



Tampa Bay
Skeptics

REPORT

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A Mind for Murdergate

“Psychic clues” audaciously altered in new edition of Renier memoir

By Gary P. Posner

In the opening paragraph of my Summer 2005 review of “psychic detective” Noreen Renier’s memoir, *A Mind for Murder* (published in paperback by Berkley Books, a division of Penguin), I complimented the book as “an entertaining adventure ... and the writing isn’t half-bad.” I then added, “But are the author’s ‘psychic’ claims even half-true?” Much of the remainder of the review offered my reasons for being highly skeptical of the book’s veracity.

Reissued earlier this year by a new publisher, at first glance this “Expanded, Revised, and Updated Edition” appears essentially the same as the original, save for a larger format and two chapters being replaced with two new ones (on the Laci Peterson case and another in Montana). However, closer inspection reveals a number of small changes, including one so audacious as to defy any imaginable innocent explanation.

The two jettisoned chapters focused upon Renier’s legal battles with skeptic John Merrell, which *TBS Report* has chronicled extensively over the past two decades. As we reported in Summer 2007, these chapters, which accused Merrell of such misconduct as lying in court, violated Renier’s 1992 settlement agreement with Merrell and prompted Berkley/Penguin (which Merrell had initially sued along with Renier and her co-author and editor) to withdraw the book. Per that 1992 agreement, neither Renier nor Merrell was permitted to again publicly disparage the other.

Resurrected this past April by Hampton Roads Publishing of Charlottesville, Virginia (Renier’s hometown, to which she returned in 2004 after residing for nearly two decades in Florida), the cover contains a new tagline proclaiming Renier as “Court TV’s Psychic Detective,” which she certainly had been until the first of this year, when Court TV revamped itself into truTV and *Psychic Detectives* vanished from its website’s program

listings (the series reemerged recently with new episodes and time will tell if Renier remains a featured attraction).

Mysteriously missing from the new cover is the name of Renier’s co-author, Naomi Lucks, which had originally been nearly as prominent as Renier’s! I suspect that Lucks’ professional craftsmanship is largely responsible for the book’s redeeming stylistic flair. The “Acknowledgments” also no longer mention Lucks, or the authors’ original editor. The book is nothing close to a rewrite, so why would they no longer merit Renier’s appreciation? A much more likely explanation is that, having been kept in the dark by Renier about her binding agreement not to trash Merrell in print and thus blindsided by his lawsuit, they wished to have nothing more to do with the book.

But unexpurgated from the “Acknowledgments” is a brief paragraph, no doubt confounding to most readers, thanking “my attorney ... who tried my [1986] libel case against the skeptic,” even though no mention remains anywhere else in the book about the case or the skeptic (Merrell). It is with mixed feelings that I realized that Renier’s critical mention of yours truly had also been in one of the two purged chapters.

This new edition presented Renier with an opportunity to correct any known factual errors that had inadvertently found their way into the first printing. For example, in Chapter 9, the man in Houston went missing not in 1996, as the book indicated, but 1998. Renier has even posted a relevant June 8, 1999, *Houston Chronicle* article on her website, pinpointing his disappearance to the previous November. And in her chapter on the 1994 Williston, Florida, case (see Fall 1996, Winter ’96-97, Summer ’97), she dated that disappearance to “April” rather than March 24. I had pointed out both errors in my review (with which Renier was familiar), yet they remain uncorrected.

Numerous other corrections — or at least changes — have been made throughout the book. A few examples: an instance of “psychologist” was changed to “parapsychologist,” “Cindy” (a murder victim) to “Sally,” “Burrville” Police Department to “Hampton,” “Dennis” (a police sketch artist) to “Mike.”

(continued on page 5)

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

Tampa Bay Skeptics, Inc., a Special Interest Group of the Center For Inquiry/Tampa, 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.

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 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 points of view.

Views expressed in articles and letters are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of Tampa Bay Skeptics or Center For Inquiry/Tampa.

