



REPORT

VOL. 9 NO. 1 SUMMER 1996

'Psychic Detective' Noreen Renier 'Put to the Test' — Hollywood style

by Gary P. Posner

I can vaguely recall a weekly television program from the '50s called *Stump the Stars*, in which regulars Ross Martin and Beverly Garland, I assume with some degree of success, would attempt to determine the answer to something (hey, I was probably still in diapers!).

Less anciently, *What's My Line?* and *I've Got a Secret* were TV staples, and my recollections of these programs are much more vivid. I believe I can report authoritatively that the "lines" and "secrets" were very often correctly determined by the celebrity panelists. I believe I can further report, without fear of contradiction, that despite their successes week after week, Kitty Carlisle and company made no claims of "psychic" ability.

A much more pretentious incarnation of these variations of the children's games of "Hot and Cold" and "20 Questions" aired most recently on April 29, when Orlando "psychic detective" Noreen Renier was one of three subjects on the ABC-TV program, *Put to the Test*, an irregularly scheduled series co-hosted by two leggy blondes and a guy. The show's purpose, as explained up front, is to "challenge our basic understanding of what can be, and what we've come to accept as truth," by subjecting the guests' claims to "objective" testing.

Renier's segment begins with her looking into the camera and making this modest claim: "If you give me the first name of a victim and something from that crime scene, I can tell you who did it, and how it happened." Her resumé is then summarized, and testimonials of praise are offered by Ft. Pierce Sheriff's Dept. Capt. Robert Miller and retired New York Detective Ray Krolak (see *TBS Report*, Summer 1992 and/or my chapter on Renier in *Psychic Sleuths* [Prometheus Books, 1994]).

Renier's test, conducted at her home "over a two-day period," involved three previously solved Glendale, California, homicides. We are informed that on day one "the results were split," although Renier was "accurate on over 75% of the facts." A "day two" case was selected for showing — that of an 89-year-old woman named Josephine, who was brutally murdered in 1994. Appearing in the room with Renier are one of the blondes (Alison Holloway), Glendale Police Dept. Sgt. Jon Perkins, and a retired judge to monitor the proceedings.

Renier is handed Josephine's hearing aid, and she then

begins to describe the killer: "I feel some [increased] width to the mouth. Might be a strong overbite. Lips — short." To my eyes, she was wrong on all three counts, and her associate's composite sketch, unveiled later, seemed to me to bear little resemblance to the killer's face.

But her "psychic" reading of the crime was more (excuse the pun) dead-on. As Sgt. Perkins, who had worked the case, conducted the questioning, Renier described the place where the murder occurred: "It seems like there's a lot of white in it. And there's some strong slant . . . with the roof. . . . A house or church, or a house near a church. Screen door creaks." Even if Renier did not research the Glendale newspapers, and scout the murder site in advance of the test (How many Josephines could have been murdered there recently?), her description may be representative of many/most homes in the area. (Interestingly, although the actual screen door does not "creak," it does, like many, scrape loudly along the porch surface.)

(continued on page 5)

"2000 Club" Challenge Update:

A Japanese puppet show on TV

by James Randi

Editor's note: James Randi's "2000 Club" Challenge, discussed in recent issues of TBS Report, now offers more than \$600,000 to the first person able to successfully demonstrate "psychic" power to Randi.

Bunraku is an ancient form of puppetry performed in the classical Japanese theater. Almost-life-size doll figures are manipulated by skilled operators dressed in black, while the voices are provided by actors just off stage. Though the puppet operators can be plainly seen by the audience, they are ignored so that the narrative can be told and the theatrical effect can be maximized. It is an accepted convention.

It now appears that the Tokyo Broadcasting System (ToBrSys) has created a modern version of Bunraku adapted to the television format. In this play, the puppet operators are the producers and directors, and the doll figures are the audience at home.

On April 13, ToBrSys broadcast a diligently edited program titled *Friday TV Star*. While the audience at

(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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\$10/yr. (4 issues)

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CHAIRMAN'S O R D E R

Life After Death

by Terry A. Smiljanich

While waiting in a supermarket check-out line the other day, I perused the various publications for sale prominently displayed all around me. "Messages from the Dead," "Reincarnation of Dali Lama," "Faces of Angels in Distant Galaxy," "Embraced by the Light" — all beckoned to the shopper with promises of life after death.

