

---

---

# Off the Beat

---

---

## Geller performs for physicists

---

Some physicists among our readers have criticized us for paying attention to the strange feats of Uri Geller, the young Israeli who can bend keys without touching them (SN: 11/10/73, p. 300). Other physicists, however, are interested and somewhat perplexed as the following report delivered to us by the theoretical physicist Jack Sarfatt indicates.

We present Sarfatt's report in *Off The Beat* rather than in our regular news columns because we are somewhat dubious about its being science news: No one has yet published a testable hypothesis about what is going on.

Before presenting the report we would like to enter the caveat that physicists should be the last people on earth to reject psychokinesis out of hand since they have a name for it, Pauli effect, that refers to one of their most distinguished and colorful colleagues, the late Wolfgang Pauli.

Pauli, who was mercifully a theoretical physicist, was notorious for being able to foul up any experiment in sight by his mere presence in the laboratory. The most outrageous Pauli story we have come across—and we remember reading this in the memoirs of a reputable physicist, but we can't remember whose memoirs—concerns James Franck, who at the time was doing vacuum-physics experiments at the University of Göttingen.

Vacuum experiments in those days were done with complex arrays of glass tubing. One day at about noon, Franck's experiment suddenly blew up or—as the modern jargon would have it—imploded. Franck checked everything out and could not understand why. Some days later he got a letter from a friend in Copenhagen that told him by the way that Pauli had arrived in Copenhagen on the day of the accident. Franck checked out the circumstances of Pauli's trip and discovered that at the exact moment of the disaster Pauli's train was standing in the Göttingen station. Case closed.

The above story may have to be qualified as possibly apocryphal since we do not have sworn affidavits attesting to it. Sarfatt's report on the latest Geller-Prüfung refers to a veritable cloud of witnesses. Here it is:

Uri Geller was tested on June 21, 1974 by John Hasted (professor of experimental physics, Birkbeck College, London) and David Bohm (professor of theoretical physics, Birkbeck

College). Participants and witnesses to the test include the physicists Keith Birkinshaw and Ted Basin and myself. Also present were the writer Arthur Koestler and the psychic researcher Brendan O'Regan. Several experiments were conducted.

In one of them, Geller placed Sarfatt's hand on top of several metallic objects which included a flat circular disk allegedly cut from a single crystal. A piece of plastic separated the palm of Sarfatt's hand from the disk. Geller's hand was in contact with Sarfatt's for approximately two minutes. Upon examination, the circular disk was found to be significantly bent. Detailed studies of the disk are being conducted at the Birkbeck Laboratories. A precise monitoring of the location of the disk during Geller's psychokinetic action could not be made. However, it was absolutely impossible for the disk to have been tampered with by means of tricks while it was under Sarfatt's hand.

Geller also succeeded in triggering a very strong burst from a Geiger counter tube that he held in his hand. The creation of the burst happened almost simultaneously with Geller's expressed intention to create it. The magnitude of the burst was conservatively estimated by Hasted to be in the region of 100 to 150 counts per second which should be compared to a normal background rate of about one per second. Hasted is now carefully studying automatic recordings of this event and several others similar to it. The creation of the burst was correlated with strong breathing and signs of great physical exertion on Geller's part. Geller complained of a sensation similar to an electric shock. There was no possibility of any electric shock coming from the instrumentation.

Geller then succeeded in bending several pieces of metal by psycho-energetic action. These objects included the blade of a knife and a key belonging to Bohm. The flow of water from a tap on to the metal seemed to make the bending occur more easily. The bending times were of the order of several tens of seconds.

Another test of Geller was made on June 22, 1974, at Birkbeck. Geller was able to repeat his performance of the day before with the Geiger counter tube. Witnesses to this test included the American concert pianist, Byron Janis and the artist Maria Cooper Janis. On this occasion, Koestler reported a strong sensation simultaneous with the Geiger tube burst. Koestler was visibly shaken for several minutes. Geller also succeeded in bending the house key of the science fiction writer, Arthur C. Clarke while being continuously watched by Clarke, Koestler, A. V. Cleaver (former director of the Rockets Division, Rolls Royce Ltd.)

and Arthur Ellison (department of electrical engineering, City University of London). Clarke, who was previously skeptical of Geller's authenticity has publicly challenged any magician to "put up or shut up" in regard to duplicating Geller's feat under identical conditions.

