



REPORT

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• **skeptic (n): a person who searches for truth through questioning and reasoning** •

Bankrupt legal processes poison Noreen Renier bankruptcy ruling

By Gary P. Posner

A Dickens character once opined, “If the law supposes that, the law is a ass.” To which I would add, “If bankruptcy law allows this travesty, bankruptcy law is bankrupt.” And, for good measure, “Justice can sometimes be not only blind, but deaf and just plain dumb.”

A series of disturbing events has marred what a federal bankruptcy judge in Virginia intended to be the final chapter in the quarter-century-long legal wranglings between “psychic detective” Noreen Renier, a former longtime Florida resident, and skeptic John Merrell, who co-founded the Northwest Skeptics in 1982. Among them: A blind eye was turned to evidence offered by Merrell, a crucial subpoena was refused and returned unread, and the judge’s June 21 final order refers repeatedly to an “agreement” that was never reached between the parties.

To hopefully put an end to their litigation once and for all, Judge William E. Anderson ordered that “Renier and Merrell shall make no further public comment about each other [nor so encourage others] from this time forward,” the violator having to pay \$30,000 to the other party. And in an outrageous overreach, his order further decreed that Merrell will be declared guilty of breaching the “agreement” (though the following was never agreed to), and will have to pay Renier \$30,000, if “any mention of Merrell’s name” appears in a book that yours truly is in the process of writing — about the 1984 “missing airplane” case discussed in our Spring 2010 issue’s lead article (more on this later)!

As reported in our Summer 2007 and Winter 2007-08 issues (available online), Renier, who had signed a settlement agreement with Merrell in 1992 prohibiting either party from ever again publicly disparaging the other, was found guilty in a U.S. District Court of being in violation by virtue of the two disparaging chapters in

her 2005 memoir, *A Mind for Murder*. Owing Merrell more than \$40,000 in attorneys fees and interest as a consequence, Renier filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy in August 2007. She claimed an inability to pay the debt, which, per her pleading, almost exactly equaled her entire gross income over the previous three years. But as Merrell informed *TBS Report* at the time, she failed to list significant income sources such as her book and her association with Court TV’s *Psychic Detectives* series, on which she had appeared numerous times in recent years.

During the nearly three-year course of bankruptcy proceedings, Merrell incurred additional costs (adding to Renier’s debt to him) as he endeavored to uncover some of the assets that he believed Renier to be hiding, while the Court’s trustees apparently did little detective work of their own. Merrell would periodically inform the Court of his findings, including information obtained via a private investigator about an undeclared bank account, and Renier would periodically amend upward her declarations of income, ultimately by more than \$100,000. Merrell’s sister, Roxie Cuellar, a former practicing attorney who defended her brother in the original 1986 Renier v. Merrell libel trial (in which Renier prevailed), told *TBS Report* that the trustees refused to follow up on Merrell’s leads despite having encouraged him to issue the subpoenas.

But Merrell believes that tens of thousands (or more) of additional dollars — earned from Renier’s “psychic” phone sessions, TV appearances and book royalties — remain secreted. And despite requesting, through the legal process, the names of her paying “psychic reading” clients and police agencies that she claimed to have worked with during the relevant time period, and the amount of money paid by them, he was denied that information. Nor were her IRS income declarations (W2 and/or 1099 forms) provided despite four formal requests, even though such information is typically made available to creditors, with Merrell being Renier’s largest.

Additionally, the refusal of Story House Productions to respond to its subpoena from Merrell, which Renier had tried unsuccessfully to quash, aroused further

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**TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS
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and "\$1,000 Challenge"**

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

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**TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS
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Chairman's

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Martin Gardner (1914-2010)

By Terry A. Smiljanich

The skeptical community took another big hit this summer when Martin Gardner died at the age of 95.

For those of us growing up in the 1950s and '60s, Gardner was a constant presence. I'm old enough to recall the folding paper puzzles in the *Humpty Dumpty* children's magazine in the early '50s, little knowing that the creator was a man whose works would continue to educate me for another 60 years. In fact, when I used to read each and every "Mathematical Games" column in *Scientific American* from high school on, I had no idea it was by the same man who used to create those folding paper puzzles.

Years before James Randi wrote his influential work *Flim Flam!*, Gardner had written about skeptical matters and science in *Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science* (1957), followed later by *Science: Good, Bad and Bogus* (1981), taking on issues such as ESP, UFOs, Scientology, and creationism.

