



Tampa Bay Skeptics

REPORT

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Dr. Isadore Rosenfeld's China Acupuncture Story Questioned

by Gary P. Posner, M.D.

"What's wrong with this picture?" That familiar refrain came to mind as I was reading the paragraph, in Dr. Isadore Rosenfeld's August 16, 1998, *Parade* magazine article about acupuncture, in which he describes an extraordinary Chinese operation witnessed by him in the 1970s. That same question echoed upon my inspection of the accompanying picture — a documentary photograph of that operation, taken by the author himself.

Dr. Rosenfeld, a cardiologist and professor of medicine, has appeared on national TV talk/interview shows since the 1960s, and has authored several books, including the 1996 best-selling *Dr. Rosenfeld's Guide to Alternative Medicine*. Upon locating the book, I found a discussion of the operation in question on pages 30-32. My quotations herein are from the *Parade* article, the book, and several e-mail communications to me from Rosenfeld.

Accompanied on his China trip by several other prominent American physicians (now deceased), the Rosenfeld party watched as a 28-year-old female patient was wheeled into an operating room at the University of Shanghai and prepped for heart surgery to repair her mitral valve. But in lieu of standard anesthesia, a practitioner placed "an acupuncture needle in her right earlobe" (per *Parade*), with an electrode attached to supply a mild electrical current.

Rosenfeld observed as "the surgeon . . . cut through the . . . breastbone with an electric buzzsaw [and] her chest was split in two [and] spread apart with a large clamp to expose the heart" (per his book). Rosenfeld shortly thereafter snapped the photograph that appears in *Parade* (it was not used in the book). Because Rosenfeld has

denied me permission to reprint his photograph, *TBS Report's* Don Addis has faithfully reproduced its image in the left sketch, which is rotated 90° counterclockwise.

Only the patient's face and incision are visible through the gaps in the surgical sheets. Let us assume, as the photo appears to indicate, that her head is essentially "face up" as opposed to being significantly rotated right or left. (Her eyes are focused to her left, as if she is attempting to observe the operation but cannot rotate her head.) Drawing a vertical line down the midline of her body, the operative field appears to be displaced far to the patient's left, rather than being centered where the breastbone and heart are situated. In fact, it appears so far to the left as to exist beyond the border of the patient's body (see right sketch, also by Don Addis). There does not appear to be any

appreciable distortion in the photo such as might be encountered from the use of a wide-angle lens.

Rosenfeld says that this apparent leftward displacement "must be due to the angle at which [the photo] was taken" (per e-mail to me). He teased me with the fact that one of the others present (Dr. Wilbur Gould, ENT) had also taken photos and that his widow ". . . no doubt has all his . . . pictures in her possession." But he would not assist me in contacting her to



obtain the photographs for review, saying that he did not wish to "participate in your project to prove that my four colleagues and I did not see what we saw."

In addition to the photographic oddities, I asked Dr. Rosenfeld how such surgery could have been performed without artificial ventilation: With the chest split open as described, the negative pressure produced by chest-wall expansion could not be created, the lungs would collapse, and the patient asphyxiate. I pointed out other problems as well, which are explored in a more extensive article on this matter that I have co-authored with Dr. Wallace Sampson, tentatively planned for publication in the Fall/Winter 1999 issue of *The Scientific Review of Alternative Medicine*.

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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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Chairman's O r n e

by Terry A. Smiljanich

False Hopes or Hard Truths?

We can now add actress Susan Strasberg to the list of celebrity victims of psychic healing. Strasberg, daughter of famed acting teacher Lee Strasberg, starred in several movies and television series in the 1960s and '70s. Four years ago, when she was 57 years old, a biopsy revealed a cancerous tumor in her breast. Doctors recommended a double mastectomy, but she received what she considered better medical advice from psychic healer Nicolai Levashov. Rejecting surgery, she opted instead for daily psychic sessions with Levashov. When she was away from California — no problem! The Russian healer was able to treat her over the telephone.