Geller also succeeded in duplicating a drawing made by Koestler. Full details on the Birkbeck tests are being prepared for publication by Hasted and Bohm. Independent tests were made by John Taylor (department of mathematics, King's College, London) with Geller during the last week in June. My personal professional judgment as a Ph.D. physicist is that Geller demonstrated genuine psycho-energetic ability at Birkbeck, which is beyond the doubt of any reasonable man, under relatively well controlled and repeatable experimental conditions. While the experimental conditions were not perfect, the events at Birkbeck do represent a major step forward in the new field of experimental psycho-energetics.

—Jack Sarfatt

---

## On the statistics of scientific meetings

---

In the court of Nero, tradition tells us, there was an official called *arbiter elegantiarum*. The holder of this office was one Petronius, traditionally identified with the author of that polymorphous perverse romp, *Satyricon*, which Federico Fellini recently made into a revoltingly fascinating film. The function of the said Petronius at court was to be a kind of Emily Post at the orgy, determining who reclined where and who took precedence over whom in the games and sports that were indulged in.

I propose that what the scientific world now needs is a kind of *arbiter scientiarum*, an officer whose function it would be to review the precedences of scientific meetings and avoid conflicts. Perhaps the International Council of Scientific Unions would be a proper body to set up such an office.

The thought comes up because of a recent week, that of June 10, during which I could have attended three separate meetings for enlightenment and profit. To review them, they were: a conference on experimental general relativity in Cambridge, Mass., a meeting on submillimeter radio astronomy in Bishop, Calif., and a meeting on quantum electronics in San Francisco.

The choice finally went to the quantum electronics meeting. Cambridge was early out because it was clear for other reasons that I would have to be in California at the time. It would be disingenuous to pretend that the venue of the quantum electronics meeting in my favorite city of all North America,

the lovely city where the fog washes away the years and life becomes once again young, beautiful and happy, did not influence the choice. Yet it was a good meeting; the subject happens to be bursting out in all directions right now. But I regret missing the other two. Since we are now into the prime summer travel season there may be other such collisions in store.

We travel a lot in this business, and as scientific meetings and the places they are held proliferate, we will travel more. I am waiting for the announcement of an international meeting on cosmic rays in Katmandu. I wouldn't put it past the cosmic-ray physicists.

In North America one of the chief manifestations of scientific proliferation is the rise of the western part of the continent in scientific interest. Time was, somewhat before I got into the business, when a reporter sitting on the East Coast could pretty well cover science in North America. One of the reasons for putting Science Service in Washington was that 50 years ago the city, with its Government laboratories, was one of the main centers of research in the United States. Today it is just one of many: *Sic transit gloria urbis*.

The American Physical Society is a case in point. Its largest meeting of the year is held in late January or early February. For decades the venue of that meeting was always New York. But in recent years it has begun to move around. It has been held several times in Chicago, once in San Francisco, and in 1975 it is scheduled for, of all places, Disneyland. Karl K. Darrow, who retired some years ago after being secretary of the APS since almost before I was born, will surely have something pucky to say about that.

When one starts from Washington, one does not set out for Anaheim, San Francisco or Vancouver with quite as light a heart as one sets out for Baltimore. What is needed, I repeat, is a conscious agency to moderate and eliminate conflicts among meetings. Another thing that is needed is better advance information about meetings. This problem is difficult, probably impossible, to solve since the really new results are not likely to be cut and dried eight weeks in advance for a preliminary abstract, but it might be profitable to think about the question.

Or am I barking up a lonely tree inhabited only by a few specialist reporters? Perhaps scientists, with their narrower range of interests find that things are so well organized now that they never suffer conflicts of dates. All I know is that I have some very hectic weeks interspersed with long stretches when I could travel, but there is nothing to go to.

