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Western Washington University
A Trip Through Inner Space

by Alice Anderson
What I'd like you to do now is just go ahead and concentrate on the sound of my voice — just let yourself concentrate fully and completely on the meaning of the word relax. There's nothing magical or mystical about what we're doing. Rather than having this be a contest of wills, this is a contest to see how well you and I work together as a team.

* * *

Ronald Roe has dark hair, intense blue eyes, and a Master's degree in special education and he is a hypnotist. There's a contagious aura of awareness and ease about him.

Roe operates the Northwest Research and Development Center. He has 12 years of educational experience; seven in public schools, five as a private consultant — and he believes in what he is doing.

"Meditation, hypnosis, biofeedback; they're all basically the same thing," he explained. "What you're dealing with is the connection between the conscious and subconscious states. Anything that can make the jump works equally well. Some methods are slower than others — transcendental meditation, for instance — but the end results are pretty much identical.

"Our system here is threefold: physical and mental relaxation; concentration — focusing (or not focusing, some people use that) on a certain thought or idea; and visual imagery — working up a mental rehearsal using verbal suggestions. You visualize the desired end result," he said.

* * *

Even though your conscious mind is fully aware of everything we're doing, he says, your subconscious mind — through relaxation — is opening the doors of communication.

I am aware of a small voice in my mind. And now we're going to bridge the gap. I'd like you to visualize standing at the top of a flight of stairs. There are five steps in that stairway, each step is numbered clearly from 5 to 1. Be aware that this symbolic stairway is a bridge that bridges the gap between conscious and subconscious levels of communication.

These techniques have been practiced throughout the history of mankind. They work.

* * *

Hypnosis has been around a long time, dating back to ancient Egypt and Greece. Credit for its modern discovery goes to Franz Mesmer, who displayed the results of his "animal magnetism" in the 18th century. Others soon realized that he did not hold a premium on subconscious power and Science rolled up its sleeves and started to investigate.

Today hypnotism is widely used in psychological therapy and research, particularly with vocally handicapped individuals. Among its believed benefits are easier breathing, more fluent speech patterns, relaxed perspective and improved self-concepts. Roe is convinced of its worth.

"I've undergone it myself — it's just a conscious change to the dream-state — the same mindlevel," he said. "It's possible to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative completely. Once you're headed in this direction you can shift your entire..."
attitude and aim yourself where you want to go. Faith in yourself is the key."

* * *

Now, when I clap my hands, your eyes will pop right open. You will be fully conscious of everything — although your subconscious will be at the fore.
He claps.

How do you feel?
Fine, I say, slightly croaky with cultivating a relaxed throat. And I do. Normal, even. Uh . . . maybe excessively open-minded, now that I think of it. Increased perception — the room is a harmony of lights-and-darks.

Okay, we're going to try an exercise now. I will count from ten backward, and with every even number I want you to open your eyes and focus on this orange ball, being aware as you do so that each time it will be harder and harder to open your eyes — in fact, by the time I get down to zero, it will become impossible.

My small skeptic is starting to froth.
Ten. Your eyelids are getting heavy, just as if a 50-pound weight is pulling them down. Nine . . . eight . . . now you have a 100-pound weight on each one . . . six . . . and now it is getting difficult . . . three . . . two . . . and not it is almost impossible . . .

I'm aware that this is harder than anything you've ever done before . . . one . . . and now those eye muscles are rigid with fatigue — in fact, you cannot open them!

I don't mind, but my skeptic is having conniption fits.

Bullshit! she screams silently, jumping up and down. I will open my eyes whenever I want to! It's just easier this way . . .

* * *

A factor attracting many people to hypnosis is the possible discovery of "past lives." Roe can't confirm reincarnation. The subconscious may be weaving an expected fantasy. Still . . .

"I had one case, a woman, who was really, literally, terrified of the dentist," he said. "Scared stiff! Once she was under, I took her back and she recalled, as a girl, being strangled in a forest in Bavaria. If you'd undergone this, you'd be kind of jumpy when someone was moving around your head, maybe about to grab you by the THROAT — (demonstrating on me) — "and throttle you!"

In addition to regular consultations, Roe teaches three classes on self-relaxation and hypnosis. One, "Kinetics: Exploring Inner Space" will be available through the Free University in February.

What's the procedure for an individual client?
"Well, the minimum is four one-hour sessions," he said. I charge a flat fee of $25 per session — sometimes it depends on what you can afford — the whole thing in advance."
He grinned.

"That's the motivation."

The first session centers on technique and relaxation.

"The second is a week later and is mostly reinforcement," he said. The third is two weeks after that, and the fourth a month later."

The third and fourth emphasize concentration and mental imagery.

"All the while you're conditioning yourself with practice in between," Roe said. By the end of the program you should be self-sufficient (capable of self-hypnosis). The absolute maximum is eight sessions — beyond that I won't go. I handle a number of dieters and smokers, and by then they've either got the thing in hand or said the hell with it."

Roe believes there are no limits to the power of the mind.

"I think too much emphasis is put on outer space today," he reflected. "We tend to overlook the inner space. I think eventually we won't need outer space anymore. We'll see inner space as the last frontier."

* * *

How was it?
Fantastic! I'm not sure I was under, though . . .

Well, there is no "under," really — it's just that you know that state of mind. You've been there before, probably more when you were a little girl than as an adult, though.

Euphoria. The sun is shining outside.

You were a good subject.

I am smiling. I cannot stop! This is ridiculous.

Keep smiling! I laugh and we step into a brilliant day.
"I'm not superstitious," said a student recently, "but I wouldn't break a mirror or walk under a ladder . . . just on general principles."

Most of us have something that we consider lucky — wearing a special hat or shirt, finding a four-leaf clover, waking up in the morning and finding snow on the ground. Man has always hoped to influence his fate by seeking good omens, and avoiding whatever might bring ill fortune.

Some Western students believe that if you first say "bunny rabbit" when you wake up on the first day of the month — before you say anything else — it will bring you good luck. Three people I talked to practice the bunny rabbit superstition, with variations. One is in a family of seven that is scattered around the country. The first of every month they call each other, and the first thing they say is "bunny rabbit."

Another student makes a wish the night before the first of the month and says "rabbit rabbit" in the morning to make her wish come true. The third says simply "rabbit." She says that her mother, who is English, thinks the custom comes from Wales.

Many superstitions have ancient roots. The idea of bad luck befalling someone who walks under a ladder comes from the belief in the sanctity of the trinity. A ladder leaning against a wall forms a triangle, the most common symbol of the trinity. Passing through its area was considered an intrusion into sanctified space. Such a disturbance disrupts its power to guard against satanic forces.

Amulets are worn to protect the wearer against evil. One student has an amulet, suspended from a
gold chain, that she considers especially lucky. It contains cats’ teeth and exceptionally long cat whiskers. Why cats?

“I like my cats,” she said, “and in ancient times they were believed to have powers.”

