



Selected articles from
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The "Martian" Who Came to Brooksville

By [Jack Robinson](#)

UFO reports nowadays aren't nearly as interesting as they used to be. Recent reports are usually just stories of alien abductions -- with no physical evidence that can be used to evaluate them. Much more fun, for example, was the 1965 case of the "Brooksville Martian." Here's the UPI report from the *Tampa Tribune*:

BROOKSVILLE (UPI) -- "It made a whistling noise and went straight up at 5,000 miles an hour or even faster," retired longshoreman John F. Reeves said yesterday in describing a flying saucer he claims to have stumbled onto while on a walk in the woods near here. . . . He said he worked his way to within about 100 feet of the object when [a] robot-type creature appeared and walked toward him, stopping less than 15 feet away. . . .

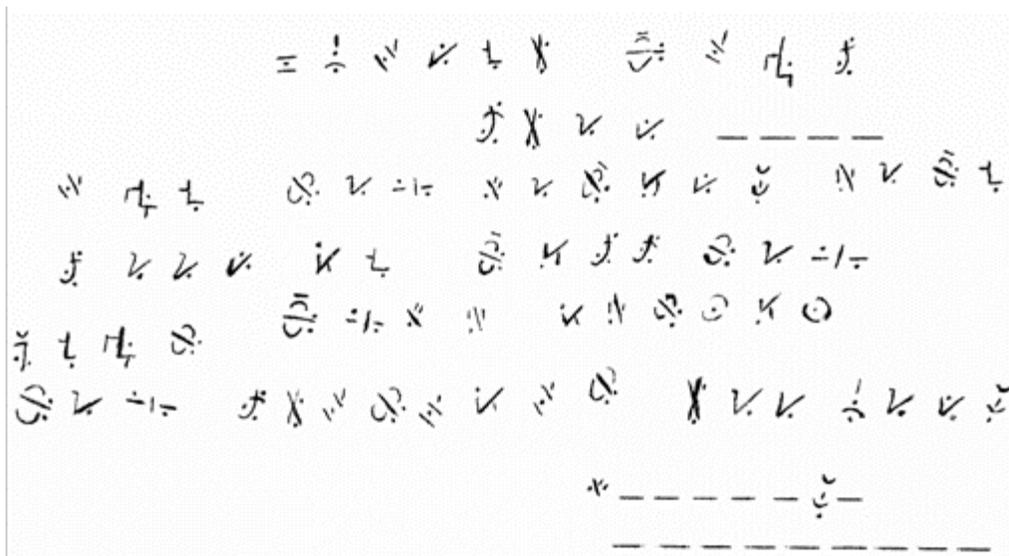
The flying saucer was described as 20 to 30 feet in diameter and six feet high and stood on a four-legged landing gear.

"It was bluish-green and reddish-purple in color with two windows on top," Reeves said.

Reeves said he saw only one robot and it dropped two pieces of cloth-like paper as it headed back to the saucer. Reeves said he retrieved the papers and they had "very queer writing" on them.

A week or so later I got a phone call from someone who introduced himself as "a courier from NICAP," the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena, the country's largest pro-UFO organization at the time. He offered to give me a copy of the writing on one of the two pieces of paper. I jumped at the chance to see physical evidence.

The writing did indeed look strange:



The format looked like that of a telegram. I wanted to know what it said. Could I possibly decipher it? Maybe I could treat it as a simple-substitution cipher -- like the "crypto-quotes" that sometimes appear in newspapers.

Notice the repeated occurrence of a three-character "word" beginning with what looks like some kind of bug (2nd group in the first full line, last group in the next full line, and 1st group in the fourth full line). I guessed this three-character group might represent the word "God"; that didn't work. I guessed other three-letter words without success, until I tried "you" -- and that worked.

Then it was possible to fill in letters y, o, and u where they appeared elsewhere in the message. That enabled me to guess some other words, for example, _oo in the fourth line might be "too." Then I could identify more "t"s elsewhere in the message. And so on. Finally, I had translated almost the entire message:

Planet Mars
 Ston _ _ _ _
 Are you coming home
 soon We miss you
 very much Why did
 you stay away too long
 (?) _ _ _ _ _ g _
 _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Imagine: The Martian language translates letter for letter and word for word into English! And they call their planet by the same name we do! What priceless knowledge we gained by my deciphering of this alien message! Either that, or the whole event was a hoax. Either way, it doesn't say much for the journalistic skills of UPI, or the investigative skills of NICAP.