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C h a i r m a n ' s o r n e r

Astronauts, UFOs, and Logic

By Terry A. Smiljanich

Edgar Mitchell, one of only twelve humans to walk on the moon, recently proclaimed that he has "been privileged enough to be in on the fact that we've been visited on this planet and the UFO phenomenon is real." According to Mitchell, aliens have made contact with us several times, and governments have been covering this up for over 60 years (i.e., since the modern era of flying saucer reports began). His comments made the news in July. Hey, he's an astronaut, so he ought to know, right?

Mitchell's observations provide a good opportunity to explore a common logical fallacy — the "appeal to authority." This is the mistaken assumption that: 1) if someone claims to be an authority on a subject, and 2) if the "authority" makes a claim about that subject, then 3) the claim must be true. Astronaut Mitchell is an authority on space, and "the UFO phenomenon" is about space. Mitchell is also a former government employee, and UFOs could be a government secret. Add all of this up and one can conclude that UFOs are really piloted by aliens, and governments are keeping this a secret.

That makes perfect sense, doesn't it? Emphatically not, and for several reasons. Let's take this assumption apart and look at it.

Is former astronaut Mitchell an expert on extraterrestrial matters? Well, he walked on the moon in 1971. And, with degrees in industrial management and astronautics, and a career as a Navy pilot, Mitchell was chosen by NASA and trained to handle complicated vehicles that took us to the moon and back. He is certainly a brave and privileged man to have been a part of this endeavor.

But does any of that make him an expert on whether reports of flying saucers are based on atmospheric phenomena, misperceptions, or downright hoaxes? Of course not. Does being a mid-level employee of NASA make him an expert on what the "government" does or does not know? Of course not. So his supposed "authority" to speak on the subject is highly questionable.

Mitchell has been a believer in the paranormal for some time. He claims that an undiagnosed kidney cancer he once had was cured remotely by a Vancouver psychic named "Adam Dreamhealer." He attempted psychic experiments while on the moon, much to the later embarrassment of his commander, Alan Shepard. He endorsed Uri Geller and his spoon-bending powers. He formed the "Institute of Noetic Sciences," which explores such things as life after death, "biofields," and psychic healing. He believes that the government recovered alien bodies at Roswell, and that aliens have shared engineering secrets with our military, all known to a "cabal" of insiders within our government — think of the thousands of people keeping the biggest secret in history!

Is there anything Mr. Mitchell *doesn't* believe in? Can you imagine a head filled with more "woo-woo" than Mitchell's? This is the "authority" that supposedly lends credence to a belief that flying saucers are visitors from another planet? No, thanks. If I'm looking for an authority on this subject, I'll turn to someone with appropriate credentials. And even then, authority itself doesn't constitute evidence. Only credible empirical evidence will suffice. "Elementary, Mr. Watson."

James Randi Educational Foundation Announces New President

The following is excerpted/edited from JREF's Press Release dated August 4:

The James Randi Educational Foundation is pleased to announce that Dr. Philip Plait — renowned astronomer, author, and skeptic — will be taking on the role of President of the JREF effective immediately.

“Phil’s ideas and vigor will take the JREF very far indeed, and we’re pleased and proud to have him take the reins,” said founder and outgoing president James “The Amazing” Randi. “I will now be dedicating much of my time to completing my next two books, *Wrong!* and *A Magician in the Laboratory*.

Dr. Plait has a long affiliation with the JREF. He has been a speaker at all of The Amazing Meetings — a JREF-sponsored annual conference series and the largest gathering of critical thinkers in the world — and over the years has provided valuable advice and support for the JREF in scientific and other matters.

Before joining the JREF, Dr. Plait spent ten years performing scientific research using the Hubble Space Telescope. It was at this time that he created the Bad Astronomy website, where he critically (and humorously) analyzes various astronomical myths and misconceptions. His debunking of the Moon Hoax (i.e., that NASA faked the Apollo moon landings) became an Internet favorite, bringing in tens of millions of views.

