



Tampa Bay Skeptics

REPORT

VOL. 11 NO. 2
FALL 1998

• skeptic (n): a person who searches for truth through questioning and reasoning •

UFOs, Scientists and Stanford University

by Terry A. Smiljanich

"Are we alone?" So asked the Associated Press in a wire story this summer. Indeed, the entire UFO community got a major shot in the arm with a press release from Stanford University reporting on a UFO study by a scientific panel. This panel concluded that "some sightings are accompanied by physical evidence that deserves scientific study." The major media wires (AP, UPI, Reuters), networks (even the BBC), and other news outlets all picked up the story immediately. The message seemed clear: Scientists should take UFOs more seriously.

Who is this panel of scientists? What did they really say? Who sponsored this study? The answers to all these questions lead in some interesting directions.

The press release by Stanford University News Service called it "the first independent review of UFO phenomena since 1970 [sic]," thus comparing it to the 1968 University of Colorado Condon Report. That report had concluded that further extensive study of UFOs would not likely advance scientific understanding of our universe. On the contrary, says the Stanford panel, "New data, scientifically acquired and analyzed, could yield useful information and advance our understanding of the UFO problem."

What "problem"? Who are these guys? Kooks and hardcore believers? Not exactly. The chairman of the panel, Professor Peter Sturrock, heads the Center for Space Science and Astrophysics at Stanford University, certainly one of our premier educational institutions. Other members of the panel included astronomers and planetary scientists from other universities. The report was "initiated" and sponsored financially by Laurance S. Rockefeller, and published by the *Journal of Scientific Exploration (JSE)*. The editor of the *JSE*, Dr. Bernhard Haisch, calls it "a peer-reviewed research journal in which scholarly investigations of phenomena not part of the currently accepted scientific paradigms may be published." The *JSE* is the publication arm of the Society for Scientific Exploration (SSE). The co-moderator of the panel was Dr. Harold Puthoff.

Wait a minute! Things are starting to get interesting. What is the credibility of this journal and the SSE? And

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Psychic agrees to take the TBS "\$1,000 Challenge"

Virginia Levy, a "psychic/prophet" from Titusville, has come forward to have one of her claimed paranormal powers (reading vibrations from objects, known as "psychometry") scientifically tested by TBS. Barring a late cancellation or other unforeseen change of plans, the TBS "\$1,000 Challenge" will take place on Saturday, September 19, at 1:30 p.m., in the first-floor Auditorium of the main Tampa / Hillsborough County Public Library, 900 N. Ashley Drive, Tampa (see p. 8).

A copy of the "\$1,000 Challenge" agreement (and other info) may be found on the "\$\$\$ Challenges" page of the TBS website, or may be obtained from TBS for a business-sized, self-addressed, stamped return envelope. A Press Release will be issued, and TBS members (and guests) are invited to attend.

The Day The Earth Stood Still A "Repressed Memory" Story From Hell

by Robert V. McKelvey

Most people can remember with great clarity certain dates that had a major impact on their lives: Dec. 7, 1941, the "day of infamy" when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, or Nov. 22, 1963, the day President Kennedy was shot and Camelot vanished forever.

For me, however, there is only one date: Sept. 19, 1991. That was the day the earth stood still; the ground trembled; the heavens opened.

For it was on that day that my 38-year-old — my once-loving, caring, devoted daughter — accused me of sexually abusing her when she was a child.

This dreadful thunderbolt struck in the office of her "counselor," a social worker, who had helped arrange a meeting between my daughter, her mother, and me. My wife and I went to this meeting like proverbial lambs to the slaughter.

Ours had always been a very close, traditional and loving family. Among our six children, this daughter had had an especially warm and affectionate relationship with my wife and me. She was very successful in her communications career and outstanding in her role as

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TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS Statement of Purpose and "\$1,000 Challenge"

Tampa Bay Skeptics, Inc., is a nonprofit educational and scientific organization devoted to the critical examination of paranormal and fringe-science 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, although 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 by e-mail or on a 3 1/2" diskette (in Mac or text/ASCII format).