In 1976, Gardner was a founding member of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) — since renamed Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (CSI) — along with such other influential proponents of scientific skepticism as Randi, Phillip Klass, Carl Sagan and Isaac Asimov. Gardner continued to stay active with CSI, writing his regular "Notes of a Fringe-Watcher" column for *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine.

Gardner's love of mathematical puzzles led him to write his most commercially successful book, *The Annotated Alice*, in which he reproduces Lewis Carroll's *Alice in*

Wonderland and *Through the Looking-Glass*, with the addition of voluminous margin notes containing myriad fascinating details about the many logical and mathematical themes and Victorian in-jokes with which the author played around in these fairy tales.

Interestingly, and to the discomfort of many of his admirers, Gardner also wrote extensively about his philosophical and religious views. He was no fan of Christianity or any other organized religion, but he was not an atheist. He was a "fideist," believing in God but admitting that this was not based on any evidence for the existence of a god.

He wrote a semi-autobiographical novel, *The Flight of Peter Fromm*, about a young man like himself who attended the University of Chicago intending to become a preacher, but instead becoming doubtful about all organized religion, while retaining his own faith in a numinous god. Like his philosophical hero, Miguel de Unamuno, Gardner believed in God because his belief satisfied a deep-seated urge within him.

Carl Sagan once asked him, "Essentially, you're saying you believe in God because it makes you feel good?" When Gardner agreed this was so, Sagan just shook his head in disbelief. Reading his philosophical essays, however, and visiting the works of Unamuno, one cannot readily dismiss such fideism as illogical, since it seemingly lies outside the realm of reason.

Gardner was fun to read, especially when he was poking

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Hubris and the Supernormal

By Valerie Grey

I first encountered the word “hubris” in a history course on Ancient Greece. It meant “wanton violence arising from the pride of strength, passion, etc.; spiteful treatment, gross insult, riotousness, insolence, lewdness, licentiousness; law: aggravated personal assault.” Its meaning has since expanded to include “wanton arrogance arising from passion or recklessness; insolent disregard for moral laws or restraints.” A lovely, contemptuous word, perfect for describing politicians. Say it with a cheerful baring of teeth. I picture a strutting Spartan, with spear and shield, bronzed musculature gleaming, haughtily prepared to vanquish everything in his path in a fight to the death.

Hubris was the word that came to mind as I repeatedly watched a video, from Gary Posner’s wonderful skeptics collection, of James Randi et al.’s 1980 \$40K challenge/test of Australian dowisers.

Before the double-blind test, the 10 dowisers were cockily confident of their abilities, albeit in a charming, offhandedly Aussie fashion (picture Crocodile Dundee, sans hat and “knife”). Asked how he thought he had just performed divining the \$14,000 gold bar, one old gent replied, “Five good quick runs, nae trouble at all. Just like takin’ a lolly out of a baby’s mouth. It isn’t fair” — meaning to the poor sods who’d soon be forking over the \$40K!

Prior to the unveiling of the results, the dowisers all said they considered the test to have been completely fair and honest. Most predicted they would score their usual 100% on divining the water, brass, and gold — right up until the test results (supervised and announced by two well-respected mainstream clerics) revealed that none had performed better than chance (1 in 10 per try). There were only 4 hits out of 35 tries on the gold, and not a single hit out of 26 tries on the brass. 11 hits out of 50 tries on the gravity-fed water running through specially buried PVC pipes was a little better, and lifted the total success rate to 13.5%, though hardly a significant statistical deviation from the expected chance 10%.

Nevertheless, the dowisers appeared in no way convinced that their “powers” had been even remotely disproved; a show of hands indicated they all still believed. Upon learning he’d scored 0% on the gold, one said, “Well,

we hope ... but that’s what happens.” “But you were dead certain of it?” “Oh, of course I’m dead certain of it, yes” — breezy present tense, as though such confidence were entirely justified even in retrospect, in the face of his abysmal failure. Randi said that even after 35 years of challenging psychics, he was still surprised at some of the creative rationalizations put forward for failure: sunspots, astrological signs, unfortunate aspects of the moon. My guess is most of the dowisers continued to claim a 100% success rate. Since they would likely blame the stars or residual magnetism or bad vibes from skeptics for their failure, it wasn’t really *their* failure, so *they* really hadn’t failed this time either, had they? Success rate neatly intact.