Is there any more central desire than the perpetuation of self? Hundreds of thousands of years ago, ancestral Homo sapiens was already preparing its dead with artifacts for the next world. The common denominator in almost all religions (I can't think of one exception) is a promise that death is not an end, but a beginning. Who among us, skeptic or otherwise, has not faced the loss of someone close and desperately desired to believe that a happy hunting ground awaits us all?

Carl Sagan, a fellow of CSICOP and co-founder of the Planetary Society, wrote in the March 10 issue of *Parade* magazine (which reaches millions of Sunday readers) about his own very personal "near-death" experience. He was diagnosed with myelodysplasia, a bone marrow disease that is fatal within six months unless a successful marrow transplant can be performed. Luckily for Dr. Sagan, his sister was a perfect bone marrow match and, after several procedures, his disease appears to have been cured.

Through it all, Sagan never waived from his firm belief that, should he succumb to the disease, he would simply cease to exist. How, he was asked, could he face death without the certainty of an afterlife? In explaining his ability to find comfort elsewhere, he quotes (who else?) Albert Einstein:

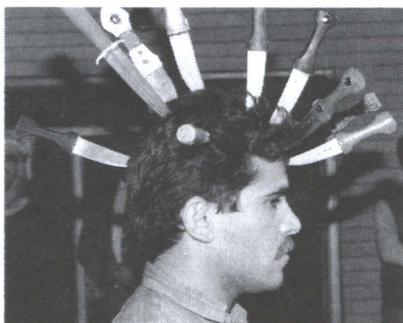
I cannot conceive of a god who rewards and punishes his creatures or has a will of the kind that we experience in ourselves. Neither can I — nor would I want to — conceive of an individual that survives his physical death. Let feeble souls, from fear or absurd egotism, cherish such thoughts. I am satisfied with the mystery of the eternity of life and a glimpse of the marvelous structure of the existing world, together with the devoted striving to comprehend a portion, be it ever so tiny, of the Reason that manifests itself in nature.

Einstein's views come close to Spinoza's rationalist and naturalistic theology (but not religion) which finds justification for a "god" without the need for either a willful creator or an afterlife. Small comfort here for "feeble souls" looking to perpetuate their egos.

As we skeptics face down the psychics and fortune-tellers, and attempt to educate the public in the importance of critical thinking, we need to recognize how deep-seated the opposition is to our message. Science is so unpopular at the check-out counter because it offers scant consolation to a person facing an indifferent universe. The religious impetus is much stronger than rational thinking will ever be. Thus, for every would-be psychic feat we "debunk," a hundred explanations and excuses will be offered, and few minds will change.

It is the chance, however, that those "few" may be willing to take the lesson from the incessant failures of psychic claims and then look for meaning and beauty in this indifferent universe, that makes it worthwhile to continue our efforts. For me, anyway, there's more beauty in the soft glow of comet Hyakutake hovering above the Big Dipper than there is in a deck of Tarot cards. There's more meaning to be found in the billion-year struggle of life on Earth than in any psalm for the dead.

And if there *is* no life after death, how much more important our time here, and how foolish it would be to sleepwalk through it.



Still awaiting final word on test of paranormal claim (or have we heard it?)

USF / St. Pete. sponsors "Psychic Fair"

by Jack Robinson

While on the St. Petersburg campus of the University of South Florida (USF) on April 12, I discovered that on the previous day, there had been a "Psychic Fair" sponsored by the university. I was disappointed that I had not known about it beforehand, so that I, and perhaps some other representatives from TBS, could have been there.

I contacted, among others, the Director of Student Affairs at the St. Pete. campus, Steve Ritch, to talk about this matter. I expressed to Ritch my thought that it would be unfortunate to give such a function respectability by organizing it in such a way as to suggest that the university endorses psychic phenomena. I was told that a disclaimer had been present on the larger promotional posters (there was no such disclaimer on the smaller notice that I saw).

I was also informed by Ritch that one reason USF had the psychic fair (and has had others in previous years and may again) is that they are very popular among the students, and are extremely well-attended. The fairs are arranged for by a campus committee consisting of about a dozen students and faculty, mostly students.