Ms. Strasberg lived the next four years without the the radical surgery recommended by her doctors, during which time mammograms were allegedly "negative." She told the world that her cancer had disappeared due to the psychic ministrations of Levashov. A close friend, Dr. Barbara Koopman, touted the incredible powers of the psychic, including favorable letters to the television series *Unsolved Mysteries*. Earlier this year, however, Strasberg "suddenly" died of cancer. Dr. Koopman has stated that the healing powers of Levashov allowed Strasberg to live an extra four "happy" years free from the fear of cancer.

Over ten years ago, comedian Andy Kaufman likewise received psychic help for his cancer. He traveled to the Philippines to receive psychic surgery. Unfortunately, he died of cancer shortly thereafter.

A member of the Skeptics Society advisory board, Dr. Steven Harris, has commented on the Strasberg story on the Skeptics Society's e-mail "Hotline." He points out that "negative" mammograms would not be unusual after a lumpectomy during her initial biopsy procedure. He also notes that the median life span of people with breast cancer is about 10 years from the small tumor stage to death. Clearly, during Strasberg's sessions with psychic Levashov, the cancer within her had continued its inexorable progress, unimpressed by anything Levashov was conjuring up.

Who knows? Would the radical mastectomy initially recommended by her doctors have provided Ms. Strasberg with extra years closer to the ten-year median? Would she have been "happier" knowing that the cancer had not disappeared but was being aggressively treated? Would chemotherapy or radiation treatment have prolonged her life beyond the four "extra" years she lived? Did Andy Kaufman's psychic surgery make him feel better for a short while?

There are no simple answers to these questions. Some people would rather cling to a false hope than face reality. If you were faced with a terminal illness, would you rather not know, living your last days and weeks with the false belief that nothing was seriously wrong? Some people would say yes to that. I for one, however, would want and expect my doctors to tell me the hard truth rather than a comforting lie.

That difference between hard truths and comforting lies strikes at the heart of what distinguishes most skeptics from "true believers." The allure of the supernatural is the feel-good promise of a happy afterlife for the self, the belief that the universe is not indifferent to our fate but rather "cares" for us. When Carl Sagan knew he was dying, he refused such comforting lies. Instead, he continued to marvel at the wondrous beauty and vastness of the universe until his eyes closed for the final time. Unlike Strasberg and Kaufman, Sagan's was indeed a noble death.

Anthropology and Shamanism

Immediately below is correspondence received by TBS Report's editor from anthropologist William Lyon. Following is a response by TBS Executive Council member Jim Lett, himself a published anthropology professor.

Editor: I happened across your website and have read your articles on Noreen Renier. I am a senior professor of anthropology and have been doing research for the past 25 years with Native American shamans. Of course, as a trained anthropologist with years of solid field work, I am much more qualified than yourself to speak on what you so quaintly refer to in Western civilization as "paranormal" activity. To the Native Americans such powers were quite normal. Furthermore, having an undergraduate degree in mathematics, I can also tell you that the logic you display is quite faulty.

It has been long known by anthropologists that Native American shamans can easily locate lost bodies, lost items, etc., via their shamanic powers, and I have seen this demonstrated myself many times during my fieldwork. One need read very little of the literature on Native American shamanism to readily understand that locating lost items is a very minor activity of powerful shamans who can heal, etc. I have just published the *Encyclopedia of Native American Shamanism* (listed on Amazon.com) that is full of documented accounts of all those things you claim human beings are incapable of doing.

I must tell you that anyone who comes to "test" the powers of Native American shamans ends up being the one who gets tested in the final outcome — best read pages 112-118 in my book entitled *Black Elk: The Sacred Ways of a Lakota* (Harper San Francisco, 1990). That is, if James Randi's "Challenge" is fraudulent in the heart of Randi and the shaman submits to testing, then Randi will indeed bring great misfortune upon himself for living such a lie. However, if such is the case then I suspect the shaman will really not want to be bothered with messing around with some dummy who's publicizing a fraudulent claim.

