

Ken Kesler

Just in case
you didn't happen
to see this.

Do you happen
to have details
of Honlon's
expose?

Or I would.

SCIENCE

New Flap Over Uri

The title of the report printed in *Nature* magazine seemed innocuous enough: "Information transmission under conditions of sensory shielding." But to the world of parapsychology, publication of the paper, the first claimed proof of extrasensory powers to have appeared in that prestigious scientific journal for many years, was nothing short of a sensation. Parapsychologists and others who believe in the existence of such psychic phenomena as telepathy, psychokinesis and precognition were jubilant; in their view, *Nature* had bestowed upon them the recognition and respectability that the scientific establishment has so long withheld. Some skeptics were dismayed; they felt the mere publication of the report in *Nature* would lend legitimacy to many of the hotly disputed tenets of parapsychology.

Submitted by Physicists Russell Targ and Harold Puthoff, the *Nature* article emphasized experiments at the Stanford Research Institute involving the controversial Israeli psychic and nightclub magician Uri Geller (TIME, March 14, 1973). Among other things, the report claimed that Geller correctly called the roll of a die inside a steel box

eight out of ten times; on the other two rolls he declined to pick a number. The odds against his performing that feat by chance, Targ and Puthoff calculated, were about a million to one. Geller was also reported to have sketched remarkably accurate versions of drawings picked at random by researchers hidden in another room. Those claims, printed in *Nature*, did seem to make a case for extrasensory perception.

Lengthy Exposé. What was generally overlooked—or purposely ignored—in the reaction to *Nature's* publication, was the unprecedented almost apologetic editorial that accompanied the Stanford Research Institute report. In the editorial, *Nature's* editors not only criticized the SRI paper but also pointedly called attention to the same week's issue of another respected British magazine, *New Scientist*, which carried a lengthy exposé that undermined both Geller and the SRI report.

Nature said that the original SRI paper was "weak in design and presentation," that its details were "disconcertingly vague," that some methods used were "naive," and that the experimenters showed "a lack of skill." Nonetheless, after sending the paper back to SRI for modifications, the magazine finally



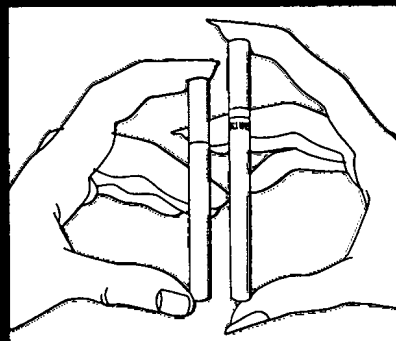
ISRAELI PSYCHIC URI GELLER
One in a million.

decided to publish it. Why? It had been submitted by "two qualified scientists" with the backing of a major research institute; the subject was "worthy" of investigation; the paper would allow other researchers "to gauge the quality of the Stanford research and assess how much it is contributing to parapsychology."

Nature also praised as a "service" the concurrent publication of the 16-page *New Scientist* article, which was

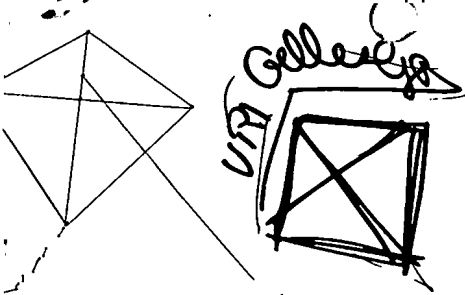
PALL MALL GOLD

LONGER... YET Milder.



Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined
That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

21 mg. "tar", 1.5 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette, FTC Report March '74.



TEST DRAWING (LEFT) & URI'S VERSION

written by Physicist Joseph Hanlon after a two-month investigation of Geller, and the SRI experiments. Hanlon, who delayed publishing his article until *Nature* printed the SRI paper, cited examples of Geller's evasiveness and reports of his cheating on television and during interviews with journalists. He also criticized the controls that Targ and Puthoff used in their experiments. Hanlon noted that Geller's sponsor, Andrija Puharich, a doctor, holds 56 patents, primarily in medical electronics. He suggested that Puharich might well have implanted a tiny radio receiver in one of Geller's teeth; it could have been used to give Geller information about drawings being selected in another room. Hanlon also questions Geller's success with the die. "Knowing the inability of the SRI scientists to control the other experiments," he says, "I can only conclude that this one was just as badly organized."

Hanlon, who was somewhat in-

clined to believe in some of Geller's professed powers when he began his inquiry, now insists that "no matter how good they are as laser physicists, Russell Targ and Hal Puthoff are no match for Uri Geller." Furthermore, he says, the SRI paper published in *Nature* "simply does not stand up against the mass of circumstantial evidence that Uri Geller is simply a good magician."

The Pollution of Space

When the two new satellites were launched last May, NASA hailed them as the latest example of space-age technology benefiting life on earth. One satellite, dubbed ATS-6 (for Applications Technology Satellite), is relaying educational TV programs to remote regions; the other, SMS-1 (Synchronous Meteorological Satellite), is a new breed of weather satellite equipped with infrared cameras that can shoot remarkably detailed cloud pictures even at night.

Both satellites are performing splendidly, but both are producing unexpected and undesired side effects: they are creating so much electronic interference that radio astronomers are sometimes virtually "blinded"—unable to distinguish the celestial radio signals so crucial to their work.

"It can cost us time, money and lost observations," grouses Radio Astronomer Frank J. Kerr of the University of

Maryland. What makes the situation even worse, he explains, is that the satellites use a portion of the radio spectrum especially important to radio astronomy. SMS-1, for instance, operates near the 18-cm. band, which is the natural wave length of hydroxyl, one of the first molecules discovered in space. It is from the signals of the hydroxyl molecule (which consists of one atom of hydrogen and one of oxygen) that radio astronomers have been learning about star formation and the nature of the clouds of gases between the stars.

ATS-6 broadcasts near an even more important frequency: the 11-cm. band, which has been specifically set aside by the International Telecommunications Union for the use of radio astronomers in their explorations of quasars, pulsars, distant galaxies and even the sun. Trouble is, the signals from these celestial sources are often so faint that they can be easily overwhelmed by signal spillover from the satellites' powerful radio transmissions, even when the complex craft are in a different part of the sky.

Kerr, who has been studying this new form of electronic pollution for the National Academy of Sciences, echoes the concern of his fellow radio astronomers: "We can perhaps live with one or two satellites, but if they put up 20 or 100 satellites that interfere in this way, it would be catastrophic."

100's