I suggested to Ritch that in the future, if USF sponsors another psychic fair, it would be appropriate to somehow have the skeptical point of view represented at the same time, or at least at some other appropriate time. I mentioned that a good way to represent the skeptical point of view might be to invite one or more members of the Tampa Bay Skeptics. He seemed interested in the idea of presenting both points of view, and requested that we send him copies of our newsletter. I also volunteered to come back over and talk to the entire committee, if they would like that, about the idea of presenting both sides of the question of "psychic" phenomena.

While on the campus, I decided to go to the library to see if it subscribes to the *Skeptical Inquirer*. I was pleased to find that it does, and that it has back issues for about three years.

As originally reported in our Fall '95 issue, TBS has been in negotiations with Louay J. Fatoohi of the physics department at Durham University, Durham, England, who is also a representative of Paramann Programme Labs of Amman, Jordan. PPL claims to be able to demonstrate, to TBS and to James Randi, paranormal resistance to pain and bodily injury (see photo).

We have still not received an acceptance or rejection from PPL regarding our negotiated test conditions. But PPL's director, Dr. Jamal N. Hussein, was supposed to have been in touch with Randi by the end of that month. TBS will consider the deal "dead" if nothing further transpires by July 1.

Randi honored with asteroid

The International Astronomical Union's *Minor Planet Circular* (MPC) of May 3, 1996, announced the official renaming of an asteroid:

(3163) Randi = 1981 QM
Discovered Aug. 28, 1981 by C.T. Kowal at Palomar Observatory, California.

Named in honour of the American magician James Randi (b. 1928; real name Randall James Hamilton Zwinge) for his continuing efforts in debunking the claims of the paranormal community and exposing the tricks that charlatans use. His use of scientific techniques in many disciplines has contributed to the refutation of suspicious and fraudulent claims of paranormal results. Name proposed by A. Dill and J. Meeus.

The following related commentary is from James Randi himself:

Andreas Dill has told me that my asteroid is in excellent company. He says: "In MPC 27127 we have (4923) Clarke, named for Arthur C. Clarke, and in MPC 27128 there is (5020) Asimov." Martin Gardner's rock is (2587) Gardner.

Andreas says he will look for some more information on my asteroid such as what kind of rock it's composed of, which classification it has among the other planetoids, etc.

There has been some concern among scientists as to the astrological effect my rock will have on the futures of persons born while it is present in the sky. Also, since it will soon be making a close approach to the Earth, whether psychic forces will be able to bring it out of orbit and send it hurtling down to decimate life on this planet. I tell you, the responsibility that goes with this honor is daunting!

On the other hand, the power it confers is very satisfying. I will now accept nominations for potential targets on Earth that might receive (3163) Randi. No frivolous suggestions, please.

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SNIPPETS

A three-day training session in hypnosis and parapsychology was held in April at the Boca Raton Sheraton. In attendance were about 30 licensed therapists from around the state, eager to learn about the legitimate uses of "past-life regression" therapy and the like, which are approved by the state's licensing board. TBS is still awaiting word about the board's consideration of our letter of Nov. 15, 1996 (see p. 6 item last issue. We sent a reminder letter on May 6).

(Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel via
Arizona Republic, April 21)

Al Ruechel, the former Ch. 10 newsman who failed to deliver on his agreement to provide TBS with a genuine case of faith-healing for our "\$1,000 Challenge" (see *TBS Report*, Summer '91 and Winter '91-92), will soon become program director of Ch. 22, the local flagship station of the state-wide Christian Television Network. Ruechel will also host a daily news, information and talk show on Ch. 22.

(St. Pete. Times, May 26)

Changing your life is as easy as changing your penmanship, says Colorado "graphologist" Polly Cady, in Tampa to teach a class of about 25. According to this 49-year-old former interior decorator, crossing your "t"s at the very top can do wonders for your self-esteem. And to improve your memory, make sure you dot all your "i"s. Explains Cady, "It's all about becoming self-empowered. . . . "It's scientifically based. It's not hooey-hooey. It's not one of those far out things."

(Tampa Tribune, May 25)

Good news for a change on the education front. A full 47% of the adult American population, when given three multiple-choice answers from which to choose, are aware that it takes one year for the earth to orbit the sun! According to the results of a recent National Science Foundation survey, barely a majority is still holding out for the alternate choices — one day and one month.

