News and Comment

Cambridge Centenary of Psychical Research: Critics Heard, Encouraged to Cooperate

One hundred years after a group of Cambridge scholars inaugurated the scientific investigation of things that go bump in the night, the question of whether there *are* things that go bump in the night remains an open one. "It is a measure of our failure that the controversy still exists," John Beloff admitted in his presidential address to the Centenary Jubilee Conference of the Society for Psychical Research (founded 1882) and the Parapsychological Association (founded 1957), which met, quite appropriately, in Trinity College, Cambridge, from August 16-21, 1982.

It is typical of the ambiguous feelings the "paranormal" arouses even among the members of the parapsychological community that the case for skepticism became one of the dominant themes of the occasion.

Card-carrying critics, such as Christopher Scott, Ray Hyman, Marcello Truzzi, James Randi, and Piet Hein Hoebens, presented papers or otherwise contributed to the discussion, but (presumably to the chagrin of dogmatists on both sides) they were by no means the only ones to argue for extreme caution in accepting evidence for "psi" at face value. Indeed, Brian Inglis, editor of a series of books published on behalf of the SPR and a determined believer in the unbelievable, complained about the "disease" of skepticism infecting his fellow psychical researchers. He had cause for complaint. British parapsychologist Susan Blackmore dropped a little bombshell by announcing what amounted to a conversion to skepticism. For years, she has tried to catch a glimpse of the occult, but "whenever I started to look into psi seriously, the evidence started to disappear." Her present work, she said, is concerned with identifying the nonparanormal factors that could account for the persistence of paranormal beliefs. It is a healthy sign that Dr. Blackmore was not instantly excommunicated.

To the contrary, many of the leading parapsychologists at the Cambridge conference expressed themselves unambiguously to the effect that, given the present unsatisfactory state of the evidence, skepticism remains a rational and valid option. What is more, they indicated that they would welcome closer cooperation with the critics in examining the evidence and in designing better experiments. Ray Hyman, a member of the CSICOP Council and the new occupant of the Stanford University "spook chair," cast a cool eye on the celebrated "Ganzfeld" experiments, where ESP subjects are placed in a state of sensory depriva-

tion—presumed to be psi-conducive. According to Hyman, there is a strong association between the presence of loopholes and the chances of obtaining significant results. (Similar conclusions, incidentally, were reached by parapsychologists Parker, Wiklund, and Ballard.) Ganzfeld pioneer Charles Honorton disputed Hyman's analysis, but the gratifying outcome of the exchange was that proponents and skeptics agreed to join forces in an attempt to "debug" the Ganzfeld work.

By and large, the visiting critics were favorably impressed, not only with the quality of some of the papers presented, but even more by the parapsychologists' willingness to look at the other side of the psi coin. (On the other hand, the parapsychologists were pleased to discover that at least some of the skeptics are—to quote Cambridge psi-researcher Carl Sargent—"almost human.") Even so, parapsychology remains a bewildering field where scientific sophistication coexists with appalling credulity.

Jerusalem psi researcher H. C. Behrendt presented a film showing "A New Israeli Metal-Bender," Rony M. "There is no reason for doubt," Behrendt pontificated. In fact, the film was an embarrassingly silly affair, showing nothing but clumsy tricks by a second-rate Geller. Parapsychologist John Palmer called the presentation "rubbish"—and requested that he be quoted. Even more embarrassing was the presentation of the so-called SORRAT evidence. In a workshop session (for which the Program Committee disclaims all responsibility), the irrepressible W. E. Cox showed slides, purportedly of miraculous events inside a "minilab" (a sort of fish tank in which various objects are placed to be moved "psychokinetically"). In an uproariously funny film, Tony Cornell of the SPR demonstrated how such marvels could have been brought about by simple trickery. At which point Brian Inglis left the hall, furiously reproaching the audience for laughing at very serious matters.

George Hansen of the Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man (FRNM, the late J. B. Rhine's institute) reported that he and Richard Broughton had attempted to replicate Mr. Cox's experiments in "spirit writing"—

where a sealed letter containing a question and addressed to a third party is placed near a "minilab," disembodied entities obligingly taking care of the answer, the postage, and the mailing! Hansen and Broughton found that the "spirit letters" in their experiment had been tampered with.

On Saturday, August 14, the *Times* of London reported the rumor that James Randi, who had submitted a paper at the conference, was planning some sort of coup "to prove the SPR and the Parapsychological Association a gullible body of fools." A small panic broke out among the delegates. They had not needed to worry. Randi's contribution (on the proper methods to test "metal-bending") was generally praised as an example of constructive criticism.