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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Editorial

by Gary P. Posner

S.O.P. at CNN

It was a dark and stormy night. High upon CNN Hill, a glistening guillotine, marred only by a few fresh sanguinary spatters, reflected what traces of moonlight managed to momentarily peek through the cumulous clouds. The lopped heads picked up steam as they rumbled down to the valley below and onto the snake-oil-slickened misinformation superhighway. An occasional wisp of rapidly rotting flesh paranormally wafted through the nation's TV sets. But the essence of sarin was nowhere to be found.

Such marked the carnage earlier this summer at CNN in the wake of a news story, also fed to and published in tandem by *Time* magazine, that turned out to have apparently not been entirely accurate. Floyd Abrams, a media attorney hired by CNN after the fact to check the facts, concluded in a 54-page report that the amassed evidence was insufficient to justify the story's premise. U.S. troops may not have dropped deadly sarin nerve gas on a group of defecting G.I.s during the Vietnam War after all.

The Abrams analysis was followed with an apology and retraction of the story by CNN News chairman Tom Johnson, who also proceeded to axe two of the story's unrepentant producers (a third resigned) and reprimand the network's premier correspondent, Peter Arnett, who claims to have done little more than read the story off the TelePrompster.

But as far as I can tell, in putting this story together, the producers appear to have followed standard operating procedure (S.O.P.) for any modern news organization, especially one eagerly launching a glitzy new "magazine" show, as the CNN/Time partnership was doing with *NewsStand*. They "produced" a premise guaranteed to generate a tremendous amount of publicity, posed hypothetical questions to witnesses, used the ambiguously/possibly confirmatory answers (some based upon recently recovered "repressed memories"), disregarded the denials, brought in a renowned "journalist" to read the script on camera, and sent the signal for consumption across the entire global village. To their credit, at least they didn't stage a genuine sarin gassing à la NBC's "production" of the notorious phony gas tank explosion during *Dateline's* early days.

To these jaundiced eyes, the only real "mistake" CNN appeared to have made was in their targeting of retired U.S. military veterans, particularly a Special Forces unit. In contrast to the rest of the government and the public at large, the vets have lobbyists and other supporters up the kazoo who can bring to bear enormous weight. Nevertheless, in an effort to avoid any future such blows to the reputations of both their news division and their potential targets, CNN has now created an editorial "watchdog" position to monitor story content for accuracy.

Imagine what might have happened with CBS several years ago if the CIA and military intelligence had the type of rabid public support enjoyed by the vets. Founded by the likes of Edward R. Murrow, the "Tiffany" Network's news division was researching a story about the alleged Roswell crashed-saucer case for the April 20, 1994, edition of *48 Hours*. Following S.O.P. like CNN, it appears that the producers contrived a government-coverup scenario and then proceeded to fudge the facts to fit. When they got around to interviewing UFO-skeptic Philip Klass, he held up to the camera a copy of the once "Top Secret" Air Intelligence Report #203, which clearly indicates that even a year after Roswell, the government was unaware of any evidence confirming that extraterrestrial spaceships were a source of UFO reports. Had we already retrieved a crashed saucer, and its occupants, at Roswell, this report, like others that have been released under the Freedom of Information Act, would have read quite differently.

Of course, by air time, CBS News had excised the footage of the document and all mention of it by Klass. Were a Floyd Abrams to investigate CBS's irresponsible reporting on that program, would any heads roll as a result? Of course not. And I suspect that CNN's "watchdog" position will be short-lived. Soon we may be able, once again, to depend upon CNN to bring us the type of "news" we crave.

[This editorial was written before Klass' "Commentary" appeared in the Sept/Oct *Skeptical Inquirer*.]

Paranormal Ancestries: The Value of History

by Hugh H. Trotti (second in a series)

The following reference represents an attempt to show how historical knowledge may be a useful adjunct for study by skeptics.