This spring, the particular shaman I have in mind for testing will be coming here for a visit. I will get back in touch with you then.

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Jim Lett's reply:

Dr. Lyon claims that his anthropological credentials make him especially qualified to evaluate the paranormal claims of the peoples he studies. He is mistaken. The

question is not whether researchers have been trained in ethnographic fieldwork and ethnological analysis, but whether they are willing to rely exclusively upon scientific standards of evidential reasoning in evaluating such claims. Despite his anthropological experience, Dr. Lyon clearly indicates that he is not willing to make an exclusive commitment to the use of reason. Further, he seriously misrepresents the discipline of anthropology and its position on the myriad paranormal claims of cultures around the world.

Dr. Lyon says that "it has long been known by anthropologists that Native American shamans can easily locate lost bodies, lost items, etc., via their shamanic powers." If by "shamanic powers" Dr. Lyon means powers of observation and deduction coupled with a knowledge of local circumstances and a penchant for interviewing witnesses, then his statement is correct. On the other hand, if Dr. Lyon means to suggest that shamans possess such abilities as telepathy, clairvoyance, spirit communication, or other putatively paranormal powers, then his statement is completely false. Anthropological textbooks do *not* endorse the objective validity of paranormal beliefs; on the contrary, they attempt to explain how such beliefs can persist in particular cultural contexts *despite* their falsity. A very small minority of anthropologists share Dr. Lyon's belief in the reality of paranormal phenomena; the overwhelming majority recognize that no paranormal belief offered by any culture anywhere in the world at any time in history has ever withstood critical scrutiny. I discuss the anthropological perspective on paranormal phenomena in detail in my chapter entitled "Science, Religion, and Anthropology," which appears in the book *Anthropology of Religion*, edited by Stephen Glazier (1997, Greenwood Press).

What anthropologists have long recognized is that shamans around the world employ a standard bag of illusionist's tricks to convince their clients of their paranormal abilities. Those tricks include sleight of hand, misdirection, ventriloquism, and the like, and they are richly documented in the anthropological record. Evidently Dr. Lyon has himself been duped by those shamanic performances, but most anthropologists do not share his gullibility. It is true that ethnographic researchers attempt to acquire an intimate familiarity with the beliefs of the cultures they study, and doing so frequently requires a temporary suspension of the researcher's own perspectives and convictions. In anthropology, we call this taking the *emic* perspective. At the same time, however, most anthropologists insist that ethnological analyses demand standard units of comparison, and to do that researchers must appeal to concepts grounded in objective reality as revealed by scientific standards of evidential reasoning.

(continued on page 5)

TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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Snippets

Why does James Bond prefer his martinis “shaken, not stirred”? Perhaps for the additional health benefit. In Patric J. Byrd’s recent “Keeping Fit” column on homeopathy, he noted that “shaking and striking [as opposed to stirring] are thought to impart the homeopathic action to the remedy, according to the official manufacturing manual called the *Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia of the United States*.” Byrd, dean of the University of Florida’s College of Health and Human Performance, added that “these treatments have not passed scientific muster, although a handful of preliminary studies suggest possible positive effects. Also, exactly how this type of therapy might work is a mystery. It [may be] . . . a placebo effect.”

(*St. Pete. Times, Jan. 19*)

Two months into its investigation of the TWA Flight 800 explosion, the FBI escorted a woman into the hangar containing the plane’s wreckage. Immediately after surveying the debris, she was able to announce the source of the disaster — a bomb that had been hidden in a suitcase near the plane’s left wing. Nevertheless, the FBI’s investigation continued, ultimately costing \$20-million and determining that a bomb was *not* involved. It would seem that the “self-described psychic,” whose involvement had been a “one-time mistake by a low-level agent,” had somehow missed the mark.