In ancient Egypt, all cats were revered, especially black cats. Mummified cats were often buried with their worshippers. The opposite attitude developed in Europe in the Middle Ages. There, black cats were believed to be transformed witches: seeing one cross your path became an omen of bad luck.

According to another common superstition, misfortune will occur if we are overly proud and boastful. “I have this cold,” one student said miserably, “because last week I was talking to a girl who was suffering with a cold and I bragged that I never get them. Right then I knew that I would.”

This superstition is found in Greek mythology, where catastrophes were often brought about by excessive pride, called “hubris.” A hubristic act was sure to be punished by the gods who wanted to keep mortals in their place. To avoid bad luck caused by boasting, many people knock on wood. This probably stems from pagan times when it was believed that touching a tree that had been struck by lightning would bring good luck.

Certain numbers have luck associated with them. Some people claimed that bad luck comes in groups of threes. “If something bad happens to me,” said one student, “I expect two more bad things to happen before too long.”

But three has long been considered lucky. It was called “the perfect number” by the Greek philosopher Pythagoras, in the 6th century B.C. It was the sign of completion and fertility. Shakespeare wrote that there is luck in odd numbers, especially three. According to Biblical tradition, mankind is descended from the three families of Ham, Shem, and Japhet, and the New Testament is based on the concept of the Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Thirteen is considered an unlucky number, and Friday the 13th an especially unlucky day. But one woman I talked to said it was just the opposite for her. Her husband had been unemployed for quite some time and then on a Friday, the 13th, he got two job offers. Since then it has been a lucky number in their family.

Many superstitions are of the homegrown variety.

“I tell my husband that husbands who kiss their wives goodbye live longer,” said one student. “I think I read it somewhere.”

“Nothing good ever happens to me on Mondays,” said another, “I try to avoid scheduling anything important on them.”

Another student always waves to a wooden Indian standing outside a small store on the road to Port Townsend. “It started when I was little,” she said. “My mother told us that if we waved at that Indian, it would bring us good luck. Once we didn’t wave, and the car went into a ditch. Now I always do.”

How do people who have no superstitions feel about ones who do? Most I talked to chuckled, or shrugged and offered no comment.

“Morals have more to do with it than luck,” said one. “If something bad happens, it’s because you have done something wrong. It’s kind of a subconscious code.”

Another student commented, “I think superstitions are born of the devil, and I stay as far from him as possible.”

Whether they really believe in them or not, people have a wide variety of superstitions. If you see a coin on the ground that is heads up, it is bad luck to pick it up. Dropping a fork means company is coming. If your ears burn, someone is talking about you, but if your nose itches, someone is thinking about you. Finding an eyelash on your cheek is good luck, and so is holding your breath when you go through a tunnel. If you make a wish on a passing haytruck, your wish will come true. Unless, of course, you look back at it.

Can we really do anything to influence our luck?

I don’t know, but I’m keeping my fingers crossed.
Whenever I see buds sprouting on bare twigs, daylight remaining several minutes longer, and sunsets that suggest the biblical creation, I know Spring is at hand. And knowing this, I think of Marin County, north of San Francisco across the Golden Gate Bridge, and Mt. Tamalpias, rising like an inverted green cone out of gently rolling hills. Goat-Boy and Mary lived on Mt. Tam, and whenever I think of them, I think of perpetual Spring... and of the time Goat-Boy described the "visitors."

It has been five years since I last heard Mary's voice. I was the editor of the base newspaper then
at Hamilton Air Force Base, located on the bay about eight miles away from the mountain.

It has been five years since I last heard Mary's voice. I was the editor of the base newspaper at Hamilton Air Force Base, which is located on the bay about eight miles away from the mountain.

Mary was a "regular caller." She was good for calling our office at least twice a week, primarily to complain about the F-106 fighter-interceptor jets that bolted into the skies over the bay, banked, then screamed over "her mountain" at 500 knots on their way to some mythical intercept over the Pacific. Usually, after she'd sated herself over the jet noise, she'd turn her verbal cannon on Nixon, Agnew, Reagan and whomever else had been playing porker in the headlines that week.

The calls would last up to 45 minutes and everyone in the office loved to take a turn talking to her. It wasn't long before she could place the voices with the names, and once she came to know us, she then focused her attention onto our plights as "lackeys" in the military industrial complex. A typical call would go as follows:

"Good afternoon, Information Office, Sergeant Vouri speaking."

"Michael! This is Mary. Those jets are scaring Goat-Boy's flock again. He's very upset. Why don't you tell that commander of yours to show some sensitivity to his neighbors?"

"I'm sorry, Mary. They're having an afternoon mission today. They'll be gone about three hours, then they'll come back — but I doubt if they'll fly over the mountain on the return junket. Please convey our apologies to Goat-Boy. I hope the goats aren't too upset."

"Well, I should say that's just about unavoidable . . . they're such gentle creatures . . . ."

"By the way, how is Goat-Boy these days?"

"Oh, he's fine . . . as furious with Nixon as I am. The nerve of that man!"

But, one day, I couldn't resist.

"Is Goat-Boy his real name, Mary?"

"Good gracious, yes. Although that's not what I named him when he was born 30 years ago. I called him Roger — but he looked like a Roger then. Now, he looks like a goat boy, so that's what I call him . . . after all, he does tend a lovely herd of goats. And by the way, Goat-Boy is becoming more distressed with each passing day by the number of those vicious jet planes that fly overhead from your base. He'd like to lodge another complaint to Nixon and that horrible man, John Mitchell, about those planes and specifically, the war . . ."

The office staff wondered about Goat-Boy. It was hard to believe such a person existed. We were further intrigued when Mary told us he'd seen a UFO. Although we'd received hundreds of reports each year (and entered them in the notorious "Green Ledger" entitled "UFOs and other madness"), the thought of getting one from Mary, whose calls were mostly political and philosophical, titillated our interest. Who was this Goat-Boy? Did he really exist? We were afraid to ask Mary, for fear she'd be insulted. We didn't want her to believe we thought she was telling tales . . . and we didn't want her to stop calling. She was a patch of blue in olive-drab days.

So there was a Goat-Boy.

Soon, we were all anxious to get a look at him and several days later an opportunity arose. There was an Air Force radar site perched on the very tip of the mountain and periodically the office would dispatch a writer up there to photograph and interview the troops for their home-town newspapers. No one wanted to go, usually. The stories were, too often, boring accounts from bored men, written by bored writers and trashed by bored editors.

But I had to see Goat-Boy.

"I'll do it!" I hollered, as I ran out the door.

Snooky Jefferson, a black sports writer, was right on my heels, yelling over his shoulder at the boss, "I heard there's a guy who played Ball up there — I been meaning to get with him!"

The two of us sped over to the motor-pool in his late-model Ford
festooned with Afro-American decals), checked out a Chevy Van (with Air Force decals) and headed south on 101 toward the mountain.

"We're gonna check out Goat-Boy and Mary — Right?" he asked.

"You got it, Snook. Hey, who played Ball up there?"

"Goat-Boy, man, Goat-Boy played Ball."