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER:

Skepticism and Atheism

By [Terry A. Smiljanich](#)

Should skeptics bring religion into the arena of discussion? Richard Dawkins says so with a vengeance in his latest book, [The God Delusion](#). In his usual "no holds barred" approach, Dawkins argues that belief in God is irrational and that the non-existence of God is so much more probable than the existence of God that we would be foolish to spend any time believing in such a concept. We might as well, he argues, spend time wondering about a Flying Spaghetti Monster or Santa Claus. Better to spend our time acknowledging that science and reason inform us about the world while religion only feeds us lies and fables.

As can be imagined, critics have come out in droves castigating Dawkins for what they see as his strident and condescending anti-religious screed. Many take issue with his blanket condemnation of religion as giving rise, he argues, to most of the evil in the world. Critics argue that his "fundamentalist" brand of atheism is as bad as his opposite number. (For a complete rundown of these reviews and an excellent discussion of them, visit the always informative [EVOLUTIONBLOG](#), run by math professor Jason Rosenhouse.)

I am not qualified to discuss the fine points of the arguments one way or the other, due in no small part to my own admittedly muddled views on the subject: Am I a deist? An agnostic theist? An agnostic atheist? What I find interesting, however, is the tendency of many skeptics to put up a wall between skepticism and religion when dealing with the public. We often proclaim that we are not in the business of being skeptical of purely religious claims, or putting such claims to the test: Do we have a soul? Are there three persons in one God?

Where we draw the line is in refusing to allow supernatural claims, absent definitive proof, to interfere with the workings of the universe, given the ability of science and reason to explain those workings or at least point the way. Whether heaven or hell exists is not subject to "proof," but whether prayer can cure disease is.

This separation between skepticism and atheism also allows us to include in our membership people who continue to have religious persuasions about purely religious claims, and allows us to distinguish ourselves from the broader secular humanist community that takes a more atheistic approach to these questions.

There is also, admittedly, a public relations motive at work. "Atheism" is one of the few words in the English language that has almost universal negative connotations, giving rise to subconscious fears of goat-horned satyrs with devilish designs. The word simply means one who is without a belief in a God demanding worship, but tell that to the public!

There are, of course, various degrees of "atheism," from strident fundamentalism to fuzzy agnosticism, further adding to the problem. That is why it is impossible for someone like me to give a simple answer to the frequent question, "Do you believe in God or not?" Honestly, I don't know what the questioner even means by "God." If he means the anthropomorphic God of creation who reckons the fall of every sparrow, then I can emphatically say "no." If, however, he means the numinous awe

at the sublime and marvelous order revealing itself in nature, which Einstein called "God," I'm not sure I could give such an emphatic "no." One thing I know I'm not, however, is an apathetic agnostic ("I don't know and I don't care"). We will never have definitive answers to these questions, but I find the constant search to be immeasurably rewarding.

Snippets



[Research](#) by Swiss neurologist Olaf Blanke, as published in the September 21 issue of *Nature*, confirms that so-called "out-of-body" experiences are actually in-the-brain events. The sensation of leaving one's body, floating above it, and looking down upon oneself, is the result of stimulation of the brain's right angular gyrus. Blanke also found that stimulating the left angular gyrus recreates another alleged paranormal experience -- that of sensing a shadowy figure lurking behind. Turns out the unwelcome stranger is merely a perceived double of oneself.

(*N.Y. Times* via *St. Pete. Times*, Oct. 8)

An announcement in the *Miami Herald*:

"South Florida is getting its own version of the hit series *Cold Case*. This month, WSBS-TV Mega 22 is launching *Xpediente*, a crime magazine show. Journalist Allan Villafaña will explore some of the area's most interesting, unsolved cases through re-enactment of crime scenes and investigation of evidence in cooperation with local police departments and federal officers. Cases will include serial killers and those involving santería and psychic premonitions. The show airs Wednesdays at 9 p.m."

