



Selected articles from
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International documentary to spotlight Noreen Renier

by [Gary P. Posner](#)

A British television production company is in the early stages of planning a one-hour documentary on [Noreen Renier](#), the "psychic detective" based in Williston, Florida. The program, one in a four-part series examining paranormal themes, is tentatively planned for airing around the world in late 2001.

Renier is well known to regular readers of *TBS Report*, which has been chronicling her career for more than a decade. Having lived for many years in Orlando, Renier moved to the tiny town of Williston (near Gainesville) shortly after receiving acclaim, and national media attention, for her role in assisting the Williston police in locating the body of a man missing for two years. [Our investigation of that case](#) (and others) failed to find compelling evidence of any uncanny "psychic" ability at work.

The series is being produced by Oxford Television Company of London, England, in association with Britain's Channel Four and Home Box Office (HBO). Several years ago, Renier had been an invited participant at "The 2nd International Seminar on Advancing The Scientific Investigation of Crimes" in Durham, England.

Olly Lambert, one of the directors at Oxford Television, made a brief trip to the U.S. in July to meet Renier. While in Florida, Lambert contacted me to briefly discuss my views about her "psychic" abilities, having come across some of my writings on the Internet during the course of his research. Before returning to England, he planned to also visit with some of Renier's most impressive supporters, including:

- The Williston Police Department

- Dr. David E. Jones, University of Central Florida anthropologist and author of *Visions of Time: Experiments in Psychic Archeology*, in which he concludes that Renier is among those whose "psychic [ability] can help the archeologist, and all historical sciences and disciplines, to recapture in great detail human events heretofore lost and frozen in time" (see Footnote #2 in my chapter on Renier from *Psychic Sleuths*, accessible [here](#) or [here](#))
- [Det. Ray Krolak](#) (Albany, NY), who has publicly credited Renier (including on *Geraldo* and *48 Hours*) with helping him solve a homicide case

During our conversation, Lambert related to me that Williston Police Chief Olin Slaughter had indicated to him that my reporting on the Williston case contained a number of false statements on my part. In response, after assuring Lambert that I am not aware of a single factual inaccuracy in my reporting -- much less any deliberate falsehoods -- I asked him to convey to Chief Slaughter, and Renier, the following commitments: For each and every falsehood that they can identify (to Lambert's satisfaction) in any of my writings about Renier (not restricted to the Williston case), I shall promptly donate \$50 to the Williston Police Department, up to a maximum of \$1,000. Further, even if any innocent errors of fact are identified (to Lambert's satisfaction) that warrant such, I shall promptly issue a public apology.

I hope that, when the Oxford Television crew comes to the U.S. to film Renier et al., I will be permitted a few moments of air time as well. And I am equally hopeful that, should such be the case, I will not need to issue that public apology. They tell me that crow definitely does not taste like chicken!

Trying to trace the truth of a "psychic detective"-like claim

by [Gary P. Posner](#)

James Moseley, editor of [Saucer Smear](#), called me one evening in late July to touch base. He mentioned an article that he had seen a day or two before in the *Miami Herald*, about a missing Florida boy's body being found as a result of a tip from a woman who saw the body's whereabouts in a "dream." Jim had already tossed the paper, but Miami TBS member Bill Cooley soon mailed me the clipping.

Titled "Teen faces murder trial as adult after premonition reveals body," the July 24 article, written by *Herald* reporter Lesley Clark, begins:

Twelve-year-old Jerry Lee Alley had been missing for three days when a woman who spotted his picture on a missing-person's flier claimed she had a dream.

Dawn Marie Bachman . . . said that in her dream she saw [him] sitting in an abandoned septic tank on a vacant [lot] she recognized as one that neighborhood kids had claimed as a

fort.

. . . Disturbed, she drove out to the vacant lot and asked a nearby volunteer firefighter whether search teams . . . had checked the tank. They hadn't.

Firefighter Chris Pellicer pulled back [the] top of the tank and peered inside. There was Jerry's body . . .

The events had taken place during the last week of June in the tiny town of Interlachen, about 30 miles east of Gainesville. I therefore decided to check the *Gainesville Sun* 's website, to see how they had covered the story at the time. The first relevant item I found was George Hutchens' [article of May 31](#), which reported:

After a weekend-long search in Interlachen that included search dogs, radar-equipped helicopters and more than 100 volunteers . . . Jerry's body was discovered at dusk Monday by volunteer firefighter Thomas Pellicer.

