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SECTION E

Washington Times

In search of modern Merlins: Psychics gain wider credibility

By Tom Kelly
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Belief in psychic phenomena, on par with a belief in astrology a decade ago, is gaining new respectability.

The most striking change is in the scientific community. It is exhibiting a new willingness to believe that some people can know things by inexplicable means and that others can will the behavior of physical objects.

Psychologist Brenda Dunne, a member of a Princeton University scientific team which has conducted elaborate tests of psychic ability for 15 years, says the era of flat rejection is nearly over.

"A survey taken about three years ago among scientists showed that a clear majority, well over 50 percent, believe there is something there. This is in contrast to one taken about 12 years ago when most did not."

Marcello Truzzi of East Michigan University, who was chairman of the Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, decided his associates were interested only in debunking phenomena. He founded the Center for Scientific Anomaly Research, which keeps a determinedly open mind.

"If this stuff has any truth, it has national security," he says.

The new acceptance and linkage to national security also is apparent



Sen. Clay Green Peet

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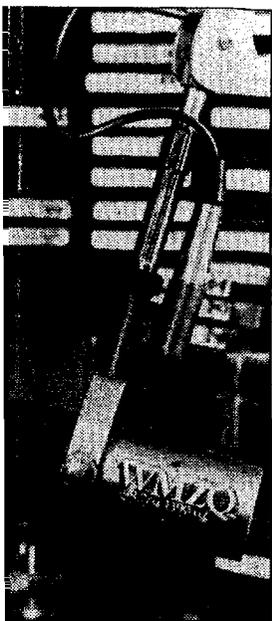


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People don't object — it's Ms. Ball. "If Jim and I do things he says, people love us. But when he says it, it really broadens the show."

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—ss D. Franklin/The Washington Times studios.

Jim Wright, Texas Democrat, is another.

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staff "take a detached, scientific and very supportive interest" in the work being done by her and her colleagues.

Mr. Wright's office says he has attended lectures by Washington psychic Anne Gehman; Mrs. Gehman says she has discussed psychic phenomena with Mr. Wright and his wife, Betty, and has a friendly relationship with them.

Mr. Pell, perhaps Capitol Hill's most unabashed believer, has urged the National Science Foundation, the Defense Department and other government agencies to increase psychic research funding. He has a full-time staff member, C.B. Scott Jones, whose exclusive job is to monitor reports of psychic activities.

Rep. Charlie Rose, North Carolina Democrat, is the founder of the Congressional Clearing House on the Future, which has met with psychics. He has urged the CIA to initiate a "psychic Manhattan Project" to develop its abilities to monitor Soviet military projects.

The government's interest in psychic phenomena began in the '70s when the Pentagon and the CIA, with the backing of Congress, sponsored

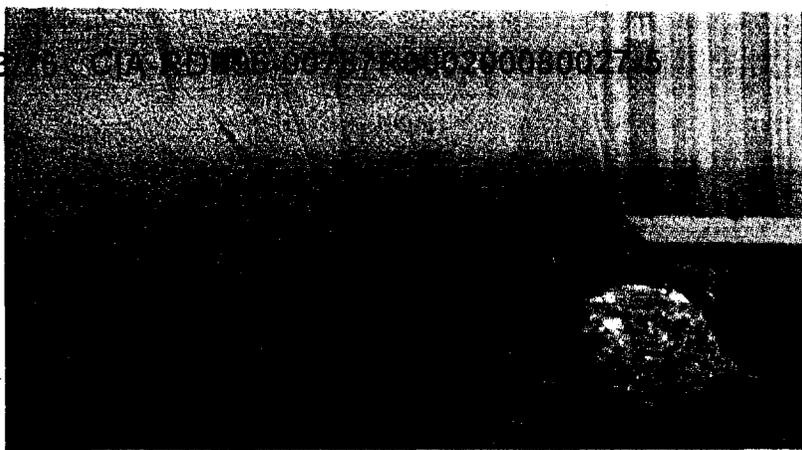


Photo by Stephen Crowley/The Washington Times

Washington psychic Anne Gehman cautions that any medium who guarantees physical phenomena is a "liar, a cheat and a fraud."

experiments on remote viewing at SRI International, formerly Stanford Research Institute, at Menlo Park, Calif. It continues today.

In a report last year, the National Research Council said the Army and its advisers had considered if paranormal forces "might be used to jam enemy computers, prematurely trigger nuclear weapons and incapacitate weapons and vehicles." It said "one suggested application" was to form a battalion of "warrior

monks" who could exert long-distance influence over enemy personnel.

