



Selected articles from
VOL. 19 NO. 2 FALL 2006

Noreen Renier's "FBI" Cases

By [Gary P. Posner](#)

Attorney Nancy Grace's nightly hour-long [program on CNN Headline News](#) devoted its July 1 show (a rerun from May 30, 2005) to the topic of "psychic detectives." One of those featured was [Noreen Renier](#), a long-time Floridian until returning to Virginia in 2004.

During Grace's program, brief clips were shown from Court TV's pro-paranormal [Psychic Detectives](#) series, one of which claimed that "Renier has cracked cases for law enforcement agencies around the country, including the FBI." But though there may be cases about which I am unfamiliar, the following is all I know about Noreen Renier's "FBI" cases.

Prior to his retirement, FBI Supervisory Special Agent Robert Ressler, who has come to be regarded as a "good friend" by Renier (as per the "Acknowledgments" in her book, [A Mind for Murder](#)), had invited her to lecture at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia, on several occasions. It was during one such presentation, about two months before the 1981 assassination attempt on President Reagan, that Renier impressed Ressler with her prediction that Reagan would soon suffer a heart attack and/or something sharper, more like a gunshot to the left chest, and that he would survive. But she then added that Reagan would be assassinated later that fall in a machine gun assault on a parade stand. When Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was killed in that manner, Renier was credited with simply having gotten the presidents mixed up. An even greater mix-up was her prediction, years earlier, that President Jimmy Carter would be reelected in 1980 (defeating Reagan), and that Carter would subsequently be assassinated on the White House lawn. Further, that his vice president, Walter Mondale, would commit suicide. (For more details, see [my chapter](#) about Renier in *Psychic Sleuths* [Prometheus, 1994]).

As for actually working with the FBI on real cases, Ressler testified in a 1986 Renier v. John Merrell deposition that Renier's claim is "not true from the standpoint of being a paid employee and is not true

from the standpoint of her being on a retainer or being used in any regular capacity. She does not work on FBI cases." As to whether the FBI ever uses psychics in its investigations, Ressler added, "In reality, we don't."

According to a 1998 newspaper quote on Renier's website, Ressler did tell a reporter that "the Bureau has used Renier strictly in an academic setting, to expand the thinking of police officers. We have, however, given her name to law enforcement people who want to try a psychic. And some of them have said she's solved cases."

To my knowledge, the closest Renier has actually come to working with the FBI on a case is when, in Ressler's words, "she helped to locate a plane containing the body of a relative of an FBI agent" (from his book, *Whoever Fights Monsters: My Twenty Years Tracking Serial Killers for the FBI*). But, though she did work with the agent's ex-wife, were her "psychic" visions accurate with regard to the location, terrain, or the relative's heroism in carrying a woman from the wreckage just before he died? Though I discuss this case in great detail in my *Psychic Sleuths* chapter, John Merrell has recently interviewed the father and daughter who found the plane, and has discovered a wealth of new information about the crash and recovery that thoroughly debunks Renier's "psychic" visions and her claim to having provided useful clues. [Note: [Merrell's website](#) was revamped in early 2010, and much material removed, in conjunction with an apparent cease-fire with Noreen Renier.] From Merrell's reporting:

Carl Wilber, who [with his daughter Cheryl] found the plane, flatly stated, "She [Renier] hasn't a clue what happened, and how she can go out and say all those things [about finding it]. . . . She's making money on this and including my name [in her book] . . . and I don't like [it]."

. . . [According to the medical examiner the passengers] died instantly -- contrary to Renier's "psychic" vision. . . . [There was] no toothless woman. No abandoned gas station. No mountain. No hill. No dry goods store. No hunting dogs. . . . Cheryl added, "She had the wrong people in the wrong places and doesn't have a clue."

In 1986 deposition testimony, Renier claimed to have worked on two bona fide FBI cases. One was the Atlanta child murder case, in which she read the vibrations from a belt belonging to one of the children. Curiously, she said she was paid about \$350 in cash by an agent/teacher at the FBI Academy whose name she could recall only as "Joe." In the other case, she testified that the family of a missing California child asked the FBI to obtain Renier's assistance, so an agent (unnamed) in Virginia interviewed her; she did not charge for her services on that occasion.