(*Washington Post via St. Pete. Times, Nov. 27*)



According to the matter-of-fact write-up by Stephanie Gonzales in the paper’s Religion section, the Rev. Ron Clark, leader of Tampa’s Living Water Church, has “healed the blind, deaf and lame” in the course of his ministering in more than 30 countries. Soon (if not by press time) Clark plans to have his own TV ministry on a local station, emphasizing miraculous healings.

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

Joe Firmage, who at age 17 founded the Serious Corporation (later acquired by Novell for \$24-million), has traded in Silicon Valley for the Twilight Zone. The 28-year-old has left his current position at USWeb/CKS Corp. (which he co-founded) to go where no internet-consulting-firm chief strategist has gone before. His mission: “. . . to be a part of this fundamental revolution in our society.” Firmage was not referring to the old-hat computer/internet revolution, but rather to the wave of the future — the pursuit of extraterrestrial beings. One morning in late

1997, just after hitting his clock-radio’s snooze button at 6:10 a.m., Firmage was visited by “a remarkable being, clothed in brilliant white light [who asked] ‘Why have you bothered me?’” Firmage replied, “I want to travel in space.” Adds Firmage, “I don’t call them aliens. I call them teachers.” He has since spent some \$3-million on his schooling, and has posted his 240-page term paper, entitled *The Truth*, on his website. I doubt that he managed to squeeze in a paragraph on hypnopompic dreams.

(*AP via St. Pete. Times, Jan. 13; Time magazine, Feb. 1*)

There is now incontrovertible scientific proof that you are what you eat — or slurp. According to the Smell and Taste Treatment and Research Foundation, people who prefer vanilla ice cream (as opposed to, say, butter pecan or strawberries and cream) are “colorful, impulsive risk takers who set high goals and have high expectations of themselves.” Lovers of butter pecan are “orderly, perfectionists, careful, detail oriented . . . and fiscally conservative.” And those who can’t get enough strawberries and cream tend to be “shy yet emotionally robust, **skeptical**, detail oriented, opinionated, introverted and self critical.”

(*Scripps Howard News Service via St. Pete. Times, Aug. 13*)

And you might be what you destroy. In the case of one patient, Palm Harbor therapist Judie Herman determined that his habit of ripping apart pillows was an indication that “he’s so bored [and] wants to work and do something and be proud of it. He’s very career-oriented.” Perhaps I should mention that the patient’s name is Mister. Just Mister. And he’s two years old. And a Labrador (as in dog). And, oh yes, the therapist is a “pet psychic.” And this major feature article contained not one word to indicate that the writer appreciated the unlikely (to be charitable) nature of the claimed ability of Ms. Herman to communicate telepathically with her patients.

(*St. Pete. Times, Nov. 20*)

Although we didn’t see this item soon enough to mention it before now, Walt Belcher’s October 6 column about that evening’s ABC-TV special on “The Power of Belief” (hosted by John Stossel) was as excellent in its own way as was the program itself (about which we did alert our readers). The column began with mention of James Randi’s million-dollar challenge and how Randi “prides himself on debunking mystics, psychics, faith healers, channelers, fortune tellers, alien abductees and any who claim to have supernatural powers.” Belcher continued: “The Tampa Bay Skeptics, a show-me-the-mojo-if-you-got-it club of doubters, offers \$1,000 to anyone who can demonstrate psychic abilities.” The remainder of the column described the TV show’s content in such a way as to provide a mini-primer in skeptical inquiry.

(*Tampa Tribune, Oct. 6*)

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

“Anthropology and Shamanism” (from page 3)

We call that taking the *etic* perspective. Whereas most anthropologists strive to incorporate both *emic* and *etic* perspectives in their research, Dr. Lyon has evidently opted for exclusive immersion in the *emic* point of view. For a more detailed discussion of *emics* and *etics*, see my entry entitled “Emic/Etic Distinctions” in the *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology* (1996, Henry Holt and Company).