Residents had called authorities about an abandoned car . . . thinking it might be related to the [case].

Pellicer and another volunteer found the car in a wooded lot [and] immediately picked up a strong odor. . . . The smell led Pellicer to the . . . septic tank, half-hidden beyond an overgrown pile of dirt and a trashed orange sofa.

Hutchens' [June 17 follow-up article](#) reiterated, "Firefighters went to check on the car and smelled an odor. They removed an industrial pallet covering an open section of a septic tank and found Alley's body."

But more than a month later (July 19), fellow *Sun* staff writer [Lise Fisher reported](#) the following:

On May 28, an officer . . . had walked through the same vacant lot with his dog. . . . He spotted a concrete slab and smelled an odor [but didn't see any] opening.

The next day, however, Interlachen resident Dawn Marie Bachman reported a dream she had in which she saw Alley sitting in a septic tank on the same piece of property her brother-in-law once considered buying. At that time, Bachman explained, her husband [had seen] children playing in a septic tank under the slab.

The dream bothered Bachman so much that she decided to go to the lot, reports show. When she got there, she found volunteer firefighters checking an abandoned car. One of the firefighters, Chris Pellicer, went with her to the slab. . . . Looking inside, they found the boy . . .

Regarding the term "reports show," Fisher told me, "[My] information . . . is taken from officers' reports that they provided to the State Attorney's Office." Fisher had no first-hand information about a "dream" having been instrumental in locating the body. And Hutchens had no such information at all, telling me, "I interviewed Pellicer personally. . . . I don't recall anything psychic or supernatural at all leading to Alley's body. . . . [He] smelled the decomposing body [while] checking out the car."

The *Herald* reporter also had gotten much of her information from that same official report, which refers to Pellicer as "Chris" (his middle name is "Christopher"). Although Bachman "declined to be interviewed" by Clark, she did tell Clark, "I believe God gave me these gifts. . . . God placed me in the situation. It's not like I'm psychic."

But it's *exactly* like she's psychic -- thus my interest in the case. Hutchens was unable to find a phone number for either Pellicer or his firehouse. But he did give me a number from the phone book for Walt Whitehouse, the other volunteer fireman alluded to in his original article.

When I called Whitehouse, he said that he had not read the news stories, and, for legal reasons, was reluctant to discuss the case. But when I informed him of the two varying press accounts as to what prompted Pellicer and him to walk from the abandoned car to the septic tank ("odor" vs. "dream"), he told me that *neither* version was correct. Although he refused to elaborate, he did say "I don't know anything about that" when I related to him the "dream/premonition" scenario.

Whitehouse agreed to give my number to "Tom" Pellicer, who would call me back "if he wants to" (he never did). And my effort to contact Dawn Bachman (by calling the one "Bachman" telephone listing for Interlachen) resulted in only a "no longer in service" recording.

But I'm not the only one having trouble getting simple answers to what seem to be simple questions. In his July 26 *Florida Times-Union* (Jacksonville) article ("I'm not a psychic' says woman whose dream led to slain boy"), [Mark Reynolds relates](#) that, "The records are unclear about exactly when Bachman had the dream. Some parts say it was early Sunday morning, while other sections clearly indicate it occurred the same day Alley's body was discovered [the body was found Monday evening]. Neither Bachman nor Putnam County prosecutor Gary Wood agreed to an interview that would clarify the issue."

The "official" report also includes the transcript of a "911" call placed by Bachman just when the report says the body was found. Excerpts from her side of the call:

I had a dream. . . . We found that dead little boy in Interlachen. He's on Carr Street. Please get the officer or somebody out here. . . . We found, we found the bike and his dead body. [She starts sobbing. The operator tells her to "stop screaming and talk to me."] I'm talking to the fire department. [She then she gives direction to the site, and the operator asks her how she came across the body.] I had a, oh, a dream about it.

[Then the firefighter comes on the line.] I'm with Station 17. . . . We're here . . . on an abandoned lot, it's got a septic tank. . . . [The dispatcher asks whether he's been in the tank.] Yes ma'am, I, just, just enough to open it up, off, I got a smell.