Yet, if we were reminded of E. J. Dingwall's words, written in 1926, "The study of occultism has so odd an effect on the human mind that even after a few years, when the conviction of the reality of supernormal phenomena has become fixed, the most transparent deceptions are gravely cited as marvels of mediumship," the parapsychologists themselves (or at least a number of them) must be blamed.

From the point of view of public relations, the staging of two "metal-bending parties" on the hallowed grounds of Trinity College was a disastrous lapse. "M-B parties" are said to be the latest craze in the Washington, D.C., area. Guests are handed spoons and forks, are exposed to a peptalk, are instructed to yell "Bend! Bend! Bend!" and then proceed to ruin the cutlery they hold in their hands. The idea, I gather, is that the physically applied force accounts for only *part* of the bending—the residue being attributed to psi. Initially, I had assumed that the party in Cambridge was intended as a joke. I was amazed to discover that many of the participants took this preposterous business quite seriously. One visitor actually fainted upon having twisted his spoon. Another told me that she had heard a paranormal "voice" telling her that the metal had become soft. Yet another reported having felt a mysterious "energy." I, too, was handed a spoon, and bent it effortlessly. Never will I forget the spectacle of a certain PA member who, jumping up and down with excitement, exclaimed that, yes, even skeptics could do it. Of course we can, if we may use our hands!

The next morning, while bewildered charwomen were cleaning up the mess, several parapsychologists of the more serious variety implored me to make plain to the readers of this journal that they were horrified by this sudden relapse into the crudest form of Gelleritis.

Their disclaimers indeed deserve to be reported. There may be a farcical side to psychical research, but at least there are influential parapsychologists who, while maintaining some sort of belief in the unknown, have successfully resisted the temptations of unreason.

—Piet Hein Hoebens

Piet Hoebens is an investigative journalist for the Amsterdam daily De Telegraaf. *He frequently reports and writes on parapsychology.*

The Parapsychology Controversy in China

Can some people read another person's mind at a distance? Manipulate objects without touching them in any way? Sense colors or shapes through their hands or feet or ears? The possible existence of paranormal powers was first raised among European scientists

more than a century ago. Over the past two years the question has been hotly debated in China.

On March 11, 1979, the *Sichuan Daily* published an article about 12-year-old Tang Yu from Dazhu county, Sichuan province, who claimed to be able to read written material with his ears. Soon similar cases were being reported from other parts of the country, and scientists, medical experts, and educators began to give their opinions.

The *People's Daily*, in May 1979, was the first to criticize the "ears can read" report as ridiculous and unscientific. It also carried a piece by a distinguished educator who dismissed the claims as sheer fantasy not worth refuting. The newspaper followed up by carrying a report from the Sichuan Medical College that Tang Yu was simply playing tricks like a magician, and the issue seemed about to die.

But many people who had seen demonstrations were not convinced. They preferred to believe what they saw with their own eyes, and did not think a boy so young could fool them so cleverly. People kept uncovering phenomena that they claimed could not be explained by present-day science, and reports continued to be published.

In August 1980 a forum on parapsychology was sponsored by the Chinese monthly journal *Nature* in Shanghai with participants from more than 20 colleges and medical and scientific research institutions. Twelve children claiming to have paranormal powers gave demonstrations of "reading" letters or figures with their hands, feet, ears, noses, and even armpits. A number of observers took the demonstrations very seriously. A few colleges and universities established research groups on the subject. Some scientists considered that a major scientific breakthrough had been made, and

preparations got underway to establish a National Society of Human Body Science.

The January 1981 issue of *China Reconstructs* reported on the debate. It carried an article citing the interest in paranormal phenomena, but also expressing the skepticism many people still felt about the authenticity of many of the demonstrations.

In May 1981 a second forum on the subject was held in Chongqing, Sichuan province. Some scientists made presentations linking paranormal powers with the theoretical basis of traditional Chinese medicine, and argued that such powers were no mystery but part of an advanced scientific understanding of the functions of the human body. Reports were given on what were stated to be cases of mind-reading at a distance, of seeing through solid objects, and of remote control of another person's actions.

Nevertheless, a number of scientists continued to express doubts, calling "parapsychology" a pseudosci-

ence. They pointed out that the evidence of one's own eyes is not necessarily true without further investigation and analysis and that some people are rather gullible and easily duped.