The reporters covering the test were smugly convinced that they could not be fooled by magicians’ tricks. One young fellow had seen a Melbourne boy psychically bend a spoon years before and was so impressed he’d saved the spoon. The psychic bending had *looked* real, so as far as he was concerned, it had to *be* real. Even after Randi not only “psychically” bent, but broke, a spoon for him — stating that the alternative explanations were either 1) the complete overthrow of centuries of science, the inverse-square law, conservation of energy, etc., or 2) a simple trick such as the one *he had just performed* — the reporter was still unwilling to believe that he could previously have been duped. On the other hand, he apparently had no problem with the concept of *the complete overthrow of all of science!* But the possibility of his own gullibility? Perish the thought!

Hubris, pure and simple. There’s no other word for it, for both victims and victimizers, and all stages in between. Hubris inculcated from birth by hubristic parents (like mine) who scorn science, eschew mathematics and logic, worship contradictions and supernormal claptrap, and gleefully indoctrinate vulnerable toddlers with the New Age (and Old Age, for that matter) mantra that *the laws of science can be, and routinely are, violated* (from which I suppose it follows logically that, if they can be and are regularly violated, what good are they, so why bother to study them?). This is the underlying precept of *all* supernatural claims and all the bloody violence that issues forth from them.

The hubrist chants the certainties of his life: “I cannot be fooled, even under non-rigorous conditions — such as at

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Snippets

During this year's World Cup competition, M. Muniyappan, an astrologer in Singapore's "Little India" district, saw his clientele skyrocket from an average of 10/day to 10/hour. The reason: The amazing precision and accuracy of his astrological forecasts — *not!* But close. The *real* reason: The amazing precision and accuracy of his *pet's* forecasts, regarding the outcomes of the championship soccer matches. Mani, his "psychic" parakeet, had exhibited encyclopedic knowledge of each team, and was thus able to successfully predict the winners of all four quarter-final matches. Either that, or, just by dumb luck, its beak happened to be attracted to the correct cards (each bearing a country's flag) when they were placed in front of what the local media dubbed the "magical bird." Regardless, hoards of gambling-mad soccer fans boosted the business to a climax — and those who did so within a few days of the final match departed with an unfair advantage over the general betting public: the certain knowledge that Holland would defeat Spain.

(AFP via the Internet, July 9)

Er, it seems that Spain went on to defeat Holland. But would that cause any "pet psychic" aficionados to question their beliefs? Why should they? Haven't you ever heard of a psychic parakeet having an "off" day? Happens to the best of us — though apparently not to an eight-armed freak of nature named Paul! Per this newspaper article, "The psychic octopus has not made a mistake when predicting the outcome of a football match for two years." Would Paul prefer the mussel in the box marked "Spain" over the one in the "Holland" box? You betcha! And for good measure, he found the Germany mussel more appealing than the one representing Uruguay, thus also successfully selecting the 3rd- and 4th-place finishers. But before he chose Germany over Uruguay, he had picked Spain to whip Germany in an earlier match-up. He was right (as always), but that still did not sit well with the Germans, who have been known to carry a grudge a tad too far. Thus, Spanish environment and fisheries minister Elena Espinosa announced, "On Monday, I shall be at the European Council of Ministers and I shall be asking for a [fishing] ban on Paul the octopus so the Germans do not eat him."

(London Daily Telegraph, July 9)



Doesn't it just drive you nuts when you think you're about to talk to your dead father, and the late Farrah Fawcett picks up instead and says hello? Well, not if you're actress Tori Spelling — and hawking a new book. As she is reported to have told *Out* magazine: "If it had been some psychic that I'd walked in off the street for five bucks, it would have been different. But it came through [John Edward]. ... He offered to do a reading with me and I was hoping I would talk to my dad. ... And then, all of a sudden, [he said] Farrah Fawcett's coming through. And we were neighbors for years. She basically wanted me to give a message to [her family]. ... I've actually written a letter to Ryan O'Neal and explained to him ... everything that happened."

