

A LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Putting together a TIME cover can produce a spirited clash of viewpoints among writers, editors, correspondents and reporter-researchers—one that ultimately serves to balance and enhance the finished story. Such was the case in dealing with the complex and controversial subject of psychic phenomena. Los Angeles Correspondent Richard Duncan was particularly open in his approach. One day at U.C.L.A., Duncan submitted himself to Kirlian photography, a process for measuring psychic energy. Although there were too few exposures to prove or disprove anything to his satisfaction, Duncan was interested to see that the developed film of his fingertips showed blotchy, whorled or spiky "coronas" that corresponded to his differing emotional states.

Senior Editor Leon Jaroff, on the other hand, brought rigorous scientific standards to his judgments on the story, and an admitted predisposition to skepticism. "Belief in these matters," he feels, "is less a function of intelligence than of psychological need." Although he firmly believes that even such widespread phenomena as *déjà vu* and precognitive dreams will eventually yield to rational analysis, he cannot rationally explain why, three times in a row last week, his clock-radio failed to go off, making him late for work.

Even more bizarre was the mysterious force that glitched TIME's complex, computerized copy-processing system on closing night—at almost the precise moment that our psychic-phenomena story was fed into it. Against astronomical odds, both of the machines that print out TIME's copy stopped working simultaneously. No sooner were the spirits excised and the machines back in operation than the IBM computer in effect swallowed the entire cover story; it developed a flaw in its programming that sent the copy circling endlessly through memory loops from which it could not be retrieved. Thirteen hours and a second expert exorcism later, the IBM 370/135 snapped out of its trance and grudgingly returned the finished story to us.

Associate Editor Stefan Kanfer, who wrote the cover story, managed to remain free of psychic interruption last week. "I got into this topic," he says, "through the back door—some would say front door—of magic and mentalism. There are many tricks with which one can duplicate paranormal phenomena." Indeed, Amateur Magician Kanfer astounded numerous TIME staffers last week by seeming to guess correctly, over the telephone, cards that had been pulled from a deck in Jaroff's office—which is one floor below Kanfer's.

Ralph P. Davidson

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