(St. Pete. Times, May 24)

From a letter-writer to Judy Harriman's "Action" column in the *St. Petersburg Times*:

For about six months my roommate and I have been harassed by telephone and mail from a psychic astrology network, even though we keep telling them we are not interested. . . . Meantime I am being billed for psychic voice mail. . . . And, quite frankly, it doesn't say much for their

psychic ability. If they were that good, they would already know I'm not interested.

(St. Pete. Times, May 29)

Puerto Rico's version of Bigfoot is known as the "chupacabras." Until this past March, reports of this alleged blood-sucking beast had been confined to that island. But sightings of what has been described as "part reptile, part insect, and part UFO alien" are now spreading throughout the Hispanic communities of south Florida. And the discovery of a dead goat in Tampa has raised the specter that the chupacabras have arrived at our own doorstep! But lest you fear for your hide (and your goat's), Miami zoologist Ron Magill, who has investigated some of these "mysterious" goat suckings, has offered a prosaic explanation. "Contrary to the popular belief, all the animals were [still] full of blood," found Magill, and the bite marks were "classic canine punctures from dogs."

Further, he was able to identify dogs' footprints, as well as evidence of dogs digging their way under the fences. Having thusly reassured the community's residents, were they relieved to learn that their monster appears to be just a figment of collective imagination? Well, not quite. Says Magill, "They were just totally not listening."

(St. Pete. Times, March 21
and 23)

From our "Instant Replay" Department: A giant bat-like creature is terrorizing a northern Mexican village. Goats are being found with their blood sucked dry, and one human has allegedly been attacked. The "Wanted" poster for this creature depicts a "bat" more than a foot long, with two horns protruding from its hairy head. Sounds like a poodle to me.

(St. Pete. Times, May 5)

Recently, Thomas Passmore, a 32-year-old Norfolk, Virginia, construction worker, thought he saw the demonic number 666 on his right hand. Not one to disobey a biblical command — "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off" — he did just that, with a circular saw. Taken to the hospital, he refused surgery, claiming he'd go to hell if the hand were reattached, and a judge advised the hospital to obey the patient's wishes. Passmore is now suing the hospital and doctors, claiming incompetence (his own), and that a relative should have been contacted to overrule his decision. I predict he'll win 6.66 million dollars.

(St. Pete. Times, May 26)

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



“Renier ‘Put to the Test’” (from page 1)

Now the game of “hot and cold” begins in earnest, as Renier offers bits and pieces of her “psychic” vision to Perkins, who plays dutifully along:

Renier: In the [killer’s] name or associated with him in some way I see [the letter] “J” again.

Perkins: I can’t confirm that. (Skeptic’s comment: “Cold.”)

R: She was sitting, standing, back turned. There would have been some blows from the back, or from behind.

P: I can’t confirm that. (Bad luck. Good try, though. The odds were definitely in your favor.)

R: Close together, or lived together, or close together. I don’t know. Is that right? Is that right?

P: Yes, I can confirm that. (What? OK, the killer did live very close by. Try another “psychic” guess along those lines.)

R: I feel a relative, a friend of a relative is involved.

P: I can confirm “a relative or friend of” (The murderer was actually a “friend” neighbor of the *victim*, not a relative or a friend of a relative.)

At this point, the taped replay of the session is interrupted with a brief description by Holloway of how the murder occurred. When they return to Renier, it cannot be determined if she correctly found her way into the kitchen without the assistance of Perkins’ feedback.

Renier: Maybe some weapon that was in the kitchen could have been used.

Perkins: OK. Can you describe the weapon?

R: A knife? (Logical deduction, even if tentatively offered. But a “psychic” might have discerned the non-obvious — it was a *pocket knife*!)

P: OK, where are we going to move to? Can you see that?

R: I think we go through two more doorways. (You mean we move from one room to another one? Given the last hint, even *I* can confirm *that*!)

P: OK, I can confirm that. (Too late!)