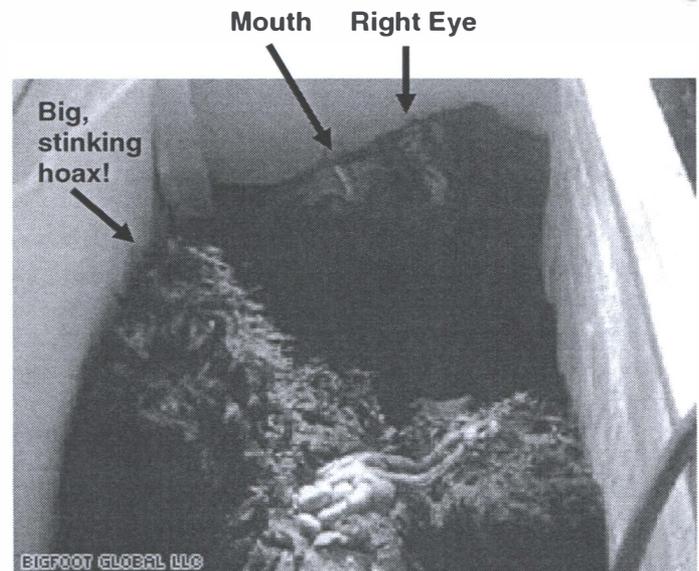
His award-winning Bad Astronomy Blog is one of the largest and most popular scientific blogs in the world. In July 2008 it was acquired by *Discover Magazine*, where his audience continues to grow. Plait is an internationally sought-after lecturer and has given numerous interviews on national TV, radio, and podcasts. He has written two popular-level science books, *Bad Astronomy* and the upcoming *Death from the Skies!* which deals with cosmic catastrophes..

Plait attributes his stature in the skeptical community to James Randi. “When I was young, I believed in all sorts of antiscientific silliness like the Bermuda Triangle, astral projection, and the like. But then I saw Randi on television masterfully and literally dissecting “psychic surgery,” and he opened my eyes — and my brain — to the idea that reality is a better place to live in than fantasy. I owe it all to Randi, so I am very excited and deeply honored to continue his vision with the JREF.”

With Dr. Plait at the helm, the JREF will be expanding its efforts, including educating children. “I want to teach kids about the wonders of the real universe. We can do this by partnering with the educational community and developing fun, hands-on materials that schoolchildren can use in the classroom to teach them about critical thinking and the scientific method. Science is sometimes taught as being cold and dull, but nothing could be more wrong! It’s exciting, it’s fun, and it’s cool. Kids are natural scientists, and we need to encourage that, foster it, and let it grow.”

• • • • •

Bigfoot Found?



The frozen specimen appeared to have a big head. And big feet. But was this “Bigfoot”? It was, according to the initial claims of police officer Matthew Whitton and former prison guard Rick Dyer, both Bigfoot hobbyists in north Georgia, who said they found the dead 7' 7" ape-man in a wooded area and that they had observed other such live creatures lurking nearby.

The discovery, publicized on CNN and elsewhere, turned out to be just another big, stinking hoax! Within days, rather than the confirmatory lab tests that were promised, thawing of the frozen “carcass” revealed a smelly rubber suit. And officer Whitton was fired.

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Snippets

Using divining rods and other time-tested tools of the trade, representatives from Tampa Ghost Watchers recently did some spirit-sleuthing at Dave's Aqua Lounge, where liquor bottles seem to mysteriously turn themselves around and the long-deceased prowl the premises. Member Mike Burton, brass dowsing rods dancing in hand, detected the spirit of "Margie," who tended bar there some 15 years ago before succumbing to cancer. "She looked pretty good for an elderly dead lady," said Burton. Pat Linse, co-founder (with Michael Shermer) of the Skeptics Society, explained how the ideomotor effect accounts for the movement of dowsing rods in the absence of perceptible hand motions. But she didn't explain how Margie could still look so fine.

(*St. Pete. Times, July 27*)



In speaking to the press about the genetic modification of crops, Britain's Prince Charles accused these multinational agro-companies of conducting a "gigantic experiment, I think, with nature and the whole of humanity, which has [already] gone seriously wrong. Why else are we facing all these challenges, climate change and everything?" Uh, I think a few other reasons have been posited. Maybe he was quoted out of context (though not by me).