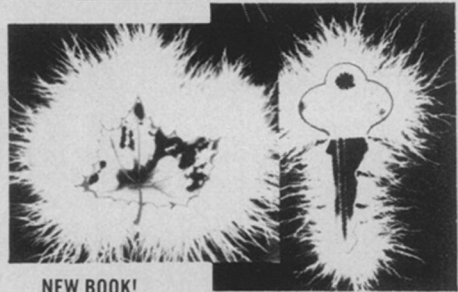
Dietrick E. Thomsen

## NEW! KIRLIAN PHOTOGRAPHY KIT

### B&W and Color Images on Film without Camera or Lens!

Now you can experiment in the amazing new field of "Kirlian" electrophotography—fascinating images obtained on film without a camera or lens by direct recording of an electric charge transmitted by animate or inanimate objects. Each "aura" differs from another. An animate aura is said to change correspondingly to physical changes. Measure changes in "bioplasmic" states! Record your own corona discharge photos of organic and inorganic objects! Our great surplus buys give you a kit for under \$50 with everything you need but film, including a portable darkroom, double transformer isolated from power source—itsself worth more than \$25, and complete instructions.

STOCK NO. 71,938Q, JUST \$49.95 Ppd.



#### NEW BOOK!

HIGH VOLTAGE PHOTOGRAPHY by H. S. Dakin

A must for getting into "Kirlian" photography, this 60-page paperback, just off the press, deals with practically everything you need to know about Electro or Corona Discharge photography. It's fascinating.

STOCK NO. 9129Q . . . \$5.00 Ppd.

**YOU MUST BE DELIGHTED!**  
EVERYTHING EDMUND SELLS HAS  
A 30-DAY MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE.  
Return it if you aren't delighted.

### GIANT FREE CATALOG!

NEW! 180 PAGES — OVER 4500 UNUSUAL  
BARGAINS FOR HOBBYISTS, SCHOOLS,  
INDUSTRY . . . JUST CHECK COUPON!



EDMUND SCIENTIFIC CO.

300 Edscorp Bldg., Barrington, N.J. 08007  
America's Greatest Science • Optics • Hobby Mart  
Helping to develop America's Technology for over 30 years.

#### COMPLETE AND MAIL COUPON NOW

EDMUND SCIENTIFIC CO.  
300 Edscorp Bldg., Barrington, N. J. 08007  
Send me:

\_\_\_ KIRLIAN PHOTOGRAPHY KIT(S)  
@ \$49.95 ea. (No. 71,938Q) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ 'HIGH VOLTAGE PHOTOGRAPHY'  
@ \$5.00 ea. (No. 9129Q) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

FREE 180-page Catalog Service & handling charge . . . .50

Encl. is  Check,  M.O. Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

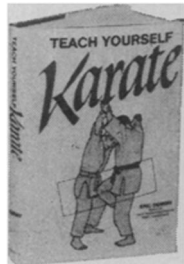
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Please print

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

## Teach Yourself Karate

By Eric Dominy



Here is a complete, detailed self-teaching "course" of 23 lessons in the art of Karate, by a world-renowned expert and coach. Instructions are clear, easy to understand and easy to follow. Every move explained. Full information on anatomy, posture, movement. Specific instructions on attacks, cuts, defenses and counters. Also covers exercises for two, uses of protective clothing, free fighting, and techniques of self-defense. Much more! COPIOUS ILLUSTRATIONS • Order Now! \$5.95, plus 50¢ handling, 10-day Money Back Guar.

EMERSON BOOKS, Inc., Dept. 690A  
Reynolds Lane, Buchanan, N.Y. 10511

#### THINGS of science

For Boys and Girls—10 to 16

Send **TODAY** for free information on how you can receive a different experimental science kit once each month. Kits include materials and booklet of interesting experiments that can be done at home or in school. Write to:

THINGS of science  
Department P18  
1719 N St., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036

Back issues of

## science news

University Microfilms, a Xerox company, provides back issues of *Science News*, except those in the current year, in microfilm/microfiche/35 millimeter editions. As each year becomes complete, it will be made available through University Microfilms.

For further information, contact:

#### Xerox University Microfilms

300 North Zeeb Road  
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

#### STRANGE PHENOMENA

A SOURCEBOOK OF UNUSUAL NATURAL PHENOMENA

Compiled by WILLIAM R. CORLISS

Over 350 accounts of ball lightning, the Andes glow, earthquake lights, Indian Ocean wheels of light, the Barisal guns, and other strange geophysical phenomena gleaned from *Science*, *Nature*, *Scientific American*, and other publications. Thorough index.

277 pages, hard covers, \$6.95 postpaid

Published by

WILLIAM R. CORLISS

BOX 107B, GLEN ARM, MARYLAND 21057