(Huffington Post, June 24)

As we reported in a Summer 2008 Snippet, Radivoje Lajic's house in northern Bosnia had been struck five separate times by meteorites since November 2007. "I am obviously being targeted by extraterrestrials," Lajic naturally concluded. Well, he says it's happened again, and experts at Belgrade University confirm that all six rocks that he has shown them have indeed been genuine meteorites. Lajic says that he has sold one of them to a Dutch university to finance his home's new steel-girder-reinforced roof. "I have no doubt I am being targeted by aliens," he reaffirmed. "[I don't know why] they are playing games with me."

(London Daily Mail, July 19)

In a series of letters written to Britain's Ministry of Defence in 1999, the grandson of one of Winston Churchill's bodyguards inquired about an RAF flight crew's close encounter with a "metallic" UFO during WWII. The documents, among 5,000 pages of UFO-related files newly released by Britain's National Archives, allege that the grandfather overheard a sensitive discussion between the Prime Minister and General Eisenhower during which Churchill allegedly said something approximating, "This event should be immediately classified, since it would create mass panic among the general population and destroy one's belief in the Church." The bodyguard allegedly told only his young daughter at the time, and did not tell his wife until on his deathbed in 1973. The daughter years later told the grandson, a physicist who stresses in the letters that he is not a "crackpot." But, alas, the MoD's response is that all "UFO files from before 1967 were destroyed after five years" due to insufficient public interest.

(London Daily Telegraph, August 5)

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

“Noreen Renier Bankruptcy Ruling” (from page 1)

suspicion. As Roxie Cuellar told *TBS Report*:

Story House Productions featured Renier in so many episodes of *Psychic Detectives* (and another of their shows called *Psychic Investigators*) that she must have received substantial payments from them in the immediate years preceding her bankruptcy. And given how many times those shows were rerun, I suspect she may have continued to receive substantial undeclared royalties from Story House even *after* she filed for bankruptcy. Both of the trustees knew full well that she had egregiously understated her income in her petition to the court, and they had the power to issue and enforce subpoenas, but they seemed more interested in closing the books on this case than in making sure that the debtor was honest in her representations and that debts owed to her creditors were satisfied to the fullest extent possible.

In the end, Renier’s allegedly hidden assets (if any) were never made available for payment of her debts. But the Court did put the rights to *A Mind for Murder* up for auction, and Renier was the high bidder at \$9,000, 61% of which will be paid to Merrell. In all, Merrell is to receive approximately \$7,500 from Renier’s estate. He estimates that he remains approximately \$65,000 in the hole as a result of the Court’s refusal, in his opinion, to administer justice in this case.

Further, Merrell was required to take down his extensive anti-Renier www.amindformurder.com website and to arrange for the rights to that domain to be turned over to Renier. He was permitted to retain and make one final post to his www.commentarybysherlock.com site.

Cuellar summarized her reactions to the legal processes this way:

I found the trustees’ actions to be very frustrating and openly hostile towards John. They knew Renier had grossly understated her income by failing to declare most of her earnings and royalties, yet they showed no interest in looking for hidden assets, instead leaving all the investigative work to John. If only *he* were a “psychic detective” like Renier, maybe justice might have been served.

John did what he was told he could do, including issuing his own subpoenas. But if the trustees had no intention of reviewing the material he discovered, they shouldn’t have advised him to issue the subpoenas and to review the materials and prepare a formal summary for them. That all cost John a lot of time and money. And it was only because of John’s persistence that about \$11,000 was eventually recovered for distribution to the creditors.

Having watched in the courtroom how Renier interacted with one of the trustees during the first hearing, there was just such a difference in the overt friendliness he exhibited toward Renier and the blatant rudeness he showed toward John. John, his other sister Sally Penna

(who also made the trip with us), and I were all shocked by it, frankly, because we had expected an atmosphere of fairness and courtroom decorum.

Cuellar had accompanied Merrell to the Virginia courtroom for two of the crucial hearings and negotiations. She tells *TBS Report* that at one point, Renier whispered to her attorney that she would sue if there was even a mention of Merrell’s name in the book I am writing. However, Cuellar is adamant that the final verbal agreement was actually to the effect that John would be delisted as the book’s author (I was originally to be his co-author) and would not contribute any disparaging comments about Renier. That is also the clear recollection of John and his other sister. As for Judge Anderson’s final order sanctifying Renier’s threat rather than the negotiated settlement language, Cuellar believes that the kindly southern jurist had been beguiled by Renier’s pleadings of poverty and maltreatment (at the hand of Merrell).