(*London Telegraph website, Aug. 12*)

Wouldn't it be great if we could dispense with fossil fuels, nuclear power plants, and even windmills and solar panels, and create nuclear fusion — the process that powers the sun — in a beaker on our desks? That's pretty much what Rusi Taleyarkhan, in his headline-making 2002 research paper, claimed to have accomplished. Unlike the earlier, and largely discredited, "cold fusion" claims of Martin Fleischman and Stanley Pons, which they had announced at a press conference rather than in a scholarly article, Taleyarkhan published his startling findings in the peer-reviewed journal *Science*. But his claims are now in serious doubt as well. A Purdue

University panel has found that in his follow-up paper published in *Physical Review Letters*, he falsely claimed that his 2002 work had been independently replicated, when in reality he had been extensively involved in those replication efforts.

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

Moving on from alternative energy to alternative medicine: You may have heard that fugitive Radovan Karadzic, the 1990s Bosnian Serb leader accused of masterminding the "ethnic cleansing" of tens of thousands, was recently apprehended. An American-trained psychiatrist, he had been hiding out in plain view, having donned glasses, a new hairstyle, and a Randi-like beard. But in lieu of committing mass murder, what had he been doing lately for a living? Practicing "human quantum energy" healing, running a related website, lecturing on alternative medicine, and contributing articles to the Serbian alt-med magazine *Healthy Life*. If he has a good attorney, his defense might be that the "ethnic cleansing" he ordered was simply a form of alternative medicine that had a few untoward side effects.

(*A.P. via St. Pete. Times, July 23*)

Comparing apples to oranges, we come to the case of Gary McKinnon. His alleged crimes were confined to hacking into nearly 100 Army, Navy, Air Force, Defense Department, and NASA computers from his home in London, causing almost \$1-million in damage. His reason? A search for secret information on UFOs. Now that he has lost his appeal against extradition to the U.S., if *he* has a good attorney, *his* defense might be that he was simply performing a form of alternative computer programming.

(*St. Pete. Times, July 31*)

And if UFOs turn out to be real, rest reassured by the Vatican's chief astronomer that there need be no conflict between belief in alien visitations and religious faith. As the Rev. Jose Gabriel Funes explained, "How can we rule out that life may have developed elsewhere? Just as we consider earthly creatures as a 'brother' and 'sister,' why should we not talk about an 'extraterrestrial brother'?" It would still be part of creation." He then opined that the Bible is "not a science book" and that the Big Bang is the most "reasonable" explanation for the universe's creation, though by God's hand.

(*A.P. via St. Pete. Times, May 14*)

"Snippets" are derived from the referenced sources and then rewritten by *TBS Report's* editor. Please submit your clippings to TBS.

“A Mind for Murdergate” (from page 1)

But then there's the one “correction” that stands out among all others — at least to the handful of people who know the case intimately and have compared the two accounts microscopically. In his historic series of interviews with a disgraced American ex-president, David Frost cajoled Richard Nixon into acknowledging, with regard to the ammunition that his Watergate-related conduct (including the doctoring of transcripts) had provided his detractors, “I gave them a sword, and they stuck it in and they twisted it with relish.” Chapter 16 of Noreen Renier's reissued memoir contains such a sword.

That chapter discusses the case of a small airplane that had gone missing in northern Massachusetts in January 1984. One of the four passengers, Arthur Herbert, was the brother of the ex-wife of an FBI agent, and both his sister and the agent offered sworn testimony on Renier's behalf in her 1986 libel trial against John Merrell, crediting Renier with having provided clues instrumental in locating the wreckage, though the brother was found dead along with the others.

In Chapter 16, on page 146 of the new edition, while reciting the series of clues that she had offered the then-missing man's sister, Renier says (spelling, punctuation and ellipses are verbatim):

I saw two sets of numbers. Breathlessly, I repeated them to my client [Arthur Herbert's sister, Jessica]. I could feel they were important.