Mary's farm was off the main mountain highway at the end of a dirt road that had been sculpted into two yawning tire tracks by the winter rains, then baked granite-hard by summer sun. Our truck immediately became wedged in the tracks; the universal assembly grinding in a cacophony of shrieks and wails over the center protrusion.

A bone-breaking 20 minutes later, we rounded a high-banked turn and saw the farm. It was a tidy, idyllic little place. A freshly-painted two-room cottage sat at the base of a grassy knoll, surrounded by a white picket fence and a potpourri of wildflowers — all in full bloom. There was a diminutive two-story barn that contained neatly-stacked bales of hay, a 1954 De Soto, a horse that must have been born the same year; and, off on another knoll about a half-mile away, was a herd of 20 or more goats.

"Goats, man, those are goats," Snooky said, barely able to contain his excitement.

As the van huffed and puffed up close to the house, a woman of about 55 rushed out the door waving a broom.

"Shoo! Shoo! This is private property! I told Nixon why I wouldn't pay the war part of my taxes — and you'll never get a penny out of me!"

"Mary! We're the boys from the information office at Hamilton. We just wanted to say hello to you and Goat-Boy."

She hesitated for a moment, released one hand from the broom-handle and centered her wire-rimmed glasses on the bridge of her nose, eyeing us suspiciously.

"I'm Michael."

"Oh for heaven's sake, well goodness gracious, I'm sorry boys, but one never knows. Those uniforms you're wearing and all — let me brew some tea! Oh, I simply must call Goat-Boy. He'll be so delighted."

She ran, skirts billowing, to a spot just beyond the barn and hailed Goat-Boy in a strong, loud voice. Snooky dug me in the ribs and hissed, "Goat-Boy, man, Goat-Boy." Mary returned from the barn and motioned for us to follow her into the house.

Snooky and I trailed behind her into the cottage...and another place and time. Except for the modern wall telephone that hung three feet up from the floor next to an antique rocking chair, the rest was 19th century rural America. A Franklin stove sat in one corner, kerosene lamps hung from the ceiling and one wall was filled, from ceiling to baseboard, with book shelves that were packed with a set of encyclopedias and an extensive collection of classic literature.

She had just set the tea kettle on the stove when a tall, angular man with an incredible growth of head and facial hair, moved slowly through the door. He had so much hair, his only other distinguishable features were a nose, glazed nut-brown by the sun, and a pair of blue eyes, identical to Mary's. He eyed Snooky and me pleasantly for a moment, extended an enormous bony hand, and then, in a rich, baritone voice, said, "Hello, I'm Goat-Boy."

Snooky was first up.

"Hey Goat-Boy," he said enthusiastically. "How yuh doin'? I heard a lot about you, man...I'm Snook and this is Mike."

Goat-Boy grabbed Snooky's hand with his right, and proffered his left to me. For a moment there, it seemed as though we were paying homage to the Maharishi. Mary stood, off to the side, beaming all the while.

"Goat-Boy," she said. "I think the boys would like to hear about some of our other visitors."
"You think they should know?" he asked mysteriously.

"Why, of course," she replied. "These boys are friends. In fact, I think if I keep working on them, you might have some help tending your goats soon . . . Oh, do go ahead."

Goat-Boy studied her a moment. She nodded — encouragingly.

"Very well," he began, "but you must promise me that your Air Force won't send any of that equipment here — you know — like the stuff they've got on top of the mountain. That equipment makes them nervous enough."

Them? Shooky and I exchanged looks. Goat-Boy settled himself, cross-legged, in a large, overstuffed chair. We, in turn, sat on rough-hewn stools, while Mary busied herself in the kitchen.

Goat-Boy began his story.

"At first they'd only come at night and even then, they wouldn't land. They'd just hover there, watching me. Sometimes, on a clear night, I go out to the fields and lay on my back so I can look at the stars. There are many beautiful stars up here away from the city. Well, they'd watch me and I'd watch them. Sometimes they'd send a beam of blue light down and play it over my body. It frightened me a bit the first time it happened, but after a while, I could see they meant me no harm. They just wanted to find out what I was."

He caught the look of puzzlement on our faces, leaned toward us and gesticulated with his arms.

"By that I mean that they wanted to know if I was a rock or a tree or one of the goats. Of course, I consider myself one with the goats — we communicate as well as anybody — but there are subtle differences in our physiological make-up, of course, and that's what they were trying to discern."

"It's a logical, intelligent thing to do. After awhile, I took a flashlight when I went out. Nothing happened for about a week, and then they returned. The same thing happened. The blue light came down. Then I turned on the flashlight and clicked it off and on a few times. I figured if they saw me doing that, they might figure I was trying to study them; and seeing that I was as intelligent as they were, try to communicate. We've all got to communicate. That's why there are wars. No one is communicating. Do you understand that?"

We nodded our heads. Snooky was trying not to laugh. It all must have been fairly amazing to a ghetto kid from Bedford-Stuyvesant.

Goat-Boy went on.

"It took two or three nights of flashlight blinking before they got the message. Then they turned out all the lights and put their ship down right out there in the field."

The goats were frightened . . . until I explained to them that they had nothing to fear."

He looked at us sternly, his eyebrows coming together in one hairy line.

"The goats were frightened of your truck today too — and those jets that take-off from your air base."

Goat-Boy saw we were a little taken aback by his changed tone, so he unknit his brow, smiled warmly at us and continued.

"The ship sat there, very quietly for a few minutes, then, this hatch opened and a ray of pale-blue light came from the passageway. Two figures emerged — I should say — two men, because they looked exactly like you or me. They wore white suits, the cut and design of which, I never had seen the like of before. They did not speak aloud, but I understood everything they said."

He stopped to accept a cup of tea from Mary, and Snooky began to ask questions.

"What did the space ship look like, Goat-Boy?"

"It looked like the space ships everyone sees."

"Like a saucer?"

"Yes, like a saucer I suppose."

"Did these guys say where they were from?"

"Yes . . . only I'm not so sure I should tell you."

"Aw, come on. We won't tell anybody."

Nobody except the office staff at the next party. I had my cassette recorder slung around my neck and I'd stealthfully turned it on while Goat-Boy was lost in his tale.

"Very well. I'll tell you. They're from far away. Not even this solar system. They're on a scientific expedition, gathering information for their schools. They're very peaceful. They've seen the war in Asia and they are very disgusted. They consider it a pathetic waste of energy."

"You say they look like us," Snooky said. "Does that mean they have noses, hair, mouths, eyes — everything like that?"

"Of course. Those science fiction movies are really very misleading. They were thrown by my hair and beard at first — I guess they thought I was just another one of the goats. Their hair is very short . . . like yours . . . but the resemblance ends there."

"Were they black?" Snooky asked, bursting into laughter.

"I don't think so . . . come to think of it, I'm very sorry I didn't ask them about races on their planet. I'll ask them the next time they visit, and then I'll have Mother call and tell you."