In October 1981 the State Science Commission set up a special group to study the phenomena. The group undertook detailed investigations of the claims conducted under scientific conditions and began to issue materials, including reports showing that many of the cases were based on deception.

The Chinese Academy of Sciences sponsored a public hearing in February 1982. The reported cases were analyzed, and the great majority of them shown to be unfounded. Credulous belief in paranormal powers was criticized. The day after the hearing, February 25, *People's Daily* summarized criticisms made, reviewed the news coverge of the past several years, and said that in its opinion there was no solid evidence for the existence of paranormal powers. Nevertheless, the debate goes on in scientific and lay circles, and experimentation continues regarding what has become a highly emotional issue.

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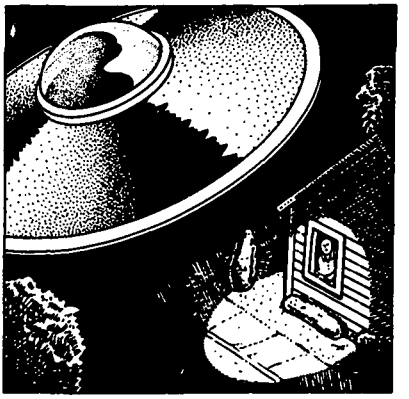
NOVA's Look at UFOs

The NOVA science series telecast an hour-long critical examination of the UFO question over Public Broadcasting System stations in the United States on Oct. 12, 1982, as the first NOVA television program of the fall season. "The Case of the UFOs," produced by John Groom of the BBC, was a perceptive look at UFO-related issues and several prominent UFO cases.

Among the cases examined were several that SKEPTICAL INQUIRER readers are familiar with: the Warminster, England, UFO hoax; perpetrated by an English physicist as a way of calibrating the acumen of UFO believers (*SI*, Spring 1980); several notorious claims that astronauts have seen "UFOs" (Fall 1978); and the Travis Walton case in Arizona (Summer 1981). The program also had a lengthy segment on the New Zealand lights of Dec. 31, 1978, and a shorter one on the Oslo, Minnesota, police car "UFO encounter." James Oberg and Philip J.



NOVA

Klass of CSICOP's UFO subcommittee and Allan Hendry of the Center for UFO Studies each appeared several times in the program.

Scientist Michael Persinger discussed how stimulation of the brain's hypothalamus can produce profound-seeming "visual" experiences and even alter memory. U.S. Geological Survey scientists showed how rocks breaking under enormous strains can produce luminescent balls of plasma, which Persinger feels may be an explanation of some UFO-lights phenomena. Another segment on photo analysis revealed how photos were found to be faked.

The program managed to treat

UFO claims in a hard-nosed, scientific, investigative manner while at the same time avoiding personal criticism of those who may have honestly reported sightings they didn't understand. It was a laudable treatment, reminiscent of earlier NOVA programs on von Däniken's claims and on the Bermuda Triangle. The BBC and NOVA deserve praise for such refreshing scientific (yet still entertaining) approaches.

—K.F.

Allison and the Atlanta Murders: A Follow-up

The police of Atlanta, Georgia, are apt to think twice before calling in "psychics" in the future. They yielded to public pressure in 1981 following an appearance on the Phil Donahue Show by Dorothy Allison, the flamboyant seer who claims endless successes in identifying murderers and locating missing children—both dead and alive. Allison had assured them that she would perform to her usual standards in helping them with the shocking series of child murders there. Unfortunately, she did just that, and failed miserably—as did other, less publicized "leading psychics" (*SI*, Fall 1982, p. 12).

It was a fiasco in every respect. Arriving with her usual police escort from Nutley, N.J., Allison proceeded to "showboat" around town—to quote one official there—and posed for every camera in sight, declaring her total control of the situation. TV viewers around the world were told that she had identified the murderer, then that there was more than one killer, one of them perhaps black, etc. After a great deal of this nonsense, she returned to Nutley. Everyone sat back to see the murderer apprehended as a result of her talents.

Soon after, because of dedicated police work, a suspect was arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced. And Allison fell strangely silent.

Following up, I discovered that Atlanta officials were not at all eager to talk about Allison, and it was some time before I learned the truth about what had actually happened. When a Sergeant Gundlach was asked about Dorothy Allison, he snorted that "that wacko broad" had given them some 42 possible names for the murderer(s) but not the correct one. "She rode around in a big limousine, ate real well for three days, then went home," said Gundlach.