TBS chairman Terry Smiljanich, also an attorney, tells me that since I was not a party to the bankruptcy case, I cannot file a protest against the judge’s order, even as it pertains to me. Yet, as Merrell was the primary investigator into the missing-plane case and the one who interviewed the quoted principals, there can be no book without mention of his name throughout.

So, I am placed in the following quandary: Should I abandon the book? Or should I proceed, and thus subject Merrell to being liable for paying Renier \$30,000 for his having breached (even though he has no control over my actions) his “agreement” with Renier (even though there was no such agreement)?

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“Hubris and the Supernormal” (from page 3)

a distance and in low light. If it doesn’t look like a trick to me, it can’t be a trick. If I can’t figure out how it might be a trick, it can’t be a trick. If I don’t want it to be a trick, it can’t be a trick. If I don’t understand the mathematics of the probabilities, it doesn’t matter and I don’t need to concern myself. I don’t need to rigorously test my own psychic abilities; it’s enough that I feel that I’m correct even when my psychic intuitions cannot be verified. In fact, the less they’re subject to verification, the more confident I am, to the point where if there’s absolutely no opportunity for me to be proved wrong, I’m 100% certain.”

The Ancient Greek hubrists merely bashed your skull in. The modern ones go in more for skullduggery.

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A New Vision for Science Engagement with the Public

From the www.aaas.org archives:

Scientists must seek a new, more energetic engagement with Americans if they are to overcome public skepticism on issues ranging from climate change to stem cell research, American Association for the Advancement of Science CEO Alan I. Leshner writes in a commentary in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Leshner's opinion piece, "Science and Public Engagement" (10 October 2006), cited a growing tension between science and society, resulting in part from moral objections to embryonic stem cell research or evolution and lack of understanding of the nature of science as an enterprise. But rather than wishing the public understood and calling for more education, scientific organizations and individual scientists must take a more personal and proactive interest in reaching out to the public, he said.

"Simply lamenting the tension or protesting attacks on the integrity of science and science education won't work," wrote Leshner, who also serves as executive publisher of *Science*. "We've been doing those for decades, if not centuries, and, as the saying has it, insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different outcome.

"Instead of simply increasing public understanding of science, scientists need to have a real dialogue with members of the public, listening to their concerns, their priorities, and the questions

they would like us to help answer. We also need to find ways to move science forward while adapting to their legitimate concerns."

Leshner listed a number of important lessons for science as it moves toward a more constructive public engagement, including: never pit science against religion, never debate a known ideologue, be clear about the nature of science, and listen.

"The most important — and most difficult — lesson to learn," Leshner wrote, "is that public engagement involves genuine dialogue, which means both parties must listen and be willing to modify their own positions."

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"Chairman's Corner" (from p. 2)

gentle fun at the non-scientific absurdities of certain popular beliefs. Whether you find his philosophical musings persuasive or not, there can be no doubt that he was a giant among skeptics. Randi and others have written moving tributes to him in the latest (Sept./Oct.) issue of *Skeptical Inquirer*.

Among the cream of the current hearty crop of intelligent and entertaining skeptics are Michael Shermer (the "Skeptic"), Phil Plait (the "Bad Astronomer"), Rebecca Watson (the "Skepchick"), and Adam Savage (the "Mythbuster"). With the likes of Gardner, Klass, Sagan and Asimov now gone, it's up to the "new" faces to carry on the tradition, and do justice to the legacy, of those iconic thinkers and writers.

Tampa Bay Skeptics T-Shirts

TBS T-shirts (S, M, L, XXL and XXXL) are available for purchase from the TBS/CFI office.

The shirts are 100% cotton, black, crew style, no pocket, with TBS name/logo emblazoned in white across the chest.

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

Letters • Readers' Forum

Editor: James Carrion's "Goodbye Ufology, Hello Truth," reprinted in your Summer 2010 issue, is a fascinating essay.

The fact is that alien spaceship UFOs would violate simple principles of physics and chemistry. The amount of energy required to launch an interstellar craft would be so huge, because of the vastness of space, that no civilization could possibly get such a vehicle off the ground. The figures are given in my article titled "Why Visiting Alien Spaceships Are Impossible" (tinyurl.com/3ympc8l) in CSI's June 2008 *Skeptical Briefs* newsletter.

