

WEIRDNESS UPDATE

"What started as a legitimate effort by the townspeople of Salem to identify, capture and kill those who did Satan's bidding quickly deteriorated into a witch hunt."

—Army Man

You may remember from *Trajectories* #9 that a while back Jim Moseley of *Saucer Smear* accused CSICOP crusaders Phil Klass and Zan Overall of sleazy behavior—trying to suppress a book on the Gulf Breeze UFOs by one Ed Walters. Klass then wrote Moseley a letter denying the charge—but Overall wrote Moseley a letter admitting they had done what Moseley claimed but attempting to justify it. Moseley printed both letters, leaving his readers to decide if they did it and Klass lied in denying it, or they didn't do it and Overall (inexplicably) lied in admitting it.

Now Klass has printed a broadside against Moseley with such brilliant polemic as:

"Is it true that Moseley applied to Alcoholics Anonymous but was turned down as incurable?"

"Not really, AA told him their quota was filled and suggested he re-apply in 50-100 years."

And:

"Is it true that Moseley's daughter has had an illegitimate child?"

"She's had so many that Moseley has lost count."

Moseley printed the whole diatribe in *Saucer Smear*, Vol. 38, No. 5, commenting only that Klass's claims were "libelous, untrue and not all that funny."

Elsewhere on the libel front, CSICOP has other troubles. As noted in *Trajectories*#1, one of their affiliates had already lost one libel case in 1988 (in

Oregon). Now more cases will soon come to court.

- Dr. Eldon Byrd has sued James Randi for statements Randi made as a CSICOP spokesperson, alleging that Byrd was serving a prison term for child molestation. Byrd claims he was never convicted of such a crime and that he has a letter from Randi documenting malice.

- Uri Geller, the Israeli psychic-or-charlatan (take your pick) has started four suits against Randi: for claiming that Geller "drove" an unnamed scientist to suicide (Geller says medical records show the scientist died of complications resulting from diabetes and a heart attack); for calling Geller a "psychopath" and a "social disease"; for claiming that Geller and Dr. Byrd conspired to commit felony; and finally for claiming that Geller's metal-bending feats have no original feature about them. Geller insists that Randi lied on all these counts, and that he will prove it in court.

(On the metal-bending issue, Geller's suit claims only that his feats possess originality, contrary to Randi; Uri does not attempt to bring the vexed question of "paranormality" before a court. English and American courts have traditionally ducked that issue, even when it seems central to a libel case, and ruled only on whether the defendant acted with or without "malice" in the legal sense.)

Two of Geller's suits were dismissed on technicalities (he was late in filing the first, and filed the second in the wrong jurisdiction); two remain pending.

- Randi has sent out a press release saying he "won" the two cases that never got to court, but complaining bitterly that his legal expenses have bankrupted him. Randi ringingly asserts that the libel suits represent "harassment" and an insidious attempt to destroy the First

Amendment. He begs for funds to continue the battle, saying he "knows" he is right.

- Randi has resigned from the Board of Directors of CSICOP.

- *Fate* magazine (August 1991) asserts that the new edition of Randi's book *Flim Flam* contains many alterations of passages which they had earlier labelled inaccurate, especially regarding his early career as astrology columnist for a Canadian tabloid.

- CSICOP's libel insurance has been cancelled.

On another front, Al Seckel, former executive of the Los Angeles CSICOP affiliate, continues to face serious charges against him made by CSICOP member Tom McIver.

McIver asserts that Seckel lied in claiming a degree from Cornell University, which he did not have, and also lied in claiming to be enrolled in post-graduate work at Caltech, when he was not. Letters from Cornell and Caltech seemingly confirm these charges and have been widely circulated by McIver and others. McIver has also been sending open letters about these alleged frauds to the Board of CSICOP and all interested parties since 1987. Nobody from CSICOP has ever answered McIver—until some recent letters from Phil Klass which did not deny the charges against Seckel but attempted to dilute them.

Klass said Seckel "almost" had a degree from Cornell, and McIver answered that that was like being a little bit pregnant. Klass also asked, with heavy sarcasm, if McIver expected CSICOP to conduct a full FBI-style investigation of every member, and McIver answered, no, he merely expected them to take some official notice after evidence of fraud has