Back to Nancy Grace's TV show: Another guest was Joe Uribe with the Montana Division of Criminal Investigation, who credited Renier with helping nail the killer of a man who had been murdered and stuffed into the trunk of a car which was then pushed over a cliff. The car had been recovered, and "we had a suspect, we had all the elements, but we didn't have enough to quite make the case." In explaining why he sought out Renier's assistance, aside from the glowing references he had received about her, Uribe added, "By a fluke, one night . . . I turned on the TV and I happened to see a television program [featuring Renier] who solved a case about [another] man that was murdered, put in the trunk of a car, and pushed over a cliff. . . . I had to [learn] more about [Renier]."

But I feel certain that Uribe must have been referring to the [Williston, Florida, case](#), which actually

involved an elderly, chronically ill and depressed man who drove his own truck over a cliff into a quarry. And, in this case, the police knew, *before consulting Renier*, that the man had been contemplating suicide in one of the local quarries.

Parade's Dr. Rosenfeld Reprises Dubious Acupuncture Claim

By Gary P. Posner

My Spring 1999 [lead article](#), "Dr. Isadore Rosenfeld's China Acupuncture Story Questioned," detailed the efforts of myself and Dr. Wallace Sampson to make sense of a fantastic claim contained in the August 16, 1998, issue of *Parade* magazine. In that *Parade* article, Rosenfeld presented a photograph that he had taken years earlier in China during "open-heart surgery" on a young female patient who remained "wide awake and smiling" as "the surgeon proceeded to open her chest. Her only 'anesthetic' was an acupuncture needle in her right earlobe that was connected to an electrical source. She never flinched. There was no mask on her face."

Even more improbable than the pain factor was Rosenfeld's photographic confirmation of the absence of an endotracheal tube for artificial ventilation, which would be required to keep the lungs from collapsing if the surgeon had indeed opened the chest. Had Rosenfeld, a cardiologist but not a cardiothoracic surgeon, perhaps been mistaken about the open chest? No, indeed. From his 1996 book, *Dr. Rosenfeld's Guide to Alternative Medicine* (see pages 30-32): "The surgeon . . . cut through the . . . breastbone with an electric buzzsaw [and the woman's] chest was split in two [and] spread apart with a large clamp to expose the heart."

Rosenfeld has reprised his seemingly impossible claim in his July 9, 2006, *Parade* column, "Does Acupuncture Really Work?," though in less detail and without the telltale photo: "In 1978, I was invited to China to witness an open-heart procedure. . . . She remained wide awake and smiling throughout the operation even though the only anesthesia administered was an acupuncture needle placed in her ear."

This second column is particularly dismaying given my correspondence with Rosenfeld (in the aftermath of his first) during which I conveyed my above concerns and more, including the fact that his photo shows the woman's "heart" situated too far left to be within her chest cavity. Rather than taking my comments to heart, he instead referred Dr. Sampson and me to famed cardiac surgeon Michael DeBakey, whom he said would put to rest our "legitimate technical questions about ventilator support." Instead, DeBakey confirmed that the operative approach described by Rosenfeld would likely cause the patient's lungs to collapse.

But although Dr. Rosenfeld continued to insist to us that he had not been the victim of a political-propaganda hoax, I had hoped that within his own heart he might have begun to allow the truth to trickle in. Apparently not.

[This item also appears in the Sept/Oct 2006 [Skeptical Inquirer](#)]

Snippets



Will publisher HarperCollins reassess its recently released *Miami Psychic: Confessions of a Confidante*, co-authored by "clairvoyant" Regina Milbourne and *Miami Herald* reporter Yvonne Carey? To what transgression does Milbourne confess in the book? From the first page: "Because I believe I got the gift directly from God, I felt I had to do something with it. For more than fifteen years, I dedicated my life to helping anyone who needed help. Seduced by the power and the money it brought, I also took my share of the pie." So Milbourne admits to pocketing more cash than a clear conscience should allow. What she neglects to mention, however, is that -- according to this article -- her real name is Gina Marie Marks and she is "part of a notorious Gypsy criminal family who has personally been involved in well-documented fortunetelling scams. . . . [If the] police files in San Mateo County, California . . . are to be believed, Marks is no psychic. She's just an interstate predator." Yet the book remains on sale as if HarperCollins were unaware, just as it seems unaware that the Disney character is actually named "Mickey Mouse" (the book refers to him as "Mutton Mouse").