BLEEDING STATUES: The modern religious effigies that “bleed” seem wondrous to many people who do not realize that the ancient pagan world possessed a plethora of signs, omens, wonders, miracles, and even a desire to dig up and carry away the bones of heroes. Bleeding statues seem to be among the inherited wonders, judging by the following references to bleeding statues of both the Greek goddess Athena and of Mark Antony (from Cassius Dio’s *The Roman History: The Reign of Augustus*, translated by Ian Scott-Kilvert, Penguin, 1987, paper):

The Athenians believed that their misfortune was due to what had happened to the statue of Athena: this effigy, which stood on the Acropolis and had been sited so as to face the east, had turned round to the west, and blood had issued from its mouth. [Page 161]

Antony’s death was also foreshadowed by the spectacle of a statue of him which stood on the Alban Mount beside that of Jupiter, and which was seen, although made of marble, to send forth streams of blood. [Page 41]

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“UFOs, Scientists and Stanford” (from page 1)

isn’t Harold Puthoff the same Harold Puthoff who years ago, with Dr. Russell Targ, studied Uri Geller “scientifically,” and proclaimed his magic acts to be manifestations of a new psychic phenomenon called the “Geller effect”? And what connection does Dr. Sturrock have with the SSE?

Before examining these questions, let’s take a quick look at the report itself that caused such media attention. The Sturrock panel convened in Tarrytown, New York, for four days in September 1997, and invited UFO investigators to show up with their “best” cases. After hearing these witnesses, the panel wrote a 48-page report summarizing the results. They quickly recognized that they could easily get bogged down in eyewitness testimony, of which there is plenty when it comes to UFO sightings. What they wanted was hard and fast physical evidence illustrating the “UFO problem.”

What they got was a hodgepodge of reports, including: (1) a few photographs that were hard to explain; (2) reports of unusual radar returns; (3) strange lights in Norway (comparable to the “Marfa lights”); (4) an old helicopter/UFO chase story; (5) reports from pilots that sound a lot like fairly mundane atmospheric phenomena; (6) reports of radiation sickness from a UFO encounter; and (7) reports of plant damage from a miniature UFO in France. Included in the study under “Vehicle

Interference” was the 1992 story of the Haines City, Florida, patrolman who claims he was followed by a strange green light and then couldn’t start his patrol car or operate his walkie-talkie. Incredibly, this “objective” report on UFOs failed to mention that some of these “best” cases have already been examined and seriously questioned by UFO skeptics such as Philip Klass, whose September 1998 *Skeptics UFO Newsletter* outlines what Paul Harvey would call “the rest of the story.”

These are the “best” cases that the UFO community could come up with? Why is this not surprising? What *is* surprising is the complete and utter absence of any testimony or counter-evidence from the skeptical community. The panel apparently didn’t want to be bothered with a real “fly in the ointment” like Philip Klass.

At any rate, the panel members firmly concluded that the evidence was inconclusive. They noted that the UFO problem “has remained unsolved for fifty years,” and is in “a very unsatisfactory state of ignorance and confusion.” Although having been presented with the “best” evidence, the panel concluded that “further analysis of the evidence presented at the workshop is unlikely to elucidate the cause or causes of the reports” (a pretty damning conclusion about the “best” evidence, when you think about it).

In spite of all this, the panel argued that, “Whenever there are unexplained observations, there is the possibility that scientists will learn something new by studying those observations.” It’s hard to argue with that “possibility.” It could be said that even a study of the tooth fairy might teach us *something*, even if it’s just about parenting skills. The panel urged the scientific community to become more curious about the UFO problem and to direct some resources toward a resolution by cooperating with the UFO community. It also noted that the SSE’s *Journal* was available for reporting on such studies.

So this is what the panel actually said. It wasn’t exactly a ringing endorsement of the theory that extraterrestrial intelligences are regularly visiting the Earth for some sight-seeing, electrical surveys, and pranks on patrolmen. Coming from a group of credentialed scientists, however, it was sufficient to put the UFO community in the news yet again. Unfortunately, no amount of debunking, nor journal articles in the *Skeptical Inquirer* reporting on negative results or out-and-out hoaxes, will make the news quite like this. But lots of people have now heard that “Stanford University” and a bunch of scientists think UFOs are a problem worth spending research dollars and time on.

Which leads us to the next question — how objective was this study? Suspicion is immediately aroused by the fact that the panel completely ignored any skeptical viewpoints, including studies of some of the same incidents by skeptics such as Philip Klass. Is that the way a scientific panel works, by looking at the pros and ignoring the cons? How can this panel excuse its ignorance of the fact that some of these “best” cases have already been questioned — even solved — in books such as Klass’ *UFOs: The Public Deceived*?