"Hey, thanks Goat-Boy. You're all right."
Goat-Boy went on to explain that his visitors had been by to visit many times and during those visits they’d discussed comparative civilizations, astrology (which Goat-Boy believed in) as opposed to astronomy (which they believed in); the merits of goat’s milk, butter and cheese; and whether or not there could be life on Venus (his visitors hadn’t been there yet).

“Goat-Boy, why do you think they chose to contact you rather than anyone else?” I asked.

“Karma,” he said matter-of-factly. “I left the world behind many years ago. My mind isn’t cluttered the way yours is — if you’ll pardon my saying. I haven’t erected any barriers to open thought, nor have I fashioned any conceited notions about the superiority of the human race. They didn’t feel threatened by me, simply because I didn’t feel threatened by them.”

“Did they offer you a ride in the saucer?”

“Yes. But I refused. I explained that I didn’t need an external vehicle to travel through space. I told them that we, as complete entities, can go anywhere we like. This shell we occupy at the moment is only one of many realities. We tend to become so intensely involved in this ego-world, that we forget what we are.”

“What did they say to that? Surely, if they’re advanced enough to travel billions of miles through space, they’ve probably figured that out already — don’t you think?”

Goat-Boy uncrossed his legs, rested his forearms on his knees and gazed, deeply, intently into my eyes.

“How many of our nuclear physicists, do you suppose, have come to recognize their true essence?”

“What about Einstein? A portion of his Theory of Relativity dealt with time travel. He said, in so many words, that as we move through time, it’s like floating down river in a boat. He believed that someday we’d discover a way to get out of the boat, step onto shore, and go anywhere we liked in time.”

“But is that a discovery of all of our many realities?” Goat-Boy queried. “I think not. But that is very fascinating. I’ll have to tell them about it the next time they come.”

“Yeah, what about the next time they come?” Snooky asked. “Do you suppose we could meet them?”

“I don’t think so,” Goat-Boy replied. “Your mind is too cluttered, as I said before.”

“Hey! No it’s not man . . . I got a clear mind.”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to insult you. I’m merely stating fact. Besides, if they saw you two, they might become frightened and never return.”

“It’s that comb sticking out of your afro Snooky,” I said. “They’d probably think you were the Emperor Ming.”


Goat-Boy broke into a toothy grin, slapped his thighs and rose from the chair.

“I really must get back to the goats,” he said. “I’ve deeply enjoyed talking to you. Mother has thought highly of you for quite some time.”

“Yeah, it’s getting late and we haven’t been up to the site yet,” I said. “We’ve got to go up there and do some work. We sure appreciate your telling us about the visitors.”

Mary moved out of the kitchen and into the center of the tight circle the three of us had formed.

“Oh, I’m so sorry you have to leave. I just baked some ginger bread. Well . . . I’ll just wrap some up and you can take it with you. I’m so glad we were able to meet face to face.”

Mary and Goat-Boy invited us back and we, in turn, invited them down to the base for a tour. They shook their heads. They wanted nothing to do with the base.

As we climbed into the truck, Goat-Boy gently grabbed my arm, motioned to the tape recorder and looked plaintively at me.

“They aren’t going to hurt anybody,” he said. “They’re just looking around. So, please, don’t tell anybody. You know how humans are. They get all excited, then the excitement turns to fear, and then that fear makes them dangerous. Do you understand?”

“Yes, I understand. Don’t worry. I won’t tell a soul.”

“Thank you,” he replied.

“Would you like some goat’s cheese?”

As the truck struggled with the road on the way out, Snooky burst into peals of laughter.

“That cat’s crazy, man, crazy, crazy, crazy . . . but, you know, I really like that dude. Really like him.”

“Yeah, so do I, Snook. So do I.”

“You believe that stuff?” He was suddenly serious.

“I don’t think so. But what does it matter?”

“Yeah . . . what does it matter?”

Snooky and I never saw Goat-Boy or Mary again. Two months later, I was transferred away and Snooky was discharged. Snooky and I have kept in touch through the years. He works as a switchboard operator for Ma Bell in New York City. Every now and then, usually about 3 a.m., I’ll get a call and a voice will ask, “You seen Goat-Boy lately?” And I immediately know it’s Snook.

The tape? Never played it for anyone.

Bless you, Goat-Boy . . . wherever you may be.
The cheap aluminum ashtrays on the table might have fallen to the floor if Raymond Mustoe's knees had trembled any harder. Perhaps a steaming cup of rose-hip tea would have relaxed him. It would be a cure an herbalist such as himself would prescribe. Mustoe, 31, said he has shared his life with herbs and the folklore surrounding them since his first herb — marjoram — sprouted in junior high.

He became interested in herbs while in a hardware store, he said. "I liked the pictures on the seed packages."

An anthropology graduate from Western, Mustoe makes it clear: he is not your garden variety herb enthusiast. He knows herbal properties, myths and histories.

He shook his head "no" to a cup of coffee. "I get the jitters from coffee. Herb teas don't affect me that way. Why ruin your nerves?"

In ancient times, Mustoe explained, herbs were used as cure-alls for man's ailments. Each herb had at least one use, many had several.

"If an ailment had no cure then an herb would be chosen, sometimes at random, as a remedy. "One faith healer had a vision about using willow for medicinal purposes," Mustoe said. "The funny thing is that willow bark contains salicylic acid which is an ingredient in aspirin. It's not always listed on the bottle, but it's in there."

Light reflected off Mustoe's balding head and the silver medallion that hung loosely around his neck. "That's my Joan of Arc," he said, pulling the chain forward. "I wear it so much sometimes I wonder if I'll wear it out. Can you do that?"

Joan rested tranquilly against Mustoe's sweater until the chain unhooked and fell onto the table. There go the knees again.

Mustoe picked the saint's medallion up and returned to the subject at hand: herbs and their myths.

"Did you know that some people believe that whatever the herb resembled in appearance it would cure? A walnut was thought to aid the brain. Blotchy
leaves were good for problems of the skin. Just about anything yellow would cure jaundice."

"If it looks like the disease, it'll cure it' was the attitude," Mustoe said. He went on: liverworts for the liver, lungworts for the lungs..."

Mustoe, who can trace his forebearers to the Salem witch trials, says that "so-called" witches throughout history were often older women who had the power and knowledge of healing via herb remedies.

"There's simply no such thing as a witch," he adds, "never was."

He smiled and looked down at his copy of The Herbalist. I think people who claim that they are witches have seen too many movies."

"Some make a big deal about having Salem ancestors. Just because they had an ancestor in Salem, that makes them a witch. That's ludicrous."

Mustoe paused and glanced around the room.

"If today's 'witches' were real they'd keep their mouths shut. Too much power to blab about," he said.

Nevertheless, herbs have played an important role in folklore dealing with witchcraft. Mustoe explains it quite simply. It's a case of people using hallucinogenic herbs.

Late medieval trial records reveal the reason why witches used broomsticks as a mode of transportation, Mustoe said.

"People rubbed an ointment consisting of henbane, aconite and belladonna onto their skin. The combination caused them to hallucinate. They felt like they were flying and needed to balance themselves with some object — a broom was handy."