(*Miami New Times* online, July 13)

Within hours after John Mark Karr made his front-page splash by confessing to the JonBenet Ramsey murder, skepticism abounded in the legal and journalistic communities, for a myriad of reasons. Yet, as this newspaper sub-headline indicated, some officials remained impressed even days later because "the suspect knew details about the death that had been kept private." This is the same reason some police departments give for having been impressed with clues provided by "psychic detectives." So, now that Karr's confession seems to have been fabricated, and since he makes no claim to having obtained his information by "psychic" means, will any lessons be learned about how "psychics" obtain their information? For example, will Court TV reassess its pro-paranormal *Psychic Detectives* series? Somehow I doubt it.

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

"Solar Rotary" Sculpture Dazzles and Inspires

Images and explanations of the USF/Tampa campus' aluminum and concrete "Solar Rotary" sculpture, by artist Nancy Holt, filled the [front page](#) of the Sunday Arts section of the August 6 *St. Petersburg Times*. TBS's [Jack Robinson](#) had more than a small hand in the creation of Tampa's own mini-Stonehenge, as his precise astronomical calculations determined the location of the design's plaques.

Letters to the Editor

Editor: I would like to take your ["\\$1,000 Challenge"](#) test as soon as possible. I have been working with the sick as a healer for 31 years. I have seen and experienced hundreds of incredible miracles. I have 150 testimonial letters, copies of two shows on public television, and copies of radio shows I've done.

It all began in 1975 while I was driving on Long Island, I had a daylight vision of Jesus. When I work with and pray with people, they feel a powerful "energy."

Would it be possible to take the test in the New York area? Possibly Long Island? I am willing to go along with any procedure that you want in order to work with one or more persons. If you would like me to send you "proof" I can mail information to you.

--Robert Tobolson
West Babylon, NY
rtobolson@yahoo.com

Editor's reply: As I explained to Robert in several exchanges, testimonials, no matter how many, will not suffice as scientific evidence or "proof." A person may get the feeling of "energy" when someone is praying with them, but that could be explained by the placebo effect. The "proof" he mailed us included cases such as a woman's knee documented in the medical record as being "much improved" even before the prayer session, and a man's improving PSA level that could have been the result of his medical therapy. To facilitate negotiations, I referred Robert to a "\$1,000 Challenge" protocol on our website as an example, and further suggested that he offer us a proposed protocol in a simple, straightforward manner such as the following, rather than in rambling letters:

<< We could have an orthopedist find us a willing patient with an arm or leg that has been fractured and casted within the past day or two. I will pray and lay on hands, and when new x-rays are taken ___ hours [or days] later, the doctor will certify that the fracture has healed in an impossibly short time and that the patient can resume normal use of that limb. >>

We received no reply to these suggestions.

Editor: In 2000 I did my own psychic test before knowing about these monetary challenges. It involved my ability to communicate by telepathy to millions of people. I asked my following in California and Nevada to open an account at a particular bank by a specific date. The bank later confirmed to me by letter that a large number of new accounts had been opened during that period.

If that does not satisfy your "\$1,000 Challenge," you could supply a normal deck of cards and shuffle it. With my telepathy, I will turn over a card and my assistant in another room will say out loud what card I turned over. We collect the money only if we nail 52 out of 52. You could monitor for electronic or other cheating, and I'm even willing to change into clothing supplied by you.

--Paul Barrier
paulskids@earthlink.net

Editor's reply: I explained to Paul that under properly controlled conditions, if we (not he) were to turn over a card, and then he were to think of that card, and then his assistant in the next room were to call out that card, a mere four times (not 52) in a row (a one-in-6,250,000 feat), that would suffice. But as with the previous correspondent, despite prior exchanges, we never received a reply to this suggestion.

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