And what is the Society for Scientific Exploration (SSE)? Founded about 12 years ago, the SSE is an organization of

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TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN: Terry A. Smiljanich, J.D., St. Petersburg (James, Hoyer, Newcomer, Forizs & Smiljanich, P.A.)
 VICE CHAIR: Miles W. Hardy, Ph.D. (Professor emeritus of Psychology, University of South Florida, Tampa)
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 AT LARGE: Jack H. Robinson, Ed.D. (Professor emeritus, Astronomy program, USF, Tampa)
 BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Gary P. Posner, Terry A. Smiljanich, Miles W. Hardy

Snippets

Still KOed by Parkinson's syndrome despite having consulted 15 physicians, Muhammad Ali decided to give Jerry Jacobson a title shot. The retired Jupiter, Florida, oral surgeon's "resonance machine" purportedly emits magnetic waves that can reawaken the "homeotic genes" needed to produce dopamine, the chemical lacking in Ali's brain. About 120 people, with all sorts of ailments, are in a study being conducted by Jacobson, who hopes to prove to the FDA that his machine is a winner. But after five sessions, feeling "used" by Jacobson, Ali discontinued the treatments. Regarding Jacobson's "homeotic genes" theory, West Palm Beach neurosurgeon Robert Brodner says, "I don't know what this fellow is talking about. I only hope that he does." Well, if the "resonance machine" doesn't work in Jupiter, perhaps it might work on Jupiter.

(AP via *St. Pete. Times*, Aug. 2 & Aug. 6)

The following is from the "All in a Day's Work" column in *Reader's Digest*:

I work for a mortgage company where I verify financial information about home buyers. One day I was processing a loan for a psychic reader and needed to confirm his income. In response to my request, I received the following letter from his employer: "He is a subcontractor for our psychic readers group. He is not a salaried employee. We therefore cannot predict his future earnings."

(*Reader's Digest*, July)

About 300 want-to-believers attended a four-day convention of the American Federation of Astrologers in Orlando. About 100 astrologers set up workshops and booths, with half-hour readings going for about \$40. The attendance figure was considered a disappointment, as more than 2,000 had flocked to a similar gathering in Atlanta a few months earlier. But the small numbers did not adversely impact on the high quality of the readings, especially those of Fort Lauderdale's Arlene Asion, whose "Astro Star Kards" couldn't possibly steer you wrong.

(*St. Pete. Times*, July 26)

"Seer' fails to predict arrest" screamed the front-page headline. Lisa Maxam Goodnight, who works at Starchild, a New Age store in Charlotte County, has been charged with grand theft for having persuaded a woman to wire her \$10,000 so that they could open a restaurant together. Goodnight allegedly then said "good night," and proceeded to spend the money elsewhere.

(*Charlotte [Harbor] Sun*, June 27)

The Virgin Mary's home in Clearwater has changed ownership once again. Originally a finance company and then an Ugly Duckling Car Sales dealership, the building has now been leased by Shepherds of Christ Ministries, which plans to buy it outright for more than \$2-million and convert it into a spiritual center. A 5-foot statue of Jesus has been erected in front of the famous windows whose stains, created in the shape of the palm tree that once abutted them, bear a resemblance to an artistic rendering

of the Virgin Mary. (A "Buddha" window stain, created by a squatter palm, resides on another side of the building. But as long as the Catholic ministry's landscapers keep that tree in place, few will notice the hidden rival.)

(*St. Pete. Times*, July 8)

And the beat goes on. Sonny and Cher are still a team, at least whenever Cher is able to spend some quality time with "spiritual medium" James Van Praagh (see lead story last issue), whose abilities permit the singers to communicate with each other. "He [Van Praagh] told me things only Sonny could have known." Cher, he's (Van Praagh) got you, babe, right in the palm of his hand.

