

GELLER

No Guesswork

Parapsychology is the fledgling science (or pseudo science, depending on one's point of view) which explores such phenomena as telepathy, clairvoyance, psychokinesis and precognition. In the past the critics of parapsychology have usually outshouted its supporters, but in recent months the trend has been running the other way (NEWSWEEK, March 4). Last week, the field of parapsychology took a major step toward further respectability with the publication in the prestigious and notably conservative British journal *Nature* of a new paper on extrasensory experiments. "In publishing the paper," said *Nature* editor David Davies, "we are serving notice to the scientific community that there is something here worthy of their scrutiny."

The experiments published in *Nature* were conducted at the Stanford Research Institute in Menlo Park, Calif., by laser physicists Dr. Harold Puthoff and Russell Targ. They involve two psychics: 27-year-old Uri Geller, who for the last year has been displaying his paranormal abilities on television talk shows, and 55-year-old Pat Price, a former Burbank, Calif., police commissioner.

In a series of carefully controlled experiments, Geller was locked in an acoustically shielded room. His task was to sketch his impressions of "target" pic-

tures that were randomly selected by scientists in a nearby room. In two instances his drawings bore only a vague symbolic resemblance to the target, but when the target was a suspension bridge, Geller drew a remarkable abstract version of it. And his impressions of a bunch of grapes, a camel and a seagull in flight were amazingly accurate. The SRI researchers calculate that the odds against Geller's performing as well as he did are more than 1 million to one.

In a more difficult experiment, conducted before a group of scientists and filmed by a camera to check for any sleight of hand, Geller on eight successive occasions correctly called the uppermost face of a die that had been shaken in a steel box (again, a million-to-one shot).

ESP: Despite the precautions taken by the scientists to prevent cheating, the experiments involving Geller have many critics. Martin Gardner, a mathematics writer for *Scientific American*, argues that Geller (who was a stage performer in his native Israel) is "so skillful a magician that only another magician, and not a group of scientists, can determine whether Geller uses trickery or not."

Ex-cop Pat Price had parasensorily to "see" locations in the San Francisco area that were visited by researchers, while he remained locked in a shielded room at SRI. His impressions of buildings and the natural landscape were accurate against odds of about 2,000 to one.

Even so, the publication of the paper by *Nature* does not put a final seal of approval on the SRI work—or place it above all challenge, whether of possible fraud on the part of the two psychics or of oversights on the part of Puthoff and Targ. "What we are saying to scientists," says *Nature's* Davies, "is: Here is what has been done in the name of science. Here are the accusations. Now go back and have another look."

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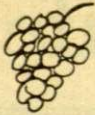
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GELLER

Call us Chances are, we've got the kind



Uri Geller



TARGET



RESPONSE



TARGET



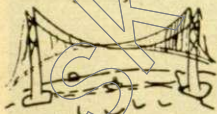
RESPONSE



TARGET



RESPONSE



TARGET BRIDGE



RESPONSE



TARGET



RESPONSE

Right on: SRI researchers' targets and Geller's telepathic responses to them



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