Allison's performance in this case pretty well matched others she had given all over the United States during her career as a "psychic detective." She told police a great deal, none of which was of any use. Some of what she said was already known and available; some was pure guesswork, and was wrong. The media jumped at her every move and word, and then dropped her when she proved a failure. But you can be sure that, when she is again called upon to declare wonders, her picture will be seen everywhere and her record will once again be conveniently forgotten.

—James Randi

Newspaper Horoscopes: Show of Inaccuracy

One of the main ways that people learn about astrology is through newspaper horoscopes. Recently, the Canadian CTV consumer show, "Live It Up" (July 15, 1982) tested the accuracy of newspaper horoscopes. (See also, *SI*, Spring, 1980, p. 13.) Twelve people were asked to keep a diary of what happened to them over a period of one week. They were then given horoscope readings for those days by four anonymous astrologers. The task of the

individuals was to compare what happened each day with the predictions of the astrologers according to the following scale:

0 = Not close
1 = Slightly accurate
2 = Some accuracy
3 = Quite accurate
4 = Bang on

This means that a perfect score would be 12 (people) x 4 (perfect score) points x 7 (days) = 336 points. After the scores were tallied, the names of the astrologers were revealed and their total scores were:

Live It Up "astrologer"	= 112
Jeane Dixon	= 101
Bernice Osol	= 91
Sydney Omarr	= 88

The Live It Up "astrologer" was a set of fake daily horoscopes compiled by the "Live It Up" staff. These horoscopes were an imaginative mixture of fortune-cookie wisdoms, good advice, and random material taken from past columns by astrologer Bernice Osol.

An entertaining demonstration of the invalidity of newspaper horoscopes!

—I. W. Kelly

Professor Kelly is a developmental psychologist at the University of Saskatchewan.

Berto, the Blind Horse: Clever, But Not Cueless

One of the four items in the "Significa" column of the June 13, 1982, *Parade*, the national Sunday newspaper magazine supplement, was entitled "The Amazing Calculating Horses." It recounted the famous cases of Clever Hans and Muhamed, two horses that performed in Germany in the early part of the century. For a long while their ability to tap out with their feet the correct answers to mathematical problems and other questions had experts thinking the horses possessed some astonishing mental capacities.

Clever Hans, pawing with his hooves, could supposedly add, subtract, divide, do fractions, square roots, and even spell and form sentences using a special tapping code. Experts were stumped until psychologist Oskar Pfungst showed in a series of exhaustive and elegant tests published in 1911 that the horse was responding to involuntary movements of the person questioning him. Most people were not aware that they raised their head slightly when the proper number of paw taps had been completed. Pfungst even showed that people—even he himself—had trouble *not* giving such involuntary cues, even when they tried very hard not to.

Serious scholars have since agreed that these visual cues, quite subconsciously rendered, fully explain Clever Hans's seemingly remarkable powers. Psychologists now refer to this kind of cueing as "the Clever Hans phenomenon."

Some other famous "calculating" horses in Germany at that time, including Muhamed, were also shown to be responding to cues. But in each of these cases it was conclusively demonstrated that the horse's groom was intentionally giving visual signals, usually from a position within the horse's view but out of view of witnesses. Here deliberate fraud was (and is) the accepted verdict.

But what about Berto, the blind horse? Berto was one of five horses, including Hans, that manufacturer Karl Krall obtained in 1909 upon the death of their previous owner. Berto, it was said, was blind but could perform

like the others. The account in *Parade's* "Significa" column (which is written by Irving Wallace, David Wallechinsky, and Amy Wallace of *People's Almanac* fame/notoriety) suggested that Berto demolishes Pfungst's theory: "Berto, was blind but could perform like the others—thus dashing Pfungst's theory of visual cues. Despite all the neigh-saying, no one could prove that the five horses were a hoax."

This comment echoed a similar one by Nicholas Wade at the conclusion of his article in the June 20, 1980, *Science* magazine on a New York Academy of Sciences symposium on the Clever Hans phenomenon. It is not exactly right.

Pfungst's explanation of visual cueing stands as strong as ever for Clever Hans. Psychologist Ray Hyman has called Pfungst's report on these tests *the* classic debunking book. But surely Berto couldn't have been responding to such cues? Thomas A. Sebeok, chairman of the Research Center for Language and Semiotic Studies at Indiana University and an expert on claims of such animal abilities, was asked by the SKEPTICAL INQUIRER to clarify the matter.