(*St. Pete. Times*, May 11)



A writer to "Dear Abby" has learned from experience that "psychic" readings can be associated with "junk":

... I saw one of those late-night "psychics" TV shows. They were begging viewers to call for a "free psychic consultation," so just for fun, I did. As I expected, they could not give me answers to any of the specific questions I asked. . . . Unfortunately . . . I gave them my mailing address. . . . Immediately I began to receive pounds of junk mail each week and phone calls from every kind of weird and goofy outfit you can possibly imagine. . . . When I think of all the waste I created with a short little phone call to a bogus psychic, it makes me sick.

(*"Dear Abby" via Tampa Tribune*, June 15)

The internet has become a source of instantaneous urban myths. Recently, within hours after a "chat room" rumor was created about the "Our First Time" website, the world was hearing the story of how "Mike" and "Diane" were planning to lose their virginity on camera, for all the world to cyberwitness. It turns out that they were really a couple of struggling actors, and the entire episode was a hoax. But when the press first heard and disseminated the story, it achieved instant legitimacy, arousing the ire of various moralistic spokespersons. Art Jahnke, senior editor of *CIO Magazine*, which covers internet issues, could have been discussing claims of psychic power when he said of this episode, "We wanted to believe it. . . . It's more rewarding to people if they believe [a story] is true."

(*Baltimore Sun via St. Pete. Times*, Aug. 2)

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

"The Day The Earth Stood Still" (from page 1)

mother of three children.

We had known for several months that our daughter was seeing a counselor because of marital problems. We had also noticed that our once-chatty daughter was becoming silent and distant. But we were totally unprepared for the session that followed. It was a confrontation from Hell.

At the meeting, our daughter calmly announced that I had fondled her when she was four; again when she was five. Further, she alleged that when she was 16, we had sexual intercourse. She added that her mother walked in on this liaison and "became angry."

I was dumbfounded. My wife was equally stunned. How could our daughter, who had enjoyed a long, loving and circumspect relationship with her parents, suddenly "recall" false incidents of sexual abuse that supposedly had taken place decades earlier?

Our daughter had a ready explanation. These revelations came to her through "dreams and flashbacks." Her therapist eagerly confirmed their genuineness, saying, "All of the clinical evidence was there." He never bothered to explain what he meant by "clinical evidence." All he said of the alleged abuse was: "I knew it before she did."

The months that followed this ghastly confrontation with our daughter took on the aspects of a Kafkaesque nightmare, filling my wife and me with feelings of frustration, confusion and, finally, anger. But worst of all — the support of our other children notwithstanding — we felt isolated and alone.

A few months later we heard of an organization called the False Memory Syndrome Foundation (FMSF), based in Philadelphia, composed of others who have been falsely accused by adult children, usually daughters. FMSF put us in contact with a similar victim, who assured us that the torment we were experiencing was not unique; thousands of other families have been torn apart by similar monstrous accusations. (To date, more than 17,000 persons have contacted FMSF.)

Through the Foundation, my wife and I have heard presentations and read papers by the most respected scientists in memory research, who explain the nature of memory and the techniques used by unscientific therapists in recovering so-called "repressed memories." We take comfort in the knowledge that we do not deserve the stigma inflicted by our daughter and her therapist.

I suppose I should forgive our accuser; she was a vulnerable and unwitting instrument of a benighted therapist. Still, I feel outraged to be accused of infidelity by my own daughter, particularly since I have been completely faithful to my wonderful wife throughout our 50 years of marriage. What bitter irony! My wife and I are now 70 years old. We recognize that we may never see our daughter or her children again.

This, then, is the devastation left by so-called "repressed memory" therapy: A loving family divided; our daughter and our three granddaughters alienated; and an ailing patient misdiagnosed, ineptly treated, and certainly not cured of her real psychiatric problems.

There is a major difference between astrology, psychic-type mumbo jumbo, and "repressed memory" and "multiple disorder" therapies. That difference is the impact on our legal system. For a time — perhaps 10 years — some courts began to permit testimony by so-called "expert" witnesses (e.g., clinical psychologists) in cases involving supposed past abuses. This testimony never included hard or verified evidence, only the opinions of the "experts." For a while, subjective testimony of this sort threatened to become institutionalized.