I cannot assert with certainty if Renier’s “success” thus far is the result of mere intuition, prior knowledge, Perkins’ feedback, “psychic” power, or some combination thereof. What I can tell you is that once she “psychically” enters the bedroom, Renier’s play-acting becomes painfully absurd. A knife already having been established as one of two murder weapons, the viewer is treated to the spectacle of Renier simulating a repeated stabbing motion with her right arm: “I get this motion with him, and I don’t quite know what this motion is. But I keep doing this. And I have sort of a lunge and pull back, and lunge and pull back motion.” She then immediately makes a series of campy-looking puffing faces/sounds, as if exhausted from reliving the kill. Even if I were initially inclined to believe in her “psychic” powers, this ridiculous acting and feigning of ignorance would be (forgive another pun) a dead giveaway.

As the test approaches its conclusion, Holloway says, “Noreen [then] had her most startling vision of the reading — a fact that was never printed in the newspaper, never testified to in court, a fact no one but the investigators knew. David had hidden one of the murder weapons in the oven.” Renier to Perkins: “I think you had trouble finding one weapon. Uh, there was a little disguise in the one weapon.” Perkins: “I can confirm that.” But Renier does

not say that the knife had been hidden in the oven. And if this *one* “vision” was the “most startling” of them all because it involved *one fact* that had not been previously publicized, does this not imply that Renier indeed had an opportunity (whether or not she availed herself of it) to come up with her other “visions” through prior research?

When the Renier-inspired sketch of the killer was shown to Perkins at the conclusion of the test, he rated it as “very accurate . . . a strong 7 [or] weak 8” (I’d give it a “strong” 3). He added, “I think she was probably 90% accurate on the facts and the information that occurred during the course of this murder.” But even if she was, did she exhibit sufficient evidence of “psychic” power to cause a rational, critically thinking person to reassess his or her skepticism of the paranormal? Haven’t magicians, psychology instructors and others performed similarly “accurate” readings, to demonstrate for the public how easy it can be to *simulate* “psychic” power?

In my chapter on Renier in *Psychic Sleuths*, I describe on page 80 a simple test protocol which, if agreed to by her, would allow, with mathematical precision, a determination as to whether or not her “psychic” powers are genuine. Renier wanted no part of such a test, even for TBS’s “\$1,000 Challenge.” And not even the lure of James Randi’s new “2000 Club” jackpot (now worth more than \$600,000) has caused her to change her mind.

Renier has recently received national press for helping the Williston police to locate a body missing for two years. We plan a full report on that case in our next issue. □

“Japanese puppet show on TV” (from page 1)

home ignored the manipulation they were being subjected to, a fictitious story was told by the puppeteers about my encounter with a “psychic” from Taiwan named Mai Takahashi, a “wonder girl” who totally fooled the parascientists in Taiwan and Japan with a ridiculously simple trick that she said was ESP. She’s 14 years old, cute as you can imagine, and as cunning as a tanuki.

As Kubota Hiroshi, a Japanese skeptic who writes for the *Ashai Shinbun*, a Tokyo newspaper with a circulation of more than eight million, e-mailed me, “I cannot believe it. I was astonished! ToBrSys changed and cut and did not broadcast the all-important scenes.”

In brief [Randi’s more thorough discussion of the encounter is available from TBS for a stamped, return envelope], simple drawings were made on 9 x 9 cm. bits of paper that were then folded over four times, resulting in 2.25 cm. squares (less than 1 inch) which were then taped shut. Takahashi was to merely hold the papers in her hand, and tell us what the targets were.

The narrator, said Mr. Kubota, told the TV audience that an overhead camera “failed to catch any trick of Miss Mai Takahashi.” As Kubota commented, it is true that the hidden camera from above did not catch her cheating, but ToBrSys said nothing about the camera *behind* her. That camera clearly showed Takahashi opening and peeking at the targets, and the studio audience saw and commented on that fact as she performed the trick!