Anthropology is an exceptionally diverse discipline, and it includes a number of widely divergent theoretical perspectives. While many anthropologists consider themselves to be scientists, and ally themselves with researchers in the natural sciences, others consider themselves to be humanists, and ally themselves with scholars in the fine arts. Among that group of self-professed humanists, there are some anthropologists who explicitly reject the canons of scientific reasoning, and it is those anthropologists who are most likely to advocate belief in paranormal phenomena. Dr. Lyon’s sympathies are apparently with this small but vocal group. I discuss the logical errors of their position in my article “Interpretive Anthropology, Metaphysics, and the Paranormal” which appeared in the *Journal of Anthropological Research* in 1991. Readers interested in more information about the schism between scientific and humanistic anthropologists will find a detailed discussion of the topic in my recent book, *Science, Reason, and Anthropology* (1997, Rowman and Littlefield).

Finally, I must say that I find Dr. Lyon’s warning of potential “misfortune” for anyone who tests a shaman to be, frankly, silly. Neither James Randi nor any rational person has any reason whatsoever to be fearful of paranormal retribution from a disgruntled shaman. The burden of proof rests upon Dr. Lyon. If he knows shamans who can perform paranormal feats, let him produce them. I will be happy to be personally involved in the design and administration of the tests. I will reluctantly predict, however, that the tests will never take place. Dr. Lyon seems to be already constructing his multiple out when he suggests that “the shaman will really not want to be bothered with messing around with some dummy” who’s interested in seeing an objective demonstration of shamanic powers. The real dummy, I believe, would be anyone who takes Dr. Lyon’s claims at face value.

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Jim Lett’s “A Field Guide to Critical Thinking” appeared in the Winter 1989-90 Skeptical Inquirer and in our Spring 1990 issue of TBS Report. It can be found on CSICOP’s website at www.csicop.org/si/9012/critical-thinking.html.

TBS hopes to participate later this year in a scientific test of Dr. Lyon’s shaman, possibly in conjunction with the James Randi Educational Foundation. Even if this test ultimately does not take place, we will extend to Dr. Lyon the opportunity to respond to Dr. Lett’s analysis.

“Acupuncture Story Questioned” (from page 1)

I suggested to Dr. Rosenfeld that his party may have been taken in by a hoax perpetrated for propaganda purposes — a well-documented propensity of the Chinese during the Cold War. But Rosenfeld scoffed at the notion (as he does in his book), and suggested that I contact Dr. Michael DeBakey, one of the world’s foremost cardiac surgeons, who “witnessed a similar procedure one year later [and] can explain your legitimate technical questions about ventilatory support. I spoke with him yesterday . . .” (per his e-mail). I asked Dr. Sampson to speak with DeBakey on our behalf, and the results of that interview were quite enlightening.

DeBakey informed Sampson that despite his conversation with Rosenfeld of just a few days earlier, he had neither read Rosenfeld’s accounts of the operation nor seen his photograph, and he was thus unacquainted with the precise details that were of concern to us. As for his own experience in China, DeBakey recalled that the mitral valve surgery that he had witnessed involved a patient who, it turned out, had been given pre-op medication intravenously prior to having the acupuncture administered. Additionally, DeBakey told Sampson that artificial ventilation had not been needed in the operation that he saw because it had been performed through an incision between two right ribs, thus sparing one (the left) lung. He added that, in his opinion, a midline, split-breastbone approach, such as described by Rosenfeld, would likely cause *both* lungs to collapse, just as we had suspected.

Before I knew of Dr. Sampson’s own interest in this case, at about the time I was initiating my correspondence with Dr. Rosenfeld, Sampson had written to *Parade* editor Larry Smith (Rosenfeld is the magazine’s health editor), pointing out some of the incongruities noted herein (and others) and asking how he might assist *Parade* in rectifying “the incorrect impressions given by the article.” Sampson, a professor of medicine at Stanford University and editor in chief of *The Scientific Review of Alternative Medicine*, did not receive the courtesy of a reply.