The cutting edge currently is focused on less spectacular goals, the abilities of people to foresee coming events — Precognitive Remote Perception — or to shape current ones — psychokinesis.

The most intriguing results have been those reported by scientists at

see PSYCHIC, page E2

MTER / Hap Erstein

'Face a Face' Puppets in Paris

Though we tend to relegate puppetry to the realm of children's entertainment, the French understand it as a birthday party diversion. Puppets can be the conduit for comedy and chilling drama. The faces of puppets are immobile; they cannot convey the emotion.

Among the unspoken rules which a Parisian puppeteer operates. With its show, "Face a Face," a young, moving and infectious series of skits, Heracio Peralta and Nicolas expand their puppet art without overdoing it with spectacle or gimmick.

The appearance is the first which puppet theaters to the French Embassy this



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Puppeteers fade into the background once the performance starts.

year under the umbrella of the Marionette Performance Festival Francais. If the other two companies are as inventive and awe-inspiring, you should make a point of pulling strings to go see them all.

Although billed as appropriate for both adults and children, one fears that today's television-trained youngsters may not have the patience or attention span for a show that evolves in such delicate strokes and tiny touches. Instead,

"Face a Face" manages the more difficult achievement of transforming adults, at least those who are willing to accept the experience, into children.

The stage of the modern Maison Francaise auditorium is clad in black, as are the two puppeteers. At times they appear alongside the puppets they manipulate, occasionally interacting with them and often merely standing out of the light in a semblance of invisibility.

When they mask themselves completely in black, all it takes from a cooperative viewer is the slightest squint and the puppets are moving by themselves.

At one point, Miss Nicolas carefully takes a puppet of an old woman out of a wicker basket, lays it down on the table-performance platform and leaves the stage. With a wondrous touch of theatrical magic, the doll then snaps to life — by itself or at least at the hand of the unseen Mr. Peralta.

The puppets move by the simple, almost imperceptible actions of their masters, all the better to sustain the illusion of self-propelled creatures. Bululu strips puppetry down to its essence, a feat well illustrated by the opening scene of a

see PUPPETS, page E5

ane Haslem Salon (2025
Place NW) in Dupont Circle
ly was intended to be a
ion venture to Mrs. Has-
nighttime gallery on Seventh
But as lease problems
er to close the Seventh
space last December, the
of regular monthly exhibi-
ow has fallen to the salon.
salon will continue to func-
newhat differently from a
Her son and the salon's di-

through Feb. 11, might inspire
women are depicted in art has be-
come a subject of intense debate
and analysis over the past decade,
and women are Ms. Friedman's
preferred subject matter.

If her small portrait renditions
of heavy-lidded, porcelain-skinned
beauties are innocuous enough, a
number of full-figure and multiple-
figure compositions display the
tense conjunction of innocence and

by disjunction from the surrealistic
Magritte. Her use of the
tures of the women from Picasso's
classical period, and such classical
subject matter as Botticelli's
"Three Graces."

Ms. Friedman's "Three Figures
on the Beach" translates this Re-
naissance motif into a dream vi-
sion; the cavorting women seem
oblivious to a severed foot on the
sand before them. The intimation
of menace and prior violence that

... appreciation for atmos-
phere. As a result, we tend to read
the paintings as patches of color on
canvas even as we relate to their
recognizable subject matter.

Achieving this kind of tension
between the formal and the repre-
sentational has long been a concern
of painters. Mr. Koch, however,
casts no new light on the matter;
and here the picturesque remains
just picturesque.

PSYCHIC

From page E1

SRI, Princeton and the Mind Science
Foundation in San Antonio, Texas.

In the precognition tests one per-
son, the "precipient," describes a
randomly selected place that a col-
league, "the agent," is about to visit.

Miss Dunne says in a test which
she conducted when she was at Mun-
delein College in Chicago, the agent
picked a sealed envelope from a
stack of 10 containing sites chosen
by outsiders.

The Rockefeller Chapel at the
University of Chicago was the site
picked and the precipient, some
miles away, described the chapel in
extraordinary detail: "I am getting
the little turrets around the building
... long windows in a row quite high
... a heavy wooden door with a black
bolt on it. ... My feeling at the mo-
ment is that it is a building like a
church, and I can see the pews."

Miss Dunne said that about 15
percent of similar tests at Princeton
produced results equally rich in ac-
curate detail.