Sebeok responded that Berto very likely had three modes of cueing available to him. For one thing, he points out, there exists no solid proof whatsoever that Berto—as has always been taken for granted—was completely sightless. For that, we have only the word of Krall and his employees and associates. Krall, says Sebeok, was easily deceived. Albert Bühren, the horse's trainer (who was also Muhamed's trainer), was, it is now known, a brilliant trickster and an illusionist (as well as a lightning-fast calculator). Sebeok considers it likely that Berto had at least some degree of peripheral vision.

Second, acoustic information channels were readily available. Auditory cues that cannot be heard or recognized as such by untutored human bystanders can easily be picked up by horses, notes Sebeok. And it is known that Berto had exceptionally acute hearing. Third, tactile cues were very probably also used. In fact, a book published in German by Stefan von Maday in 1912 gives a rich review of the tactile mode of information transmission, with particular reference to Berto. Horses, of course, are conditioned to be highly sensitive to subtle tactile cues; they do "read the mind" of their rider in a real sense via pressure of the bit and the rider's subtle muscle tensions and relaxations.

The evidence points to the probability that Bühren, Berto's groom, was intentionally giving the horse cues, says Sebeok. Four separate witnesses have testified to Bühren's presence during such demonstrations, although Krall often tried to disguise that fact.

A noted Danish conjurer named Faustinus Edelberg was allowed to observe Berto for a short time. He reported in 1915 that, for example, when he stated a problem for Berto loud enough for Bühren to hear it from outside the stable, the horse tapped out the correct answer. If Edelberg inscribed the problem on the horse's skin but did not state it within Bühren's hearing, he could not obtain any answers. Once he wrote the numeral "4" on the horse's flank and then pretended to write "+3" also; in actuality he wrote the +3 in the air so that the horse could not feel it but it would appear to Bühren as if he could. The correct answer of "7" was given. Inevitably when Bühren was within sight or hearing, Berto was correct. On the occasions when he was wrong, Edelberg found out later that Bühren had been called away or distracted. Once, when Berto suddenly began giving right answers after a long period of senseless responses, Edelberg abruptly threw open the stable gate and found Bühren lurking behind it.

Unfortunately, Edelberg was unable to discover exactly how Bühren was cueing the horse before Krall expelled the magician for "undue skepticism." (Certain modern-day magicians will find this ringing a familiar bell.) No further tests were done, so nothing was ever absolutely proved. But the circumstantial evidence is strong, concludes Sebeok, that Bühren was giving Berto the answers.

So the "calculating" horses of early twentieth-century Germany, Berto among them, couldn't really do arithmetic. But of course that shouldn't blind us to the fact that they were indeed clever nevertheless. As Lewis Thomas recently observed ("On Clever Animals," *Discover*, September 1982), referring in this case to Clever Hans, "The record shows that he was considerably better at observing human beings and interpreting their behavior than humans are at comprehending horses, or, for that matter, other humans."

—Kendrick Frazier

California Superquake: Psychics' Long Fizzle

It is informative indeed to check up on the confident predictions made by self-proclaimed psychics. Supermarket tabloids never seem to show any interest in such projects; though they give headlines to the seers when they make the prognostications, we never get a scorecard to consult afterwards. If you consider the rash of very colorful and dire earthquake predictions that were made for the state of California in the past few decades, you have an excellent cross-section of the accuracy of the prophets.

Edgar Cayce was one seer who foretold catastrophes aplenty. He said, in 1941, that Los Angeles and San Francisco would be destroyed by earthquakes sometime before the destruction of "most of New York City" in 1971. (Later he changed the date to "before 1978.") He also told believers that an "Atlantean" island he called "Poseidea" would rise from the Atlantic in 1968 and 1969, and portions of South Carolina and Georgia would sink, all these wonders serving as signs that the West Coast calamities were about to occur. Needless to say, none of them came about, but Cayce-followers were hardly fazed. They are, in a word,

unfazable.

Far safer was the claim of "cataclysmologist" Chan Thomas, who declared in his book *The Adam and Eve Story* that Los Angeles and San Francisco would succumb to "an unbelievable mountain of Pacific sea-water . . . as if they were but grains of sand."

Why Psychics Like to Predict Earthquakes

Earthquakes are a natural for "psychics." Earthquakes are so frequent that as long as the psychic keeps the prediction suitably vague he or she is bound to be right at some point. Here, from the U.S. Geological Survey's *Earthquake Information Bulletin*, is a table of the expected yearly world incidence of earthquakes, by magnitude.