(continued on page 6)

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Other skeptical sources on the paranormal

• **Prometheus Books** •
70-page catalogue • 800-421-0351
(30% discount available through TBS)

• **Skeptical Inquirer** •
Flagship journal of CSICOP • Box 703
Buffalo, NY 14226 • 716-636-1425
info@csicop.org • <http://www.csicop.org>

• **Skeptic** •
Published by the Skeptics Society
2761 N. Marengo • Altadena, CA 91001
818-794-3119 • skepticmag@aol.com
<http://www.skeptic.com>

• **Skeptics UFO Newsletter** •
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TBS Statement of Income and Expenditures for fiscal year 1994 (6/1/94 - 5/31/95)

I. Beginning balance from previous year		\$	808.73
II. Income			
A. New memberships/subscriptions		\$	110.00
B. Renewals			510.00
C. Donations			422.50
D. Prometheus book orders			112.35
E. Orders for articles (photocopying costs)			37.10
	TOTAL	\$	1191.95
III. Expenditures			
A. Newsletters		\$	671.21
B. Postage, fax, shipping			192.85
C. Telephone calls			5.08
D. Stationery (letterheads, labels, mailers, etc.)			33.73
E. Photocopying			22.80
F. Florida Corporation 1995 Annual Report fee			61.25
G. Prometheus book orders			99.67
	TOTAL	\$	1086.59
IV. Current financial assets			
A. Checking account		\$	902.70
B. Stamps, post cards			11.39
	TOTAL	\$	914.09
V. Current liabilities		\$	0.00
VI. Net balance (I + II - III; IV - V) as of 5/31/95		BALANCE	\$ 914.09
VII. Est. cost of printing/mailling V.8, No.1 in 6/95			\$ 210.00

All financial records are available for inspection.

Faithfully submitted,
Gary P. Posner, Treasurer

TBS in the Media

TBS vice chairman Miles Hardy appeared on Ch. 13's 10 p.m. newscast on June 7, in a segment about science, skeptics and superstition. Hardy was in good company, as Carl Sagan was also interviewed for the piece. Sagan had also been a guest (by phone) on the May 23 edition of *AM Tampa Bay* on 970 WFLA.

Founder Gary Posner was quoted in Michelle Bearden's "Prescription for Prayer" reports both in the *Tampa Tribune* and on Ch. 8. A *Tribune* editor changed Posner's May 19 quote from peer-reviewed "studies" to "students" (corrected the next day). And if May 21 viewers of Ch. 8's 6 p.m. news felt that Posner was used to illustrate how "medicine has lost its heart [and] compassion," Bearden denies any such intent.

Posner and TBS were mentioned in Susan Thompson's April 26 *Tribune* article about Dr. Larry Dossey, author of *Healing Words*.

And Posner and TBS's "\$1,000 Challenge" were featured in Lisa Foronda's report on "psychics" on Ch. 10's 5 p.m. newscast of May 22.

"Puppet show" (from page 5)

Kubota also reports that ToBrSys edited out all the comments of Mr. Aikawa, an older and very respected TV host who presided at the demonstration. He was very aware of the moves of Takahashi.

Mai Takahashi was caught cheating doing a simple conjuring trick that was revealed by the cameras. And in the second part of the agreed-upon test, for which I tightened-up the conditions so that she could not peek, she failed.

I challenge the Tokyo Broadcasting System to produce the videotape from the hand-held mobile camera — the tape that was not used by ToBrSys, and which clearly reveals the trick.

Until ToBrSys does this, the Japanese public remains deceived, and I personally have lost any trust I had of the producers and directors. This was an example of disrespect for the TV audience, who are not informed of what actually took place, but are given what the TV producers want to give them — a children's story that is easily digested, but is not true. Needless to say, the "2000 Club's" \$600,000 remains safe.

LETTERS • READERS' FORUM

To Tampa Bay Skeptics: Warmest of Christian greetings from Port Charlotte! I hope that all is well with you!

I'm corresponding with you in hopes that you can send me general information in dealing with subjects like the Roswell incident, "Area 51," and the happenings with the Branch Davidians out in Waco, Texas. There is a lot that I do not understand as to what is truth and what isn't in all three cases, and hopefully you may be able to send information that could help me understand things better on these subjects!

Do know that your help is truly needed and very much appreciated! Do hope to be hearing from you soon!

Rev. Bob Edwards
Port Charlotte

We responded with several articles from Skeptical Inquirer relating to the Roswell "crashed-saucer" case, and a few from other sources regarding "Area 51" in the Groom Lake region of Nevada, where the U.S. military tests our most secret experimental aircraft, and where some UFO buffs claim that we have alien craft in storage. In the accompanying letter, I explained that although the Branch Davidian situation is outside the purview of TBS, it appeared obvious to me from the videotapes (as shown on Nightline and elsewhere) that the Davidians themselves started the fires. —G.P.