Contrast this with hypnosis, psychic phenomena, astrology, numerology, etc. So-called experts in these areas were not allowed to testify. Their practices remained in the outer fringes of society, regardless of the legions of gullible who believed in them. The courts rejected their claims.

Two recent books, both by Ph.D. psychologists, have criticized the balderdash being spread by their profession. I recommend *Whores of the Court* by Margaret Hagen and *Manufacturing Victims* by Tana Dineen. And, of course, the April 1 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* contained a report debunking therapeutic touch.

Unfortunately, as Max Planck once observed, ill-founded theories probably will persist until their practitioners all die out and a better-informed group of professionals takes their place

Fortunately, as more and more women have come to their senses and recognized that their repressed memories were iatrogenically induced by their therapists, they have sought redress in the courts. The tide now has turned, with retractors winning large lawsuits against therapists, and insurance companies refusing to pay for unproven techniques.

Thankfully, the hysteria is waning. I only hope that I am alive to see the day that my family is made whole once again. □

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"UFOs, Scientists and Stanford" (from page 3)

scientists who believe their colleagues should spend more time and precious resources looking into what can at best be called "fringe science," if not out-and-out pseudoscience. One of the founders of SSE and its current president is Professor Sturrock, the head of the Stanford UFO panel. Included in the Society are luminaries of fringe science such as Russell Targ and Robert Jahn (who studies ESP at Princeton, lest Stanford think it has a monopoly on this). Professor Sturrock is a believer in the UFO phenomenon who, according to Klass, has spoken previously on the subject.

So, what are some examples of other fringe-science endeavors that SSE believes worthy of serious study? An examination of past issues of SSE's *Journal* is very revealing. A recent German dowsing study is reported to have had 96% success (apparently, James Randi had better get ready to start writing \$1,000,000 checks). A correlation was found between birthmarks and reincarnation memories. The CIA-sponsored "remote viewing" project was found to have come up with intriguing results. Cold fusion can no longer be dismissed, and holds the potential for unlimited power in the near future.

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TBS Statement of Income and Expenditures for fiscal year 1997-98 (6/1/97 - 6/30/98) (13 mos.)

I. Beginning balance from previous year	\$ 840.00
II. Income	
A. New memberships/subscriptions	\$ 180.00
B. Renewals	822.00
C. Donations	322.55
D. Donations to Don Addis Gift Fund	162.00
E. Sale of back issues of <i>TBS Report</i> (incl. P&H rec'd.)	43.75
F. Sale of book (received free by TBS)	20.00
G. Sale of Don Addis cartoon	45.00
H. Prometheus book orders	73.00
	TOTAL \$ 1,668.30
III. Expenditures	
A. Newsletters	\$ 975.25
B. Postage, fax, shipping	241.92
C. Stationery (letterheads, labels, mailers, new masthead, etc.)	101.48
D. Florida Corporation 1998 Annual Report fee	61.25
E. Prometheus book orders	83.70
F. Don Addis gifts	124.57
	TOTAL \$ 1,588.17
IV. Current financial assets	
A. Checking account	\$ 903.17
B. Stamps, post cards	16.96
	TOTAL \$ 920.13
V. Current liabilities	\$ 0.00
VI. Net balance (I + II - III; IV - V) as of 6/30/98	\$ 920.13

This financial report is faithfully submitted by Gary P. Posner, Executive Director.
All financial records are available for inspection.

Note: Beginning with the 1997-98 fiscal year, the years now end on June 30 rather than May 31 (FY1997-98 thus ran 13 months). These annual Statements will now appear in our Fall issues.

TBS in the Media

Miles Hardy appeared on Ch. 13's July 19 10:00 News report about how one's handwriting may (or may not) reveal intimate personality traits ("graphology").

Gary Posner was quoted in Tim Grant's article on Carrollwood's Dinah Harrison. In her self-published book, *Never Alone - A True Story*, she claims that her long-deceased husband still talks to her and plays pranks on her suitors (via stuck elevators, flat tires, etc.). The article ran in the North Tampa edition of the May 31 *St. Petersburg Times*.