Earthquake Magnitude and Expected World Incidence

Type of Shock	Magnitude	Average No. Each Year
Great	8 or more	1.1
Major	7 to 7.9	18
Large (destructive)	6 to 6.9	120
Moderate (damaging)	5 to 5.9	1,000
Minor (damage slight)	4 to 4.9	6,000
Generally felt	3 to 3.9	49,000
Potentially perceptible	2 to 2.9	300,000
Microearthquake (imperceptible)	Below 2	600,000+

Seismologists have been warning for years now that a major quake somewhere along the San Andreas fault system in California is long overdue. This does not constitute an earthquake *prediction*. Geophysicists consider an earthquake prediction to be the specification of the place, time, and magnitude of an earthquake within sufficiently narrow limits to permit short-term and long-term actions to save life and property. Psychics bind themselves to no such constraints. The only certainty is that, when the expected great California earthquake does happen, almost every psychic in the world will claim to have "predicted" it. The only scientific study of the accuracy of earthquake "predictions" found those made by psychics and astrologers even less accurate than "predictions" generated by a computer's random-number generator (*Earthquake Information Bulletin*, 10, no. 3, 1978, summarized in Spring 1979 *SI*).

—*K. Frazier*

However, Thomas is careful to place his disaster "during the next polar shift"—and sets that occurrence somewhere between the year 2000 and 2500. He was able to assume that he would be safely in his grave by then and unavailable for comment.

Cayce fans might reflect that Thomas flies in the face of their hero, who not only sees Los Angeles and San Francisco deluged much earlier but sets his "polar shift" (a "noncataclysmic" one, you'll be relieved to know) between 1998 and 2000. Surely there is an appropriately mysterious reason for these two great occult figures to have disagreed, or is that itself merely an illusion awaiting further explanation for us puzzled laymen?

Psychic Joe Brandt received a vision of the destruction of California, early in the 1960s. But he said he couldn't be 100 percent sure of the date. "It looked like 1969" he said, "I wasn't sure. My eyes weren't working just right."

"Doc" Anderson, known as "The Georgia Seer," made us sit up at attention in 1969 by predicting "the most powerful quake ever recorded in history" centered "near Los Angeles and San Francisco" sometime before 1979. Added Anderson, ". . . it will center along the San Andreas fault line." How perceptive.

Never one to be caught out on a limb, the Reverend Neal Frisby of Phoenix, Ariz., warned that California's "last major earthquake could happen between 1972 and 1977."

Irene Hughes, hastening to get in on the attention, gushed of "devastating earthquakes for California in 1976."

In 1971 no less an authority than *Search* magazine carried the prophecy of John Dombrowski that between 1972 and 1976 ("very definitely before 1976," he insisted) San Diego, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, and "much of the California coastline will become a feeding ground for sharks."

Jeane Dixon, the unsinkable rubber-duck of prophecy, told *National Enquirer* readers in 1968, "I predict a mammoth earthquake on the West Coast . . . But it won't happen for about seven years." That should put it at about 1975. But hold on, fans! Didn't Dixon also tell *Enquirer* readers back in 1964 that there would be a "great California quake in 1965 or 1966"? What happened to that one? Or both of them, for that matter?

Though it's hard to believe that anyone actually takes Criswell seriously, we must note that he told the world in 1968 that "the strongest earthquake in the history of the U.S. will virtually wipe out the city of San Francisco on April 7, 1975 . . . There will be more than 25,000 persons killed in this earthquake . . . and the mountains will

crumble into the Pacific."

These are only a few of the more prominent characters who are on record as having predicted that the Great California Earthquake would happen sometime before 1982. There are dozens more, and all share a common quality: They were all wrong.

—James Randi

The Father of UFOlogy, the FOIA, and the FBI

Although private pilot Kenneth Arnold ushered in the "UFO Era" with his June 24, 1947, report that he had spotted nine disc-shaped objects while flying near the Cascade Mountains in the Pacific Northwest, the title of "Father of UFOlogy" rightfully belongs to Donald Keyhoe, a retired Marine Corps officer. It was Keyhoe's article in the January 1950 issue of *True* magazine, claiming that the U.S. government was covering up evidence that UFOs were extraterrestrial craft, that would set the pattern for UFOlogy's future claims and stance.

When Congress passed the Freedom of Information Act in the mid-1970s, UFOlogists were among the first to exploit the resulting access to once-classified documents, expecting they would reveal the long-claimed government coverup, or what one UFOlogist (Stanton Friedman) has called "a Cosmic Watergate." UFOlogists were both surprised and disappointed, for the many hundreds of papers released by the CIA, the FBI, and the Pentagon failed to reveal a "smoking gun."