(*Miami Herald*, Oct. 23)

Perhaps Sally Baldwin can be of some assistance to that show by reuniting grieving loved ones with their dearly departed. "It's an essence, an energy flow," says the Lauderdale-by-the-Sea resident about

the messages she receives from the dead, which "pass through me and come out in spoken words." According to this article, "Thanks to the popularity of psychics and best-selling authors Allison DuBois and John Edward, channeling has spread beyond a cult curiosity." It is, presumably, now an accepted reality -- at least to most people, such as those who attend her monthly public "channelings" or her private sessions. But [James "The Amazing" Randi](#) remains skeptical: "While the evidence [purporting to prove psychic ability] is copious, it's all very bad. Bad evidence doesn't hold water. A small amount of good evidence would prove the case."

(*South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, Oct. 9)

Miles Hardy resigns, citing health issues

Prof. Miles Hardy, a member of the Executive Council and Board of Directors since TBS's inception in 1988, has tendered his resignation, citing age-related health issues.

A favorite [TV guest](#) of Kathy Fountain's, Miles played an integral role in TBS's achieving instant credibility with the media and the public at large.

Replacing Miles on the Board will be Prof. [Jack Robinson](#), and Prof. [Bill Hall](#) will do so on the Executive Council.

Miles assures us that, "Although I am resigning my official duties, I will remain a loyal supporter and member of TBS. We had some great times, didn't we"? Indeed. And we all wish Miles the very best.

Merrell v. Renier Update

On November 16, the U.S. District Court judge in John Merrell v. Noreen Renier (see our [Spring](#) and [Summer](#) 2006 issues) ruled that Renier breached her 1992 Settlement Agreement with Merrell by including two chapters in [A Mind for Murder](#) that "accuse Mr. Merrell of lying and maliciously attempting to destroy Ms. Renier's career." At press time, it appears that Renier's Nov. 27 "Request for Partial Reconsideration" has been denied, and Merrell is entitled to recover his \$45,000+ in attorney's fees, as well as pursue an additional damages award via binding arbitration or, if necessary, a jury trial.

TBS in the Media

TBS was the focus of a Friday the 13th (of October) article "[Nothing to Fear?](#)" in the *St. Petersburg*

Times' "City Times" section. Terry Smiljanich, our chairperson since 1989, was quoted extensively.

Gary Posner was quoted (with photo) in the Charlottesville, Va., free weekly newspaper *The Hook* in [an article](#) about Noreen Renier (and be sure to see the ["Discussion" section](#) at the end). He was also quoted in an Oct. 1 *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* article, "Divining Guidance," as in divining or dowsing for water, mineral deposits, or even missing persons. The 15-year-old Manasota Dowzers Club was the featured subject of this piece.

Letters to the Editor

Editor: Hooray! Got hold of the Fall 2006 TBS Report and enjoyed reading some common sense for a change. I am a [James "The Amazing" Randi](#) fan and enjoy seeing common myths debunked (ESP, UFOs, Tarot cards, palm reading, etc.). Glad to see there are some smart people who agree with me.

--[Peter Bernard](#), Reporter
WFLA-TV 8
pbernard@wfla.com

Editor: I'd like to take TBS's "\$1,000 Challenge"! I am willing to be tested as soon as possible, and will come to you. I already sent a notarized application to the [James Randi Educational Foundation](#) for its million-dollar challenge, but I haven't received any word on its status.

I will be blunt: I have the ability to cure scoliosis using energy healing. In severe cases, it might take a few sessions. In minor cases -- as I have done before -- the curve completely disappeared in under an hour. It will be seen that I do not manipulate the spine into correct alignment via force, as in chiropractic spinal manipulation.

A noticeable reduction in the degree of lateral curvature will constitute a positive result. For purposes of exact measurement, I propose that a qualified independent observer measure the spine before and after using the standard Cobb angle. I can go chase down the people whose spines were straightened, some completely, as a direct result of my treatment. But I would prefer to prove myself via a scientific test. Please let me know what you need from me before agreeing to set one up.

--Christopher Pille
christopher.pille@gmail.com

Edited from my e-mail replies to Christopher: "As you know, spinal curvature can vary somewhat depending upon the person's conscious (or subconscious) efforts to stand straighter. The test must be designed such that the results are so self-evident that no judge is required [I referred him to online examples of TBS's previous '[\\$1,000 Challenge' protocols](#)]. Before we would consider trying to set up a test, I would like to see medical records (photocopies from an M.D.'s office chart) documenting that a patient with 'severe scoliosis' of long standing was 'cured' after several sessions with an 'energy healer' (i.e., you)." Despite our prior exchanges, I never received a

reply to this request. —G.P.

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