Fellow Skeptics: Just a note to let you know that I have moved to Venice, and probably will be moving to the Atlanta area. I've enjoyed the association with those in TBS even more skeptical than myself.

Carl Sagan's latest book, *The Demon-Haunted World*, has a great chapter on skepticism (Ch. 17). A bright fellow!!

I'll try to keep up my subscription to *TBS Report*.

Rev. Tom Leckrone
Venice

You'll also have to join the Georgia Skeptics, who produce a heck of a newsletter themselves! —G.P.

Editor: In reference to the many conspiracy theorists, it just seems obvious to me that if there were secret societies (or UFOs, etc.) with secret agendas and the power to accomplish these ends, the first people to disappear would be those who are trying to expose them. By the admission of the exposers, these societies have the ability to pretty much do what they please. They also want to remain secret, so what is stopping them from eliminating the threat of exposure? Who would miss these individuals who are profiting from exposing the conspiracies?

Mike Smolik
St. Petersburg

Fellow Skeptics: Enclosed is a check for a two-year renewal. But I have recently purchased a house in a village in New York's Adirondack Park, and it appears I will be living here from now on.

I have found many challenges here. The extreme cold weather, along with climbing mountains, hiking wilderness trails, and living by a campfire, are experiences I had as a child, many years ago. Florida had many things that reminded me of plans my wife and I had made. My physician here acknowledges that emotional stress has been very evident after I return from my trips to Florida.

I still face reversal of the several conditions that threatened my life a few years ago, and am monitored by a doctor who was trained in Germany. She has taken me off all medication that my doctor in Zephyrhills had me taking — and I am still improving.

I experience many weather conditions here that I would be unable to experience in Florida, such as just a few hours of darkness in June (but darkness beginning at 3:45 p.m. in December), the Northern Lights, and charting a semi-lunar pattern to arctic air masses. And I do not miss the close encounters with tropical storms and hurricanes.

Maybe some day in the future, I may tire of snow and find no new studies to counteract "Cabin Fever" . . .

Harold Blake
Tupper Lake, NY

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Announcing...

Press and
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Tampa Bay Skeptics Quarterly Meeting

Scheduled: Open Forum; Video from recent media coverage of the paranormal

SATURDAY, JUNE 29 --- 10:30 A.M. - 1:30 P.M.
CARMEN MANIS ROOM (2nd FLOOR)
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James Randi Educational Foundation

This newly formed non-profit and tax-exempt educational foundation is generously funded by a sponsor in Washington, D.C., who wishes at this point in time to remain anonymous.

A 7,000-square-foot facility is presently in preparation to house an extensive book and video library with reference and lending capacity, a sophisticated computer setup with Web server, and 24-hour Internet access for researchers, students, and the media. We will be prepared to supply copies of photographic, video, audio and printed materials, at very little or no cost, via fax, telephone, Internet, mail or personal contact.

The Foundation will conduct and/or finance original research, conduct classes and seminars for students, teachers, the media and the public, and will offer scholarships to students in the USA and abroad. We are also looking for persons involved in parapsychology to cooperate and work with us.

We of course shall seek the cooperation of the splendid organizations already in existence that share our goals, and will offer our full support to them. I look forward to hearing from those of you who might wish to offer your skills, your valued opinions, and materials for our library (the intention is to digitalize material and supply copies to clients). Materials in Spanish and other languages is also desired. Any contributions will be attributed to the proper sources. Thank you all!

— James Randi

Have an e-mail address? Send it to us (garypos@aol.com) so that we may add you to our electronic TBS Update Service.



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TBS "\$1,000 Challenge"

and

2000 Club "\$500,000 Challenge"

Tampa Bay Skeptics is offering \$1,000 to anyone able to provide TBS with verifiable scientific proof of any paranormal phenomenon. This notice represents an open invitation to all UFOlogists, psychics, astrologers, dowzers, and the like.

James Randi has compiled a group of skeptics (The 2000 Club) who have collectively pledged over \$500,000 to be awarded to the first person to successfully demonstrate paranormal power to Randi.

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