The FOIA request to the FBI for all of its UFO files did turn up a letter that provides useful insights into the Father of UFOlogy's reputation within the FBI for accuracy on other matters. Portions of the letter, dated September 26, 1958, from one FBI official to another are as follows:

> Keyhoe has been known to the Bureau since 1935 and was, and may still be, a free-lance writer. In 1948 he was described by Mr. Nichols as "a flamboyant writer and we have found from previous experience that much of his material is irresponsible." In 1951, the Director [of the FBI] concurred with Mr. Nichols' statement that "We should not get involved with him."
>
> As an example of his writing, the January, 1941, issue of *Cosmopolitan* magazine carried an article written by Keyhoe and John J. Daly, entitled "Hitler's Plan to Seize the United States Merchant Marine." This article indicated the Bureau had in its possession documents concerning such a plan by Hitler, *which indication was completely false.* [Emphasis added.]

This FBI letter was prompted by an inquiry from Keyhoe asking such questions as, "Have FBI agents told witnesses not to talk about UFO sightings?" The several thousand UFO-sighting reports in the public domain at the time Keyhoe made his inquiry would have seemed to have answered his question, or at least indicated that the public was not even slightly intimidated by the FBI.

—Philip J. Klass

Wyoming UFO-Contactee Runs for Governor

The gubernatorial race in Wyoming was an interesting, if not unusual, race: one of the candidates was the much exploited UFO-contactee Pat McGuire. A rancher near Laramie, McGuire had previously been featured on the "That's Incredible" TV program and in the *National Enquirer.* Under the guidance of Leo Sprinkle, a psychologist at the University of Wyoming who uses hypnotic regression to discover UFO

contactees, McGuire had revealed that alien beings had visited him on several occasions. During one such visitation, the aliens told McGuire where to dig a well. The resulting "miracle well," according to reports, produces tremendous amounts of water in a region where surface water is scarce.

Not unexpectedly, McGuire inserted his extraterrestrial guidance into his campaign. According to AP dispatches appearing in the *Casper Star-Tribune* and the *Rock Springs Rocket-Miner*, McGuire claimed to have received a message from his alien mentors stating that "alien beings are using him to warn the Soviet Union and other countries against intervening in Israel's invasion of Lebanon." According to McGuire, said one report, the aliens "picked him up" to give him the message and apparently warned that any such interference would result in their intervention "no matter what the destruction needs to be." It appears as though the earth is on the verge of intergalactic conflict.

A fellow Democrat, a member of the Wyoming legislature who wished to remain anonymous, stated to this writer, "Why does he have to be a Democrat?" Those who followed McGuire's campaign were hopeful that if he was elected he might use some of the state's mineral royalties to create the world's first intergalactic spaceport on his ranch—complete with appropriate immigration and customs officials.

Unfortunately, these dreams will have to wait. In the Sept. 14 Democratic primary, McGuire polled only a little more than 8,000 votes, losing out to the incumbent Democratic governor by 38,000 votes. According to one news account, his "low-key" campaign was the cause of his poor showing.

McGuire's contacts with the aliens have been and continue to be frequent. Visitors to his ranch in Albany County have reported that he points out distant flying saucers on a daily basis. In fact, so frequent are his alien visitations that his entire family reportedly takes them for granted. Visitors (the earthly kind) have not had the opportunity to see the supposed saucers at close range or in a photograph, apparently a consequence of the aliens' camera-shyness and fear of strangers.

Sprinkle did not publicly enter the "McGuire for Governor" campaign—perhaps in an effort to maintain a more conservative scientific stance. He did, however, conduct another of his annual conferences this past summer. He had featured McGuire in an earlier conference that had attempted to contact the aliens telepathically by transmitting the participants' thoughts to a medium in Czechoslovakia, who then beamed the thoughts into outer space. According to Sprinkle, the purpose of the 1982 conference was to bring people with common experiences together for scientific and objective study. Questioned on the reliability of hypnotic regression,

Sprinkle responded that he recognized the possibility of flaws "but it's the only tool we have. . . . I have decided that I would rather be a 'fool' investigating these interesting experiences, rather than be a 'fool' who is not investigating. Either way I can be perceived as a fool . . ."

—*Lee Roger Taylor, Jr.*

Lee Taylor teaches at Western Wyoming College, Rock Springs.