He cautioned that large quantities of the herbs are deadly.

Mustoe is hesitant to say why Hollywood used truckloads of garlic in its horror movies. He maintains, however, that Slavic Gypsies believed that the pungent herb would protect one from a particular form of evil — disease.

"Slavic Gypsy legend states garlic was created from the devil's hoof touching the ground," he said.

Garlic is not the only herb believed to have protective properties, Mustoe explained. On Midsummer's Eve, a particularly potent time for all herbal properties, birch twigs and boughs were placed throughout the home to ward off evil.

The tradition of decorating homes with holly at Christmas evolved from several factors, Mustoe said.

"First of all, it was one of the few green plants in Europe in winter," Mustoe said, smiling and swinging St. Joan like a pendulum. Back and forth... back and forth.

"Also, the red berries symbolize the life force. Later, Christians adopted the tradition to fit Christianity. The berries now symbolize the blood of Christ and the leaves are the crown of thorns."

Druids used mistletoe in their ceremonies celebrating winter solstice.

Mustoe laughed. "Later mistletoe was Christian-ized to be the wood Christ was crucified on — it withered into a parasite."

A Catholic, who "would go to Mass everyday if I could," Mustoe says our image of evil is not from the Bible, but from popular imagination.

A much discussed herb in the film "Rosemary's Baby," tanis root, simply does not exist, Mustoe said.

"There is no such herb, yet several books have been published since the film dealing with the properties of tanis root."

He shook his head. "Obviously, some writers got their ideas about herbs and witchcraft from "Rosemary's Baby"."

To the frequently asked question: Do herbs increase a person's psychic ability? Mustoe said firmly, "No."

"That's just junk," he said.

Mustoe concedes that some herbs are indeed hallucinogenic in nature. "Whether they play tricks on your mind or if it does increase your psychic ability I don't know," he stammered and added, "I guess not."

His interest in herbs also extends into the culinary uses for them. He has been stirring herbs into steaming pots since his early teens.

"That's part of the real magic of herbs," he said, peering through his black framed glasses. "There's nothing as magic as adding herbs to a cauldron of beef bourguignon. It's creating something special."

Although Mustoe claims no expertise in the knowledge of the medicinal properties of herbs, he was quick to offer a few examples.

A tea brewed from lavender blossoms is calming, yet one still retains a sense of alertness, he said. "Few enjoy the taste as I do, but it does work."

Poppy seeds stirred in a glass of milk will have the effect of a mild sedative.

"If you ingest a small amount of chili powder it will pick you up. Be careful not to burn your tongue, though," he warned.

After he completes studies in horticulture at Bellingham Vocational Technical School, Mustoe would like to work in "some kind of a plant shop — a place that sells herbs."

Picking up and fingering the ashtray, Mustoe confided, "You know, herbs are a part of everything, history, folklore and religion."

He recited a prayer found in the Roman Ritual (a book that all Catholic priests have). The prayer blesses herbs for the Assumption of Mary on August 15.

Mustoe said he brings his herbs to church and asks for the blessing each year.

"If the priest doesn't know what's going on," he laughed, "then show him a copy of the verse. He'll do it."

The prayer:
"The Earth is replenished from thy rains
Giving grass for cattle
And herbs for the service of man."
Matthew's eyes danced as he held the pyramid up to the light. "The amount of power generated through this simple shape is practically beyond belief," he announced.

Trying to contain my skepticism, I nodded and urged him to continue.

"Why, there have been reports of life-long insomniacs who suddenly find themselves sleeping like babies, solely through the use of pyramids. The possibilities are mind-boggling!"

He went on extolling the virtues of the pyramid while I went on pretending to be convinced. Secretly, I was wondering what had happened to him. This was my brother — cold, calculating Matthew who'd never had a mystical bone in his body.

Apparently, he really believed in this pyramid business. Logical Matthew, with an obsession! I was shocked.

Sure, I'd heard a thing or two about "Pyramid Power." Vague claims came to mind of planets flourishing and razor blades staying sharp indefinitely. It was the sort of thing one hears all the time, far-fetched allegations that may or may not be taken seriously.

Ordinarily, I dismissed these thoughts without question. Now I found my disbelieving roots being shaken. I had to admit that if someone as mentally sound as my brother could be lured by the power of pyramids, there just might be something to it. At any rate, it was worth investigating.

There is an abundance of books available on Pyramid Power. Written in the midst of the current craze, they are filled with sensational accounts of the mysterious pyramid energy. Since I was after the real story I waded through pages of Science Digest and Alternative Sources of Energy Magazine in search of facts.

The power in pyramids, it seems, is all based upon the Great Pyramid of the Egyptian Pharaoh Khufu (Cheops). For years, there have been reports of strange happenings within the Great Pyramid. Napoleon, for example, is said to have spent a night inside it but refused to tell of his experience on the grounds that no one would believe him.

More recent interest was spurred by the discoveries of a Frenchman who visited the Great Pyramid in the 1930s.

Deep within the pyramid, Antoine Bovis found the bodies of cats and other small animals which had wandered inside and died of starvation. To Bovis' amazement, the bodies showed virtually no signs of decay — in fact, they were perfectly dehydrated, or mummified.

Eager to test his finding, Bovis constructed a scale model of the Cheops Pyramid. He found that a dead cat would mummify simply by being placed inside the pyramid. The same results were achieved in experiments involving birds, fish and other small animals.

Unfortunately, there is no firm scientific evidence that the pyramid's power of preservation really exists. Believers claim, however, that the experiment has been successfully performed with all types of organic matter, resulting in dehydrated fruits and vegetables, eggs, flowers, etc.
Bovis' findings published in a Czech scientific journal, attracted the attention of Karl Drbal, a Czechoslovakian engineer. It was Drbal who discovered, in 1959, the effects of the pyramid on razor blades. He placed a dull blade inside a cardboard pyramid and announced, shortly thereafter, that the blade had regained its sharpness. The phenomenon of Pyramid Power was born.

Since I had not digested some of the pyramid's background, I decided it was time to examine the more sensational claims. Proponents say that the pyramid acts as a focusing device which pools psychic energy. They believe that when the pyramid is placed on a perfect north-south axis, certain characteristics of whatever falls within its aura will be altered.

The alterations possible range from heightened meditative trances to milder tasting cigarettes. Pyramids, believers report, can improve the taste of wine; polish tarnished jewelry; keep milk fresh; speed the healing of cuts, burns, and bruises; preserve meat; and purify polluted water.

Aside from these applications, there have been claims that sitting inside a pyramid can relieve headaches, reduce tension, improve sexual vitality, and increase energy level. Actress Gloria Swanson was quoted by Time Magazine (October 8, 1973) as claiming that sleeping with a miniature pyramid beneath her bed made "every cell in my body tingly."

Claims, I reminded myself, are only claims — not scientific facts. But my skepticism was changing to an attitude of "don't know it till you've tried it."

Finally I could no longer contain myself. I had to get a pyramid of my own.