Posner was interviewed on June 29 by Alan McBride for a Florida's Radio Network news item on the Sturrock/SSE report on UFO manifestations (see Terry Smiljanich's front-page article). And McBride interviewed him again on Aug. 6 for an item about Muhammad Ali's "magnetic therapy" (see "Snippet").

On July 31, Posner drove to WLBE Radio in Leesburg, home of Carol Prediletto's "Eve the Mystic" program, and was interviewed after the show by Jackie

Keenum of Orlando's WKMG-TV 6. Her report aired on Ch. 6's 11:00 News on August 4.

ABC-TV News contacted TBS for information about John Monti for an upcoming Oct. 6 special exploring the economic costs of "The Power of Belief," to be hosted by John Stossel. Monti is the renowned "psychic detective" who searched unsuccessfully for Tiffany Sessions (see *TBS Report*, Winter 1991-92 and Spring '92, or select "John Monti" from the "Index" at the bottom of the TBS website's Home Page).

TBS referred ABC to the Denton, Texas, police dept. (which has recently used Monti in a high-profile case), and provided video of Monti (ABC had none) from two of Kathy Fountain's TV shows (Ch. 13/Fox). ABC then requested the original broadcast-quality tapes from the station, but received little cooperation. At that point, Gary Posner asked Fountain to intervene, and she proceeded to personally search a storage room filled with uncatalogued tapes to locate the needed ones for the competing network. TBS thanks Kathy for her kind efforts!

Other skeptical sources on the paranormal

• *Prometheus Books* •

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randi@randi.org • www.randi.org

Letters • Readers' Forum

Editor: I had the odd experience today of doing a search for my name on the web and coming up with an editorial by Ralph Moss of *The Cancer Chronicles* relating to alternative medicine. I was amused to see that my letter to the editor of the *Seattle Times* attacking the publication of a credulous article on "Therapeutic Touch" had really annoyed him, as I dared call this technique "barbaric superstition."

The good in this, of course, is that you were cited also in this article and thus I found your superb website, and that of the Tampa Bay Skeptics. I wanted to thank you for putting these wonderful resources on the web so that we who have a scientific worldview can learn from you.

Thanks!!!

Kurt Denke
Seattle, WA
Absquatulate@msn.com

Editor: Valerie Grey's piece on hypnosis in the last issue of *TBS Report* was interesting. Her account seems to support the contention of psychologist and CSICOP Fellow Robert Baker, who once gave a talk to the Georgia Skeptics (which I attended) in which he claimed that there is actually "no such thing" as hypnosis.

On the other hand, we also had a psychiatrist talk to us on the same subject, and he claimed that hypnosis could reach non-conscious mental states which he believed existed and accounted for the so-called divided personality disorders. Experts appear to feel strongly both ways: There *is*, or there *isn't*, such a thing as "hypnosis."

Hugh Trotti
Decatur, GA

Editor: Thank you for the TBS e-mail update on "Alternative Veterinary Medicine." I enjoy all of the

updates, but this one was especially interesting. I forwarded it to a veterinary neurological surgeon friend of mine, who replied that he had "grave misgivings about the use of acupuncture and acupressure in humans let alone in animals." He said that he had personally seen four or five dogs which had been ambulatory when they visited a chiropractor and quadriplegic when he finally saw them after they had had multiple "adjustments." In all cases, ruptured cervical disks had been driven into the spinal cord.

My veterinary surgeon friend said that if the dogs had been brought into the university veterinary clinic before the chiropractic damage, he could have offered them a good prognosis with surgery. Instead, all the dogs had to be euthanized because prognosis for recovery was so poor by the time he saw them.

Valerie Grey
Nokomis
104355.1423@compuserve.com

No, this page 7 "Thank You" box has not now become a standard fixture of our newsletter. But I must express my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all of you who contributed to the wonderful gifts (including the gag items) bestowed upon me at our "TBS 10th Anniversary" meeting in June.

Here's to another 10 years of TBS and the *Tampa Bay Skeptics Report*.

—Gary Posner

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"UFOs, Scientists and Stanford" (from page 5)

Dr. Larry Dossey reports on the powerful efficacy of faith healing. ESP results have been correlated with sidereal time (perhaps thus bridging the gap between ESP and astrology). There is evidence that the Loch Ness Monster really exists.