Graphotherapy: Close That Loop, Raise That Crossbar

A new unscientific, unproven, we-can-improve-your-personality bit of mysticism is emerging on the current scene. I hereby predict that it will blossom and gain wide acceptance.

"Graphotherapy" is the name of the new game. It was featured in the *National Examiner,* May 25, 1982, in an article entitled "Change Your Life by Changing Your Handwriting." If people take advantage of you, practice closing the loops on your written "t," "d," and "s." Your self-esteem is directly related to the height of the crossbar on your "t"; if you wish to raise your self-image, raise the crossbar. There are also writing exercises to practice to become more relaxed, more intelligent, and so forth.

The pundits of graphotherapy hasten to point out that this process takes time—about a year—and that it requires the professional guidance of a graphotherapist.

Graphotherapy is bound to flourish. It contains three of the key ingredients of virtually every such discipline that has survived the ages:

1. It has the appearance of logic and science—at least to the illogical and nonscientific. After all, if your personality is reflected in your handwriting, as has been asserted for centuries by graphologists, then certainly a conscious change in one will cause a change in the other.

2. Its program contains all the elements of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

3. Based upon its totally subjective elements, and with the many elusive shifts of ground available to its purveyors, it will appear to be unmeasurable and untestable by science. Testimonials will be its forte.

And so the centuries-old tried-and-false nonscience of graphology has given itself a graduate degree: it will now masquerade under the banner of graphotherapy.

—*Robert A. Steiner*

Robert Steiner is a magician and chairman of the Bay Area Skeptics.

Moon May Be the Son

The Reverend Sun Myung Moon, sentenced in July to 18 months in jail for income-tax evasion, is just full of surprises. During the recent trial of a deprogrammer—who was being sued by a Moonie, the 62-year-old Korean cult figurehead was coy when asked if he was the True Messiah. He told the court that he had "the potential of becoming the true messiah," but referred them to his church members for the final answer of whether or not they believed he was such a holy personage.

But Moon went on to tell the audience in the New York City courtroom that he had frequently spoken with Moses, Buddha, and Jesus Christ. Conveniently for the Reverend, these famous folks spoke to him in Korean—he speaks no English.

Moon assured the court that he knew it was Buddha he spoke with,

because he recognized him from temple statues, and he recognized Christ "from his picture."

—*J. R.*

Committee to Be Formed in Sweden

In Sweden, an organizing committee has issued an invitation to found an organization for "science and popular education." Journalists and illusionists are among the ten initiators, who also include representatives of the fields of psychology, philosophy, the history of ideas, sociology, physics, and pedagogics.

In its announcement the committee referred to strong antiscientific and pseudoscientific trends in Swedish society. "There are those who say nothing should be done about this, since it is not dangerous. We do not share this opinion. Pseudoscience is dangerous when it entices people to quackery instead of competent medical care. Mysticism is dangerous when it makes use of human weaknesses to drag people into positions of authoritarian dependence. Distrust in science and reason is in the long run dangerous to democracy, since democracy depends on respect for human reason."

The committee expects that this skeptical organization will be formed by the end of 1982. There is no lack of material for debunking, it said. The address of the organizing committee is c/o Sven Ove Hansson, Malmv 11, 191 61 Sollentuna, Sweden.

—*Sven Ove Hannson*

Science as Human Enterprise

I believe that science must be understood as a social phenomenon, a gutsy, human enterprise, not the work of robots programmed to collect pure information. I also present this view as an upbeat for science, not as a gloomy epitaph for a noble hope sacrificed on the altar of human limitations. Science, since people must do it, is a socially embedded activity. It progresses by hunch, vision, and intuition. . . . Facts are not pure and unsullied bits of information; culture also influences what we see and how we see it. Theories, moreover, are not inexorable inductions from facts. The most creative theories are often imaginative visions imposed upon facts; the source of imagination is also strongly cultural. This argument, although still anathema to many practicing scientists, would, I think, be accepted by nearly every historian of science. In advancing it, however, I do not ally myself with an overextension now popular in some historical circles: the purely relativistic claim that scientific change only reflects the modification of social contexts, that truth is a meaningless notion outside cultural assumptions, and that science can therefore provide no enduring answers. As a practicing scientist, I share the credo of my colleagues; I believe that a factual reality exists and that science, though often in an obtuse and erratic manner, can learn about it.

—Stephen Jay Gould, in *The Mismeasure of Man* (W.W. Norton, 1981)