Pyramids, varying in cost and size, can be purchased in occult and specialty shops. Or you can construct your own without much difficulty. Since I was still somewhat unconvinced, I made a pyramid myself out of green cardboard.

As I taped the thing together, I began wondering about the implications of my act. It struck me that I was, conceivably, on the verge of an obsession myself. Was Pyramid power about to overtake me? The results of my first experience were not as dramatic as I had hoped. I did "mummify" some orange slices, but after sleeping with the pyramid underneath my bed I was unable to report the same tingling results experienced by Ms. Swanson. This, however, may be the dimensions of my homemade pyramid are not perfect, and the conditions in my apartment are less than ideal. Or perhaps the pyramid is just slow in responding to former non-believers like myself. I like to think that as I shed my doubts, the pyramid will gain power.

Whether my pyramid can or cannot produce miracles is no longer especially important to me, because I now find myself willing to believe that it can. My skepticism is being rejected and I'm learning to accept a concept that previously seemed laughable.

I haven't joined Matthew as a True Believer, but my little green pyramid still sits beneath my bed gathering energy . . . and dust-balls.
un Gallery
Jim Bunton is not an old Indian; his coal-black hair, showing no signs of gray was neatly braided, outlining the roundness of his Mono Indian face. He married a woman from the Lummi Tribe and moved from California onto the reservation as a Communications Director for the tribe. When he smiled it was warm, but his eyes revealed some trepidation.

"Late one summer evening I was watching television with my little girl. Many of the house lights were on and the porch lights, too. I heard something come up the back stairs and over some loose boards, under which sat nine of my chickens. I thought it must be some kids until I heard it go back down the stairs. The chickens were making a lot of noise. We turned down the TV and listened, but heard nothing . . ."

His words came slowly, reservedly, as his eyes search mine, looking for a sign that might betray the confidence of his listener. Jim continued.

"Later, the chickens started up again and I swung open the back door (to frighten whatever might be there) and there, standing in the shadows beyond the porch light, was a figure with one of my chickens in its hands. Dropping the bird, it ran quickly through the corral, across the road and into the night.

"So quickly had it come and vanished. I still can't rationalize what it was; I can't say it was a man. I want to see it again."

Bigfoot, Sasquatch, T'si-at-ko, Gigantopithecus, North American ape — all refer to the widespread phenomenon of human-like beings described as "hairy, upright creatures with human features."

Sightings have been reported in California, South Dakota, Florida and British Columbia, but a focal point for much of the Sasquatch controversy — and consequently besieged by believers and skeptics alike — is the Lummi Indian Reservation near Bellingham. Scientists from around the world are eager clamoring for recognition and the chance for a crack at the "big one." The infighting among the informed "specialists" has resulted in confusing and contradictory reports. Sasquatch chasers are appearing on the reservation for a glimpse of the hairy wonder; still others bring their guns for a chance for a trophy and world-wide fame.

Another man who is close to the action, who also has seen a Sasquatch on a number of occasions ("I won't call it a Sasquatch; it's nothing I've ever seen before.") and recalls thousands of footprints ascribed to Sasquatch, is Sergeant Kenny Cooper of the Lummi Tribal Police.

Cooper, who has lived on the reservation for 12 years, has recorded literally hundreds of reported sightings in a log book he started in 1967. In November of 1976 alone, he recorded 152 separate reports of "Sasquatch" disturbances.

Cooper claims (with witnesses) to have observed a close gathering of three Sasquatches while holding a 12-gauge shotgun on one for nearly twenty minutes.

Asked why he didn't shoot, Cooper replied, "I had received a memorandum, through the Lummi Tribal Council, from the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Everett, directing me not to shoot any Sasquatch or I would be charged with manslaughter."

"I went home that night and pored over my law books and determined that since no Sasquatch had been classified or registered as a "being" that they (the BIA) had no right to issue such a warning."

Would he shoot one if again given the opportunity? Cooper, an ardent outdoorsman and one-time hunting guide on the Olympic Peninsula said, "I'd have to think about it — they look too much like humans . . ."

Sightings of Sasquatches on a South Dakota Indian reservation prompted many Indians there to move off the reservation. Cooper, considered an expert on the subject ("I'm not really; I just happened to be in the right place.") was asked by the Tribal Council at
Standing Rock Indian Reservation in Little Eagle, to come and "get rid of" the creatures. He turned down the invitation because of a commitment to his work here and, because "I just didn't have the time."

Cooper's close encounters while tracking Sasquatches have resulted in his tape recording of the noises they make. When compared with recordings made on the South Dakota reservation on a sound spectrometer at the University of Washington, the similarity was readily apparent.

Jon Beckjord, director of Project Grendel, a Seattle-based wildlife research organization dedicated to the task of identifying, classifying, studying and obtaining legal protection for the North American Sasquatch, is convinced of the similarity of the two recordings. "Sometimes, around dusk, you can hear the confused, hysterical, high and low shrieking of the Sasquatch on the Lummi Reservation," said Beckjord.

Beckjord spent nearly two years on the Lummi Indian Reservation attempting to record the movements and behavioral patterns of the Sasquatch, which he is still absolutely convinced inhabit that area.

Now studying in the Everett area, Beckjord maintains a Bigfoot Hotline — listed in the Seattle telephone directory. He requests that all Bigfoot sightings, or tracks found be promptly relayed to him at that number.

Reports of Sasquatch tracks reveal varying sizes. Local footprints (as found on the Lummi Reservation) measure 18 inches in length and six inches across the ball of the foot. Recent prints found in Southern Alaska were nearly two feet long and measured one foot across the ball of the foot and five inches across the heel.

The consensus among scientists is that Sasquatch feet are necessarily large, to support the erect creature's 300-400 pound mass.

The distance between the footprints (or stride) range from four to eight feet — as not all Sasquatches are the same height.

To insure the protection of the Sasquatch when one is finally located, State Representative John Martinez of Everett introduced a bill to the House Committee on Natural Resources which would forestall the killing of a Sasquatch "regardless of the fact that they have not been officially classified."

According to Beckjord, one such ordinance is already on the books in one southern Washington county.

While many social and physical anthropologists have discounted the existence of a bonafide Sasquatch (or Gigantopithecus), enough evidence remains to intrigue even the most skeptical of scientists.

Dr. Grover Krantz, professor of anthropology at Washington State University, said that if the Sasquatch is a hoax, "the fakery must have been designed by a brilliant human anatomist at least 40 years ago, and one who has ever since been directing a large group of people placing thousands of these tracks under remarkable circumstances — and all this without ever being seen or having a member expose this colossal hoax."

Krantz and Dr. Roderick Sprague, a University of Idaho anthropologist, are editors of a paperback book *The Scientist Looks at Sasquatch*, just published by the University Press of Idaho.