Even if true, the "dream" story doesn't sound particularly suggestive of a psychic-type event. The woman was familiar with the piece of property and its abandoned septic tank, which she knew was used by children as a playhouse. Having a dream of the sort reported would seem perfectly understandable in natural terms.

So why all the apparent secrecy? The "gut" feeling that I got from Whitehouse was that the *real* tip

may have been based upon comments overheard spoken by the alleged 15-year-old perpetrator, about whom, for legal reasons, Whitehouse did not feel at liberty to converse, even peripherally.

At this point, we are left with multiple newspaper headlines indicating that a "dream/premonition" led to the body's discovery, and an official report from the State Attorney's office confirming this account (although containing some conflicting dates). Yet, I can find no first-hand confirmation of that version of events from either of the two firefighters involved: Pellicer seemed to know nothing of it when interviewed by Hutchens, nor did Whitehouse when speaking with me. If I find out more, you'll read it here.

Exploring science on WMNF

by Judith Becker Bryant, Ph.D.

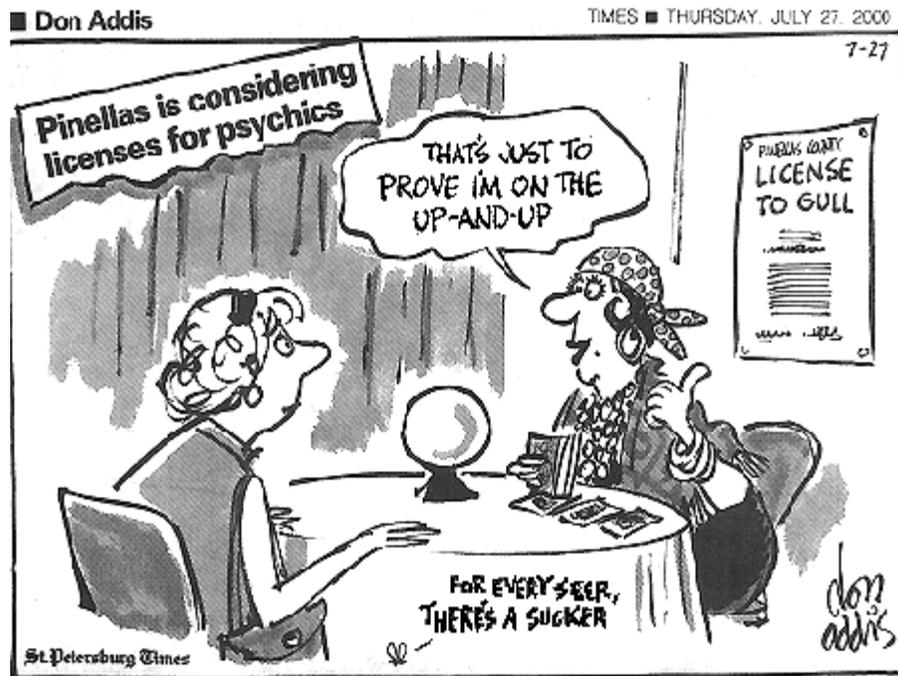
Given the dearth of intelligent reporting about science, readers may be interested in learning about the radio program *Explorations*, which is broadcast locally on WMNF-FM (88.5) on Tuesdays at 11 a.m., and via the internet at www.kpfa.org on Tuesdays at 2 p.m. and www.wbaifree.org on Wednesdays at 7 p.m.

This hour-long program covers the world of science, war and peace, and the environment. The first half is devoted to commentary and interviews with top scientists and environmentalists; the second includes phone calls from listeners. Issues covered range from black holes to nuclear waste disposal, to the human genome project, to science and the movies.

The host of this lively program is Dr. Michio Kaku. According to [the show's website](#), Dr. Kaku, an internationally recognized authority on theoretical physics as well as the environment, is co-founder of string field theory and author of the first paper on conformal supergravity and the breakdown of supersymmetry at high temperatures.

Kaku, who holds the Henry Semat Professorship in Theoretical Physics at the City College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, says his ultimate goal is to help complete Einstein's dream of a "theory of everything" -- a single equation (perhaps no more than an inch long) unifying all the fundamental forces in the universe. His numerous articles and books include *Visions: How Science Will Revolutionize the 21st Century* (1997) and *Strings, Conformal Fields, and M-Theory* (1999).