A few additional observations are in order with regard to the precision of Dr. Rosenfeld’s recollections and his attention to detail in recounting them. He acknowledged to me that, not being a surgeon, he actually “did not pay any particular attention at the time to the surgical technique used.” He says in his book (contrary to *Parade*) that “needles” (plural) had been placed in the patient’s “left” (not “right”) earlobe. He explained to me that this “was a typo, which was not picked up since I did not use the photo” in the book. But the image was presumably indelibly imprinted in his mind. From the book: “I took a color photograph of that memorable scene: the open chest, the smiling patient, and the surgeon’s hands holding her heart. I show it to anyone who scoffs at acupuncture.” Yet, the photo clearly shows the surgeon’s hands to the lower-left of the patient’s heart — hardly another “typo.”

Toward the end of our correspondence, Dr. Rosenfeld told me that, in publicizing the China story, his motivation had simply been “to draw attention to the possible use of acupuncture to alleviate chronic pain and suffering. . . . I

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"Psychokinetic" powers fail to impress

On Feb. 6, TBS's Gary Posner and Glenn Thompson were among the invited guests at the Tampa home of researcher Marshall Payn, to witness an anticipated demonstration of "psychokinesis" by "Katie" of Vero Beach. Katie, who appeared some years ago on *Unsolved Mysteries*, was recently profiled in *Vero Beach* magazine.

Katie's only "success" that evening involved causing a small polished stone to seemingly jump out of the body of another invited guest (who was receiving hands-on "healing") and fall to the floor. However, this feat was indistinguishable from simple sleight of hand. All three of her attempts at "psychokinesis" failed when she was not permitted to touch any of the objects (two sealed containers and Posner's car keys).

Posner and Thompson were later invited by a disappointed Payn to fly to Marathon (in the Keys) to observe another acquaintance, Joey Nuzum (profiled in the same article), demonstrate his own even more amazing "psychokinetic" powers on March 22 and 23. Anticipating comparable "success," both declined, although TBS remains available locally to witness any more such attempts.

A rare "psychic hit"

From Buck Wolf's column, "The Wolf Files," on the ABC News website at <http://more.abcnews.go.com/sections/us/DailyNews/wolffiles48.html>, summing up the generally unimpressive "psychic" predictions that had been made for 1998:

But another prediction for last year might make you scratch your head. Pennsylvania seer Elizabeth Joyce published this in Sept. 1997 in *Fate* magazine:

"A dark-haired woman named Veronica will upset the Clinton Administration in early 1998, and Clinton may not give the State of the Union address.

An angry blonde will bring forth the truth. This will be verified by others later, and Clinton will be impeached late in the year."

Joyce had originally thought the "angry blonde" would be the first lady, not Linda Tripp. But she has no doubt in her vision. "Why did I get Veronica instead of Monica? I do not know," she says. "But I believe in my spiritual guides."

Named one of the Top 20 psychics by *American Woman* magazine, Joyce foresees the Y2K computer bug bringing shipping to a halt by the end of the summer, creating grave food shortages.

But before you bet the farm on her prophesy, keep in mind that she believes your birth sign determines how you drive. Those born under Aries and Scorpio are usually speed demons, Joyce says, while Taurans stubbornly honk their horns, and Geminis tend to get lost.

Annual TBS Executive Council Elections

If you would like to nominate someone (including yourself) for the TBS Executive Council, or cast a vote by proxy, please contact us. The elections (a bit overdue) will be held at our upcoming March 20 meeting.

Correction

In our last issue, we inadvertently cut off the result of the final run in TBS's Sept. 19 "\$1,000 Challenge" of "psychic" Virginia Levy. In the final (7th) run, Levy selected box #2, but her crystal stone was actually in box #8.

Media Alert

TBS's Gary Posner will be a guest on *The Unexplained* in its upcoming episode on "Speaking With the Dead." The tentatively scheduled premier date is March 18 on the A&E network.