Now letters came into my head. “I see three letters,” I said. “G, T, and O ... they are significant ... they could be initials of towns ... they definitely have something to do with the location of the missing airplane.”

Two pages later, in discussing the aftermath:

[T]he numbers I had given Jessica turned out to be longitude and latitude of the downed plane. And the letters? They were the initial letters of the names of two towns, Gardner and Templeton, whose outskirts connected in the area marked by the longitude and latitude. The “O” turned out to be the first letter of the name of the river that runs right next to the crash site.

Renier then goes on to say that the wreckage was ultimately located by Carl and Cheryl Wilber, a father and daughter who were following deer tracks through the snowy, dense woods. She further described the nature of

the terrain as rocky with “towering hills” and “big gorges.” Renier says that the Wilbers “couldn't help notice the [search] planes that had been circling overhead,” implying that her numerical and alphabetical clues had pinpointed a precise tract in the Gardner-Templeton area, along a particular river, resulting in the Wilbers' decision to search there.

No wonder Renier enjoys a reputation, perhaps second only to Sylvia Browne's, as a world-renowned “psychic detective.” But, in the laundry list of problems associated with Renier's telling of the story, buried among the dirty linen is the Nixonesque sword. From page 188 of the *first edition's* Chapter 16 (punctuation and ellipses are again verbatim):

Now letters came into my head. “I see three letters,” I said. “H, D, and A ... They are significant ... They could be initials of towns ... They definitely have something to do with the location of the missing airplane.”

And what towns and/or river did *those* clues — presumably the *actual* ones she had provided — point towards? Renier didn't specify, saying simply, “They were the initial letters of the names of three towns whose outskirts all connected in the area marked by the longitude and latitude.” Not three towns associated with *this* crash! But John Merrell has an idea as to where “H, D, and A” may have come from — he suspects Renier may have made the same “non-psychic” mistake I did!

When presenting this case in my chapter on Renier in *Psychic Sleuths* (Prometheus Books, 1994), one of the news clippings that I referenced (about an onboard “fire”) actually pertained to *one of two other small-plane crashes* that had occurred within a 30-mile radius in the same general time frame as the “G, T, and O” crash. As Merrell explains on his website devoted to the book (www.amindformurder.com), “If one examines a map of the area you can draw a virtually straight line from east to west from Hubbardston to Dana Center to Amherst for the Barre crash. ... And for the crash near the Monadnock area there is the Ashuelot River, Dublin and Hadley.” He also notes that, unlike *this* case's crash site, “Both of [the others] were near mountainous terrain, rock slabs, and gorges,” matching Renier's description.

Even if her clues actually *had* been “G, T, and O,” would they have mattered? As reported in the press, the troubled plane had been witnessed to have gone down about a half mile from the Gardner airport nearly two weeks earlier and the Wilbers had set out in that direction for that reason alone. They never saw any circling search planes, and only in 2006, when Merrell tracked them down for an interview, did the pair first hear of Renier and her claims. Upon reading her version of events

Tampa Bay Skeptics T-Shirts

TBST-shirts (S, M, L, XXL and XXXL) are available from the CFI/Tampa office. 100% cotton, black, crew style, no pocket, with TBS name/logo in white across the chest.

The shirts are \$10 each (plus \$4 total per order if shipping is required). Make check payable to “Tampa Bay Skeptics.”

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And check out the TBS website's
full page of "Resource Links"

"Murdergate" (from page 5)

(including her "psychic" visions of various nearby landmarks, the rocky, gorge-filled terrain with "towering hills," the Wilbers' reason for searching where they did, etc.), Carl Wilber told Merrell, "I don't think she got *anything* right." Said Cheryl, "It makes me feel terrible that somebody took advantage of the situation. ... She made up a lot of stuff."