Snippets



Concerned about the proliferation of fortune-telling businesses in the past several years, John Wood, chief investigator with the Pinellas County Consumer Affairs office, is pushing to require licensing of psychics, astrologers, and the like. In addition to paying a \$100 annual fee, applicants would undergo a criminal background check. Says Wood, "Victims of [fortune tellers] are desperate. They've tried everything else. . . . They see a sign 'Problems Solved' [and] get a cold reading . . . based on trust, and there's a potential for misuse of that trust."

(*St. Pete. Times*, July 25)

"Psychic medium" John Edward will relay messages to you from your deceased loved ones -- for a mere \$250. And he now has his own five-days-a-week TV show, *Crossing Over*, on the Sci-Fi Channel. As expressed so eloquently by television columnist Walt Belcher:

His style is to find willing subjects and then grill them with rapid-fire questions. . . . "Is there a Joey or a Johnny?" he asks. No, but the son's name is Jay. "I just see a 'J' and 'Y'. . . . Shifting subjects, Edward says he is being told to ask about twins. The woman says her sister-in-law is pregnant and wants twins. And so it goes. If the message . . . doesn't ring any bells, he quickly moves on. . . . You would think they'd give him a complete name instead of just a couple of letters. . . . [It's] distressing to see people so desperate . . . that they would be willing to pay [for this].

(*Tampa Tribune*, July 10)

TBS in the Media

[Gary Posner](#) will appear on ABC-TV's upcoming 20/20 report on intercessory prayer. He was also phoned by another 20/20 producer for background information about "psychic detectives." And he was interviewed by phone for background information for a possible article on "psychic detectives" in [Brill's Content magazine](#).

A new series on PAX-TV, *Encounters With the Unknown*, had its debut on August 25. Posner is slated to appear in the episodes on the Power of Prayer, Heaven and Near-Death Experiences, and End-Times Prophecies, and was also asked a few "bonus" questions about the Shroud of Turin (although his answers might not be used in that show).

Posner will also have [a major article on Richard Hoagland](#) (of "Face on Mars" fame) in the Nov./Dec. [Skeptical Inquirer](#), which will contain much information first reported in several 1990-91 issues of *TBS Report*.

Letters to the Editor

Editor: Your "\$1,000 Challenge" [test of Bill Pierce](#) was totally loaded. Even when he beat the odds and did very very well, you attempted to explain it all away. What you don't understand is that Bill is a good-natured guy and simply agreed to the test in a good-natured way. I would say he deserved a fair shake when it came to evaluating his super-good 15 out of 23 results. But then, that wouldn't fit into your narrow view of things, would it? I congratulate Bill on his success in beating this test and proving that he is a very accurate picture dowser. He scored very highly despite your attempt to belittle his success.

--Jim Peterson
jim.a.peterson@ci.sj.ca.us

Editor: I would consider it a successful treasure venture if I recovered a single million-dollar treasure from digging 25 holes. Bill far exceeded that number of locations. Would you be willing to put your money where your mouth is and chance betting against Bill's dowsing ability? Let's say Bill would give the skeptics a gold coin for every one that he missed, and the skeptics would give Bill a gold coin for each one he got correct. On that basis, the skeptics would have clearly lost a bundle in this round. If the rounds continued, my bet would be that the odds would favor Bill's dowsing ability and the skeptics would be the money losers.

--Dell Winders
Omnitron@gate.net

Editor's reply to the above two letters:

Neither of the preceding two critics appears to have a grasp of the math/probabilities involved in our test of Bill, who had only thanks for our interest in testing him. However, we would accept Dell's proposition, with the following changes: We would provide at least 10 Polaroids to Bill (beyond 10, we would be willing to supply as many as he wants). Each would contain 10 plates, only one of which would be hiding a gold coin. For each Polaroid in which he correctly identifies the location of the coin, we would pay him \$100 (or whatever amount he agrees to). For each Polaroid in which he misses the location of the coin, he would pay us half that amount. However, even in the unlikely event that Bill were to "win" more money from us than we from him, this test would not be rigorous enough (in terms of probabilities) for Tampa Bay Skeptics to sanction it as a scientific test of paranormal powers. It would simply constitute a "bet" which Bill would be entitled to say he "won."

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