Letters • Readers' Forum

To TBS: An annotated link to Tampa Bay Skeptics has been added to "Tampa's Big List: A Guide to Tampa Bay's Best Web Sites at www.pictograph.com/BigTampa.

Select "List 1" from the index page menu and scroll to see your listing.

Cordially,

John Bancroft
Editor & Publisher

apparently familiar with the scientific method. Unfortunately, I did not catch the guy's name. Certainly, this is worth skeptical investigation.

Your fellow doubter,

Joe Mustion
Bradenton
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Editor: I was in Tampa early last year but did not know about your skeptic group at the time. More recently I used information from your web pages to educate a friend who has an interest in the supernatural. It is maddening the way the TV "news" shows are misleading the public.

Thanks for the putting your articles out there, and keep up the good work!

Julie Fisher
zoe@a-omega.net

Editor: I just discovered the Tampa Bay Skeptics website and find it thoroughly enjoyable. I searched using "skeptics" and the first return was the Tampa Bay Skeptics. Being from the Sarasota area, I was delighted.

I was always considered a gullible child. After receiving a degree in the sciences, and being jaded with age, I have become much more of a skeptic, to the point of being a hard-line agnostic. I have to admit, though, that I am still occasionally duped.

On a recent broadcast of *New Dimensions*, the guest talked about pet telepathy. As you can imagine, I thought this most absurd. The premise was that after leaving home, pets knew well in advance when their masters would be returning, showing signs of agitation as much as twenty minutes before their arrival. He talked about randomizing return times and returning by different conveyances, seeing if this would cause significantly different results. He talked about double-blind experiments — he was

Editor: Readers may be as dismayed as I was concerning an article in the Jan. 24 issue of the *St. Petersburg Times* on the demise of laboratory experiments in many Florida schools (p. B1). The *Times* reports that some administrators are attempting to reduce liability by ridding themselves of "anything that might explode, infect, injure, or stigmatize."

I wonder about the intellectual consequences of eliminating many laboratory experiments and reducing students' opportunities for free exploration. Not only might students experience less of the marvels and mysteries of science, they also lose chances to learn about critical thinking and the scientific method.

Although it is reasonable to require that research conducted in schools follow standard guidelines for safety and the protection of human subjects, it is a shame that the fear of lawsuits can so seriously limit students' scientific experiences.

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Editor: Thank you very much for your prompt response to my inquiry. I looked at the websites you mentioned, and I found them very helpful.

I would like to support your work, and I am enclosing a membership form and a check.

Paul H. Smith III
Tampa

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V11N4



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, MARCH 20 --- 10:30 A.M. - 1:30 P.M.
MARTIN LUTHER KING ROOM (2ND FLOOR)
PUBLIC LIBRARY, 900 N. ASHLEY DRIVE, TAMPA

Scheduled: Video of media coverage of the
paranormal, Executive Council elections,
and other fun stuff

Followed by optional lunch and "spirited" conversation
at the Village Inn on N. Dale Mabry near Kennedy Blvd.

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.

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"Acupuncture Story Questioned" (from page 5)

thought acupuncture was worth looking into. I still do, as
does a panel convened recently by the NIH. . . . I continue
to keep an open mind on the subject." While I expressed
my appreciation of that position, I also conveyed my
concern that many of *Parade's* 80-plus-million readers
could easily have drawn a conclusion that Rosenfeld says
he did not intend — that acupuncture appears to possess
mysterious and unexplained, perhaps even supernatural,
anesthetic properties.

To this point about the important role that authorities
such as Dr. Rosenfeld play in educating the American
public on health-related issues, he replied, "As far as your
fear that my readers will opt for acupuncture anesthesia
during heart surgery, I think I can reassure you not to
worry about it." Oh. Well, never mind, then.

== 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**.

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Tampa Bay Skeptics has a standing **\$1,000** offer for
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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"
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