Here's something else that Renier had made up — though Jessica Herbert believed it (or at least pretended to) when she offered the following at deposition in advance of the libel trial: "Noreen said that [my brother] had survived, the girl had survived ... and that he had taken her out of the plane, set her in a safe place and gone for help. [She also] described how he had tried to get down the side of the big hill and sat down because of the broken leg." According to Merrell, in conjunction with Renier's own dramatic courtroom testimony, Herbert's rendition of this selfless act of heroism, when read into evidence during the trial, brought two of the jurors to tears. Yet the scenario is sheer fantasy. The NTSB had determined that all four occupants died immediately upon impact, and the woman's decapitated body couldn't even be removed until the mangled metal was cut apart.

There had already been myriad reasons, as I and other critics have extensively documented, for taking such "psychic" claims with a gargantuan grain of salt. But the newly revealed Watergate-worthy doctoring of "H, D, and A" to "G, T, and O" in this case — one of the most famous and vouched for in Noreen Renier's storied career — should resign her to the fact that she has handed the world a sword, and that her credibility has now been unequivocally and forever-

more impeached. Anyone care for relish?

A version of this article is slated to appear in the Nov/Dec issue of Skeptical Inquirer.

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TBS Community and Media Appearances

On July 22, Chairman Terry Smiljanich was the invited speaker at a meeting of the Kiwanis Club of St. Petersburg. An audience of about forty members heard Terry speak about the mission and history of TBS, and about the importance of critical thinking. The guests were especially interested in stories of the various attempts to collect TBS's "\$1,000 Challenge." Some questions were directed to tales of freaky coincidences in which members of the audience or their families had premonitions that came true or "psychic" predictions that became reality. Terry explained that these rare instances may have just been that — coincidences — and that it is human nature to remember the times predictions come true and forget the many times that they do not.

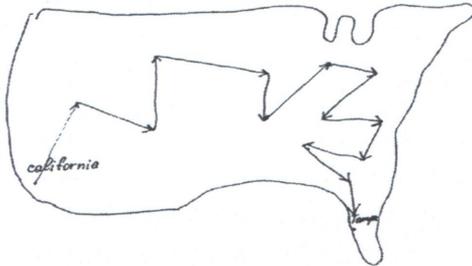
And on the following day, Gary Posner was one of Kathy Fountain's two guests on *Your Turn* (Ch. 13). The topic was faith healing, with special attention to tattooed Canadian Todd Bentley's raucous Lakeland crusade, which was drawing faithful and media from all over the world. Posner emphasized the difference between a claim/anecdote and the evidence required to substantiate it, and read from a recent Associated Press article about how the reporter had been unable to verify any of the healings from a list of 15 "cured" people that Bentley's ministry had distributed to the press.

Letters • Readers' Forum

This curious handwritten letter (verbatim), accompanied by his passport photo, was recently received from Igor Simchanko, who lives in the former Soviet republic of Belarus and once failed a TBS "\$1,000 Challenge" (see Spring 2006) involving Florida Lotto numbers:

Give let us try one additional attempt of the set of experiments. I will use your old box for the connection with you. Let us begin California approaching Florida gradually. Sketch to me communications to my boxes, this will be signal for the beginning of my attempts. In the case of negative answer from you, I leave after itself the right to experiment into the unmarried.

The flip side of his letter contained this diagram:



We have no clue as to what Simchanko has in mind, and did not reply. His "experiment into the unmarried" will have to proceed without us. —G.P.

Editor: I was reading your articles on psychic mediums James Van Praagh and George Anderson. I agree with Anderson (Summer 2006) that it is healthy to be a skeptic. But I really feel sorry for people like you who don't seem to have any belief at all that psychic communication is possible, including with the dead.

I have been psychic all of my life and am now learning how to give readings in my spare time, besides working as a self-employed paralegal. I have proven to people through e-mail readings that telepathic communication and life after death are real.

I am skeptical too, at times. I won't mention names,

but I am very disappointed in a certain psychic who is often on TV. This person does not seem like a genuine psychic and gets very important information wrong, and people like this give psychics a bad name.

Humans are much more than mortal beings — we are spiritual beings. The way I understand it is that we live in Mind. We are all connected. Once you can grasp and understand this, you begin to be aware of a higher level of consciousness and start to have mystical/psychic experiences that help you to believe even more.