From that article: "The distances in outer space are so vast that the velocity of a space vehicle has to be [at least] one-tenth the speed of light if it is expected to reach Earth in a reasonable period of time. ... The entire capacity of the United States power system is one trillion watts. ... If we could by some magic harness the entire output of the U.S. power system behind a space vehicle, it would take 1×10^8 seconds — three years — to get it up to speed!"

It is unfortunate that honest investigators and skeptics have spent so much time chasing an impossible dream (or nightmare) that can be demolished with a few familiar and simple energy equations.

Sid Deutsch
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Editor: I am emailing you guys for some help. I live with my wife and five kids, and we've been experiencing some very strange things in our home. My seven-year-old stepdaughter "sees things," if you will, starting back when she was three. Since moving into our apartment (which is the size of a small home) about eight months ago, she has often awakened to see "someone" moving the curtains attached to the top of her bed. The house had been quiet for months until three weeks ago, when my wife and I were home alone watching a movie, went into

the kitchen, and upon leaving the kitchen found a full water bottle just standing straight up in the middle of the walkway. Five days ago, my daughter came into our room crying, saying she saw a black shadow with long black hair and no face, so we let her sleep in our room. Yesterday when my wife and I were alone with my two young boys, we were watching a movie when suddenly there were two very loud knocks on the wall in my boys' room, but no one was there. A few hours later, my brother-in-law came over and we watched another movie, my two boys now asleep in my room. During the movie we all clearly heard my stepsons' room door open and close twice, followed by sounds of things in the room being moved. My wife then saw a shadow figure (in the reflection of our sliding glass door) leave the boys' room and walk down the hallway to my room. Later, my three-year-old son woke up screaming "daddy" and looking scared to death, pointing into the dark hallway trying to tell me what he saw and said that all the stuff on his bed had flown off.

Angry, I told this "entity" to leave my home. We all then ended up leaving and staying at my in-laws' house. I cannot deal with this kind of craziness in my home and we don't know what to do. Any help or advice would be greatly appreciated.

Rob Colletti
Brandon
robcolletti@gmail.com

Editor's reply: We informed Mr. Colletti that after doing some Internet searching of his address, one TBS Executive Council member found that ten years ago a family of five moved out after a milk bottle mysteriously appeared in the bathtub. Another commented that conducting a thorough investigation would probably require us to set up audio and video recorders and live in the home for a week or so. We ultimately explained that "poltergeist" cases like this one are almost invariably found to be caused by someone living in the home, usually an adolescent, and usually female. Readers are invited to offer their own comments/suggestions.

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3910 S. MANHATTAN AVENUE, TAMPA

(between Dale Mabry Hwy. and West Shore Blvd.,
one block south of W. Euclid Ave.)

Featured: Patrick McGirk on "What I really want my
science students to learn: Science's remarkable
methods for exploring the natural world."

Followed by optional lunch at a local restaurant

"Noreen Renier Bankruptcy Ruling" (*from p. 5*)

I have decided upon a third alternative. Assuming the book ultimately proceeds to publication, I will use a pseudonym for Merrell, perhaps "Jack Monroe." While making sure that there is not "any mention of Merrell's name" in the book itself, the pseudonym will be accompanied each time by an asterisk, and there will be notations throughout referring the reader to a page on my website that will explain the situation in full detail.

In my own imagination, which by law is permitted to be as vivid as Judge Anderson's, his honor and I mutually came to this pseudonym "agreement." If he professes to have a problem with it, he can stick it where the moon don't shine.

Visit TBS's 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 JREF "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 prize to the first person able to successfully produce proof of paranormal powers for an independent authority, in accordance with the rules at www.randi.org.

All UFOlogists, psychics, astrologers, dowzers, and the like are encouraged to come forward, offer your proof, and make history. See the "\$\$\$ Challenges" page on the TBS website or contact us for more details.

Center For Inquiry Tampa Bay

As the opening paragraph of its website explains, Center for Inquiry Tampa Bay (of which Tampa Bay Skeptics is a Special Interest Group) offers an opportunity to put your principles into practice by joining other reasoning people in working for positive change in society. CFI Tampa Bay 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 Bay events, visit their website (www.CenterForInquiry.net/Tampa) or contact them by U.S. mail (13014 N. Dale Mabry Hwy., Box 363, Tampa, FL 33618) or e-mail (Tampa@CenterForInquiry.net).



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A Special Interest Group of the



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