The main emphasis at Princeton,
however, has been on psychokinesis,
which can be more easily fitted into
scientific controls. Robert G. Jahn,
dean emeritus of the School of Engi-
neering and Applied Science, Miss
Dunne and others have reported the
results of 78 million trials in which
voluntary operators have tried to in-
fluence the behavior of natural
background static, called "white
noise," and the distribution of free-
falling balls.

In the first experiment an elec-
tronic device produces 1,000 white-
noise pulses a second. Left to
chance, half would have positive
electrical charges, half negative.

The participating volunteers try
to influence the impulses by concen-

trating on a desired outcome. The
results over the years show a diver-
gence from the norm 10,000 times
greater than indicated by chance.

In the second major experiment,
called the "Random Mechanical
Cascade," a specially designed ma-
chine drops 9,000 polystyrene balls
through a matrix of 330 pegs.

Left to chance, the balls would be
distributed among 19 bins in a uni-
form, perfectly balanced fashion,
with a few at each end and most in
the middle in what is known as a bell
curve.

Operators will the balls to one side
or the other. And results over 15
years, according to Miss Dunne,
have, again, been 10,000 times as
great as anticipated.

The other major psychokinesis
experimenter, Helmut Schmidt, a
quantum physicist formerly of Duke
University and currently of the
Mind Science Foundation in San
Antonio, has achieved even more
striking results. His subjects try to
influence the clicks of a Geiger
counter.

The clicks, which measure the
emissions of radioactive materials,
come at predictable rates. Operators
try to speed or slow them. Mr.
Schmidt says they have outscored
chance by 10 million to one.

The scientific interest in para-
normal events has a historical foun-
dation. Thomas Edison was a firm
believer in the paranormal, and
physicists Albert Einstein, Max
Planck and Neils Bohr took open-
minded attitudes.

In the 1920s, J.B. and Louisa
Rhine were appointed to the faculty
of the Department of Psychology at
Duke University, where they
touched off a new interest in psychic
phenomena.

Reports by today's experimenters
have received considerable atten-
tion, but less than total acceptance
in the scientific community. John

Palmer, of the Foundation for Re-
search of the Nature of Man, in Dur-
ham, N.C., says in "An Evaluative Re-
port on the Current Status of
Parapsychology" (1985) that the ex-
periments do support the existence
of anomalies.

A report by the National Re-
search Council, "Enhancing Human
Performance" (1988), which was
funded by the Army, concluded that
they "fall short of an experimental
ideal" and do not "justify any conclu-
sion." The report praised "the sincer-
ity and dedication" of the investi-
gators and recommended that the
Army continue to monitor the work
at Princeton, SRI and San Antonio.

Mr. Truzzi takes a more positive
view. He says scientists prefer to de-
scribe test results as "anomalies," or
abnormalities, and avoid such term
as paranormal phenomena.

He says he would prefer to hav
their significance explained i
terms of physical laws. If they tur
out to be paranormal phenomena, h
says, "it would shake my world to it
foundations."

Mrs. Gehman, a board member o
the National Spiritualist Associati
of Churches, who charges a min
imum "gift" of \$100 for a 60-minu
session and who says she has mar
people from Capitol Hill among h
clients, believes that she can cor
municate with "those who have go
through the process of death," and
certain situations can heal and be
metal.

But she says 99.9 percent of r
ported physical phenomena — tat
rapping, levitation and such — a
fraudulent and that any medi
who guarantees physical pheno
ena is a "liar, a cheat and a fraud."

She says that if the scienti
eventually prove that their an
alies are rooted in natural law
won't bother her at all.

"Whatever the explanation," s
says, "I will be content."

Hotel Terminus"

NR (descriptions of Holocaust
s)

victims, colleagues, employers,
stances, observers of Klaus

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duced by Marcel Ophuls,
ive-produced by John S.
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IUM RATING: FOUR STARS

o, his bodyguard in Bolivia, his
ney in France, his U.S. employ-
n the postwar Counter Intelli-
ce Corps who used and pro-
ed Barbie for his information
ommunists.

Mr. Ophuls also talked with Bar-
s victims who have harrowing
ories of his torture methods in
ns, with journalists and Nazi
ters who tracked Barbie, with
istance leaders, Auschwitz sur-
ors, Bolivian authorities and
des of others who knew Barbie
new of him.

They all have important stories,
hearing them all in one big,
-straining (subtitles and IDs),
-dressing dose is a numbing, of-
-disengaging experience. I vote
three 90-minute TV segments
less of Mr. Ophuls' words and
ug face on screen.