Everything is actually psychic, since there is no such thing as solid matter — even Einstein proved this. All that exists is a form of energy. I believe we are all psychic, but some people block it out with their belief that it is unreal.

Sara Mitchell

sara@authorsaramitchell.com

Our reply (in part): "We'd be happy to test you in a manner that could conceivably prove your psychic communications to be genuine rather than imaginary. For example, if you can truly communicate with a dead relative of a person whose relatives' names are unknown to you, the dead relative ought to be able to tell you his/her name and relationship to the person. So far, no psychic has ever been able to come up with that information, which should be infinitely simpler than doing a full reading." Her reply to us (in part):

I can only give the information that comes to me. Names are very difficult, but sometimes they come spontaneously. I am not sure about your testing, and I may think about that, but being tested by total skeptics who don't understand the science of Mind may not be the best way to go here. I want you to know that I can really sense your feeling of reality, and I respect it. I am just trying to open your mind here. I have nothing to gain except possibly the satisfaction that someone will wake up and realize that there is really something going on here that before they believed was impossible.

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Announcing . . .
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Press and
 Public
 Welcome

Last Saturday of every March, June, September,
 and December (barring special circumstances)

Our next meeting will be:

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

11:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.

**TBS HOME OFFICE (AT CFI/TAMPA)
 BRIDGEPORT CENTER BUILDING**

**5201 W. KENNEDY BLVD., SUITE 124, TAMPA
 (Next building westward from West Shore Plaza)**

Including: Open Forum, video from Virginia Levy's
 "1,000 Challenge" (see below), plus other fun stuff

Followed by optional lunch at a local restaurant

**Major St. Petersburg Times article on TBS
 prints malicious lies by demented "psychic"**

A prominent profile of TBS in the "City Times" section of the August 8 *St. Petersburg Times* includes a series of malicious accusations against Gary Posner by unsuccessful "\$1,000 Challenge" aspirant Virginia Levy (see Winter 1998-99). Posner had explained to reporter Emily Nipps that Levy had lied to her, but Nipps' journalistic effort omitted any mention that Levy's charges had been disputed by Posner.

Though TBS's documentary video shows Levy trying hard to win and having fun throughout, she told Nipps that Posner had treated her so appallingly that she purposely lost and left in a huff. In actuality, she hung around for an additional hour, doing a reading (from a newspaper photo and roadmap) in an effort to locate little Amanda Brown, who had gone missing just days earlier. Her predictions about that case turned out as off-base as her Challenge performance.

In the article, Levy calls the Challenge a "mockery" and a "scam." In truth — a commodity now foreign to her — she had called it fair and had praised Posner's professionalism. See www.tampabayskeptics.org/Virginia_chall_result.html for the full story, including links to the article and video.

Visit TBS's Award-Winning Website

www.tampabayskeptics.org

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.

And send us your e-mail address if you would like to be added to our **TBS Update Service**.

TBS and James Randi "Psychic" Challenges

Tampa Bay Skeptics has a standing "\$1,000 Challenge" for scientific proof of any paranormal phenomenon.

The James Randi Educational Foundation will award its fully secured \$1,000,000 jackpot to the first person able to successfully demonstrate paranormal power for Randi.

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 website or contact us for more details.

Center For Inquiry / Tampa

As the opening paragraph of its website explains, Center for Inquiry/Tampa (of which Tampa Bay Skeptics is a Special Interest Group) offers an opportunity to put your principles into practice by joining other rationalists in working for positive change in society. CFI/Tampa sponsors social events for freethinkers as well as intellectual programming, and assists with campus outreach.

One ongoing event, the lecture series on the third Saturday of each month at 11:00 a.m., often covers topics that may be of particular interest to TBS members.

For more information on upcoming CFI/Tampa events, visit their website (www.CenterForInquiry.net/Tampa) or contact them by mail (5201 W. Kennedy Blvd., Suite 124, Tampa, FL 33609), e-mail (Tampa@CenterForInquiry.net), phone (813-849-7571), or fax (813-849-7572).



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