In short, there is nothing the loony fringe has come up with that the SSE hasn't found to be potentially worthy of serious funding and scientific study. Included in the *Journal's* past issues is an article by the ubiquitous Dr. Russell Targ on "viewing the future," thus giving even fortune telling a "scientific" boost.

In the next issue of *TBS Report*, we will take a closer look at the Society for Scientific Exploration and its anti-skeptical mandate, and explore the impact and meaning of the Stanford University / Sturrock UFO Report.

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 \$13. Please enroll me as a member of TBS, and begin my annual subscription to *TBS Report* with issue _____ . Renewal Please accept this donation of \$ _____ .
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Announcing...

Press and
Public
Welcome

Tampa Bay Skeptics Quarterly Meetings

3rd Saturday of every March, June, September,
and December (barring unforeseen conflicts)

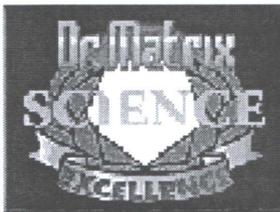
Our next meeting will be:

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 --- 10:30 A.M. - 3:30 P.M.
PUBLIC LIBRARY, 900 N. ASHLEY DRIVE, TAMPA

Scheduled: Open Forum, video of media coverage
of the paranormal, and other fun stuff
(until noon in 2nd-floor Carmen Manis Room)

Followed by: TBS "\$1,000 Challenge" (see p. 1)
(at 1:30 in the 1st-floor Auditorium)

Note: Parking is available in adjacent garage with 2nd floor
covered walkway to library. If attendant attempts to charge
the "event" price, explain that you are going to the library.



TBS Website recognized for Science Excellence

To quote from the
"Dr. Matrix" Award
announcement:

"Sites receiving this award are distinguished by the
quality of their content [as it] serves the interests of
discovery, mental enrichment and thoughtful enjoy-
ment. A flashy Web site will not receive this award if its
content lacks interest and integrity. . . . This award
doesn't go to 'cool' sites. It goes to the *great* sites. It is
given in gratitude, with no other request but that you
keep doing what you're doing."

Thank you, "Dr. Matrix." We shall try.

== Visit TBS's Award-Winning Website ==

<http://members.aol.com/tbayskept/tbs.html>

If for no other reasons, check out the web versions of
our *TBS Report* articles for their related **links** and for the
occasional **graphics** not present in our printed newsletters
due to space constraints. To find out at a glance about any
significant additions/changes since your last visit, click on
"**What's New on the Site**" at the top of the Home Page.

And, if you haven't already done so, be sure to send
us your **e-mail address** (to garypos@aol.com) so that we
may add you to our electronic **TBS Update Service**.

TBS and James Randi "Psychic" Challenges

Tampa Bay Skeptics has a standing **\$1,000** offer for
verifiable scientific proof of any paranormal phenomenon.
James "The Amazing" Randi has secured pledges
totaling more than **\$1,000,000** for the first person able to
successfully demonstrate paranormal power for him.

These monetary rewards, and a place in history, await
the first successful candidates. All UFOlogists, psychics,
astrologers, dowzers, and the like are encouraged to come
forward and offer your proof (see the "\$\$\$ Challenges"
page on the TBS web site, or contact us for more details).

30% Discount on all Prometheus Books

...ordered through TBS. Please make check payable
to "Tampa Bay Skeptics," and include the full P&H costs
as specified in the current Prometheus Books catalog.

UFO Abduction Insurance

Don't fear leaving home without it! TBS members are
covered by our **\$10-million UFO Abduction Insurance**
policy through St. Lawrence Agency, Altamonte Springs,
Florida (800-728-5413 • www.ufo2001.com). A copy of the
policy (and a newspaper article on St. Lawrence Agency)
is available from TBS for a stamped return envelope.



1113 Normandy Trace Road
Tampa, Florida 33602

FIRST CLASS

== NEWSFLASH ==

A "psychic" has come forward to be tested
for the TBS "\$1,000 Challenge"
(see page 1)

== NEWSWATCH ==

Watch for an ABC-TV special on the
"Power of Belief" on October 6
(see mention on page 6)