Such optimism within the anthropological ranks is not universal. Dr. Richard E. Salzer of Western's anthropology department said, "It is inconceivable for these beings to exist as primates without a breeding population of at least 200. In all other primate populations, if their numbers fall below 200 they are headed for extinction. With no life-support systems, these beings could exist for no more than 20-25 years."
Salzer added that if Sasquatch exist, they must be extremely long-lived, with the female having an extended reproduction capability of 150 years (to account for their relatively low population level).

Said Salzer, "I really don't believe there is a Sasquatch, but I'm willing to be convinced. I would be delighted if we were to make contact with them, but it is important that they are protected, and, above all, not killed.

A University of Washington anthropologist specialist in Indian culture, Dr. Jay Miller, considers Indian legends of a wild, hairy man "incredibly parallel in that they all describe a similar kind of being."

The Indian legends usually describe the creature as hairy, with a strong stench and a whistle or shrill call. The creature in Indian legend is generally nonviolent. It may destroy property but never life, Miller said.

Miller thinks there is a good possibility that tales of legendary wild man could have spread from tribe to tribe, and thus account for the similarity.

He also speculates that the Indian legends were reinforced when the white man arrived with his own "wild man" myths from Europe.

The word "Sasquatch" is an English corruption of a word of a Lower Fraser River tribe, describing the creature.

"The Sasquatch legend would have been something the white man could handle rather than ignore as he did the others," Miller said. "So the two traditions reinforced each other."

And, Miller added, once there is a category such as the wildman legend, any mysterious or unexplained encounters "will be filtered through that category."

This year, on May 9, scientists from around the world will gather in Vancouver, British Columbia, for a conference entitled, "Sasquatch and Similar Phenomena of Humanoid Monsters." Included in the four-day meeting will be an analysis of a Sasquatch filmed in California and footprints ascribed to Sasquatch by two representatives of the Darwin Museum in Moscow.

A scientist from Gloucester, Massachutes, will attempt to explain, "Why there has to be a Sasquatch."

Dr. Krantz will discuss the "Anatomy of the Sasquatch Foot, or, Is Sasquatch a Living Gigantopithecus?" and further evidence of the possible correlation with hominid evolution.

The track of the elusive Sasquatch is as believable or unbelievable as the accumulated data on UFOs. Sasquatch sightings are on the rise, as are UFOs.

Fact or fantasy? Legend or lunacy? Like many tall tales, the believing comes with seeing. One day, perhaps, scientists may have the opportunity to study these ubiquitous creatures in their natural habitat. It is important that we not alienate these massive creatures or risk jeopardizing the relationship that might evolve between them and us.
EARLY MONDAY MORNING...

Ajax, slow down to cruise speed, this little burrow looks real keen... tell the boys to go on ahead I want to check this place out... what's it called anyway?

Yawn...

What! Great creeping cheeses! Hold on to your shorts, Ajax!

Well Ajax, looks like we're stuck here for a bit. Let's have a bite and take a look around.

Close call eh?! Relax ole boy. We'll be down in a jif.
Revelation in Leaves
by Valerie Vance

One Sunday morning I decided I was due for a meal out and happened upon the La Creperie' Restaurant in Fairhaven. I noticed a sign at the entrance of the restaurant reading: tea leaf reading today. My decision to have my leaves read did not come at that point. I must admit I was rather skeptical about the idea.

I was seated and placed my order. While my breakfast was being prepared, the desire to find out more about this “reader” became overwhelming. Breakfast was served, and several cups of tea had been consumed. Leaves floated at the bottom of my last cup.

She sat at the far end of the room. Her hair, white, as the china cup she raised to her lips. Upon her right wrist she wore a charm bracelet. A large gold cross hung around her neck.

I rose, approached her, and asked if perhaps she could read my leaves. She smiled and nodded her head.

I felt very comfortable with her. I asked no questions. No information concerning myself was requested or volunteered. We didn’t even exchange names.

Dorothy Smith didn’t look like a tea leaf reader, even though she has been practising the art of reading tea leaves off and on for about 50 years. She wore no turban, silk shirt, or shawl. She did not speak in esoteric gypsy mutterings. She resembled, rather, someone’s grandmother.

She peered into my cup, studying my leaves. “Every cup is a challenge,” she said. “Leaves are like fingerprints, no two readings are alike.”

She sat silent, calm, looking hard at the leaves in my cup for what seemed like too much time for “good” news. She raised her eyes from the cup and looked at me.

“I see a star,” she began. “A star of enlightenment. Wherever you go and whatever you do, this star will shine upon you.” Her dark eyes shone. She spoke with an air of understanding. My skepticism dissolved.

Again, from the white china cup she raised her eyes and met mine. “But you have got to stop asking WHY. You constantly ask for a reason behind every action.” She paused for several moments. “Those answers are within yourself,” she said. I could not disagree with this woman. I do ask questions, constantly.

She continued and revealed the appearance of a “net” and two individuals holding this net at each end.

“These people are trying to get you inside this net,” she explained. “But you cannot allow yourself to fall inside this snare. These people will not allow you the space you require to grow.”

My mind did not need to search far to place the people to whom she referred. Prior to the time of the reading, my life-style had undergone major changes, including a decision to part from two individuals closest to me.

Not everyone can have a hopeful reading, Dorothy admits. Moreover, she does not reveal the results of a reading if the news is tragic.

“There is too much unhappiness in the world,” she explained. “No one is 100 percent certain about anything. I don’t pretend to be 100 percent accurate in my readings. I just couldn’t send someone away frightened or unhappy.”

To illustrate this attitude Dorothy told me about a previous reading.

One afternoon three women came into the La Creperie’ for lunch. Dorothy described one of the women in the party as, “one of the saddest people I have ever seen.” The women requested their tea leaves read, and the first two readings went well. Then she came to this woman. Dorothy said she could feel this lady was very unhappy and close to tears. Dorothy revealed to the woman that she saw a “ship” in her cup. At this point, the woman began to cry. The woman had a son who was in the merchant marine and he was indeed away on a ship. Though the ship he was aboard was due home, he had not yet arrived.

The woman and Dorothy talked for sometime and the two parted. Dorothy revealed to me that below the “ship” she saw death. She felt very strongly that the son would probably not be coming home. That he was unsafe in some
way. The woman never returned, and the return of her son aboard a ship cannot be certain. It is very odd that of all the symbols Dorothy could have chosen, she "chose" a ship. Some might call it coincidence . . .

"The reading of tea leaves is purely symbolic," Dorothy said. "Many people ask me how I learned to read tea leaves. You don't learn. I didn't learn. I never read a book."

Feelings are the teacher of tea leaves, according to Dorothy. She repeatedly expressed her ability to "feel" people.

At the beginning of each reading, Dorothy tells her client that the reading is revealed through symbols. Each symbol can represent a person, place, or thing. A tree, as an example, denotes family and closeness. Sometimes the sight of an object, such as a tree, in a cup is incomplete. Sometimes the tree is equipped with a "bird's nest." "A bird's nest is Beauty," she said.

When Dorothy was a child, her mother knew a woman who was a tea leaf reader. Dorothy always watched and listened very carefully to this woman. When Dorothy was a little older, she began revealing what she "saw" in the tea cups.

"The kids made fun of me," she sighed. "But I did it just for fun."

In the past, Dorothy has offered her services at parties and social gatherings. She began working at La Creperie' in 1974.

There is no charge for a reading at La Creperie'. Dorothy accepts donations "if not over a dollar." She explained that there is no price for her services.

"I am a believer in what will be, will be," Dorothy said. She realizes that some things will happen and others do not. Dorothy feels that she helps people realize their potential through her readings. A reading can only be as accurate as the individual allows, according to Dorothy.

"Perhaps I can make people more aware of their real feelings."

I went away feeling as though Dorothy Smith was receiving as much as she gives to her customers in that she has the opportunity to "experience" people. Tea leaf reading is her medium in reading us all.
The Ghost at the Top of the Stairs

by Zebbe Crabtree

After years of intense skepticism, I have had an encounter with a ghost. There was a crack in my skepticism wide enough to admit ghosts that frequent certain renowned English castles. But that crack closed firmly against the possibility of a ghost living in the upstairs bedroom of a condominium on Lake Washington.

This ghost makes noises resembling books being thrown on the floor. But it is a friendly ghost, and I believe it wanted to talk to me.

I had heard about the ghost briefly, several weeks before I was invited for a Sunday evening dinner at the condominium. Rob, a writer friend, had said that in increasingly frequent intervals, a thumping or rumbling noise would come from his bedroom, which is directly upstairs over the living room. He mentioned it over a hurried cup of coffee one day, and, when I scoffed, dropped it.

He told me that following the noises, he often became inspired, and several times wrote a complete story just after the thumping.

But I had forgotten this that Sunday night, when I went to dinner. Rob and his roommate Paul, an anthropology graduate student, rented the place from a vacationing eye-nose-and-throat specialist.

We were sitting around the table, sharing a turkey loaf, corn and mashed potatoes, and the conversation turned to religion, science fiction, aliens and spirits. That was when it started. A thump, like someone jumping on the floor, directly above the living room.


Then, it was quiet and we resumed the conversation. A few minutes later, rumbling started. It sounded like books and boxes being shoved about. This kept up, off and on.

The two men kept calm, ate their turkey roll and talked, but I was distracted. "How do you know it's not your neighbors?" I asked, right in the middle of Paul's discussion of some science fiction he was reading.

"There's no one else in the condo," Rob said. The family next door lives in Hawaii. They're just here around the holidays. And they're not here now."

"Well, if that thing is a ghost," and I waved in the direction of the noise with my fork, on which cold gravy had congealed, "I would be pretty uncomfortable living with it. Why don't you move out?"

They said that the first couple of times it happened, they ran upstairs to see who was there, but there was no one to be seen, and nothing in the room was displaced.

"You get used to it," Rob said. "I really don't mind." He looked thoughtfully at my still-full plate. "Well." He strode to the stairwell, just off the kitchen, and ran upstairs.

I could hear him in the hallway, saying loudly, "Hello. We know you're there and it's nice to have you. I'll come up in a while, but for now would you mind being quiet? We're trying to eat dinner."

Now I was a little more surprised at his behavior. But the thumping stopped. Evidently there were rational ways to deal with, and talk to, ghosts.

When we finished eating, I said jokingly that I would like to go up and say hello. Actually, I needed to use the bathroom at the top of the stairs.

The stairwell was dark. So was the hallway. But the light in the bedroom was on. I didn't see any shadows. The bathroom was to the right, and the hallway to the left, leading to the bedroom, only the doorway of which was visible.

I paused, thought again, "I don't really believe in ghosts. But a little test won't hurt." So I thought,
"Hello, if you're really there." There was a sound like the distant banging of a door. I whipped into the bathroom, turned on the light and shut the door. Feeling safer, I thought again (not believing just one experiment) "If you're really there, give me some sign," with all the hope and fear of a doubtful Catholic. Rumble, rumble, rumble. With that, I fled downstairs (forgetting why I had ventured up in the first place).

I asked the two if they had been shutting doors or banging things in the kitchen, and they said no. The dishes had not been moved from the table, nor the pans from the counter. Besides, how could they have read the timing of my thoughts?

Sitting in the livingroom, drinking coffee, the stereo on loud, the rumbling continued intermitently.

"Is it like this all the time?" I finally asked. It was getting on my nerves.

No, they said, this was an unusual amount of activity.

"It doesn't frighten you, does it?" Rob asked.

I said "no," unconvincingly.

"It's really a friendly spirit," Rob said. "I mean I live here, I sleep in that room."

Paul, the anthropologist, said "I get a strong feeling of peace, wisdom. A wise old man. Definitely friendly."

"He used to play tricks on me," Rob said of the ghost. "He implanted images in my mind, occasionally, when I tried to go to sleep. But I don't let him anymore. I made it very clear, I'll live with him around, but I won't put up with any games. He leaves me alone."

It was quiet, then there was a tremendous low rumble, which I felt all the way through — like a pang of fear.

"All right," I shouted to the ceiling. "I'll be going soon, you can calm down."

This sound was not altogether like the falling books or boxes. It built up from a faint rumble, as thunder does — like a collision of unseen forces — or the sound of a train far away.

I began to take the "unusual amount of activity" personally.

"Maybe you'd better go up and confront it," Rob said.

I asked for one good reason.

"Because if it's frightening you, you'll go away unsettled. If you go up and meet it, you'll see it's friendly, and it won't bother you."

"You mean it really doesn't bother you?"

They both laughed a little. "I admit it did for the first two or three weeks," Paul said.

Upstairs, the light was on. The bedroom was ordinary modern, white-walled, electrically-heated. It had a sitting chair, desk with lamp, shelves of books, bed, photos, beer steins, and no ghost — visible, anyway.

Rob and I stood there for some time, listening intently. Nothing. And it wasn't frightening, but peaceful. "What a ploy to get in me in his bedroom," I thought.

"It hasn't ever made a noise when I've been in the room," Rob said.

Nothing happened, and we stepped out on the deck, overlooking the lake. Rob left the glass door to the bedroom open. We stood talking, stargazing, when the deck began to shake. There was a strong sense of a presence standing between us. My skin crept, the hair on my neck and arms rose then something that felt like sudden cold or an electrical shock, touched my arm, penetrating to the bone.

That was enough. I ran downstairs. Rob was down a moment later, and looked at me curiously. I watched the foot of the stairs, apprehensively.

He laughed. "Don't worry, he never comes downstairs."

I was content to stay downstairs the rest of the evening. There was just one more rumble. Rob shook his head. "He's all yours tonight."

I began to accept the idea of a spirit or being, or whatever it was, upstairs, and it seemed not frightening, sitting in the livingroom with the lights on and other people around.

I was not frightened again until I got in my car to drive home in the night. I kept checking the back seat to see if it was coming home with me.

It may have, for just a day. The incident was still on my mind the next day. I turned corners slowly, reaching my hand into a room to flick on the light before actually entering. There were rumbling noises above my livingroom, but then, I have a neighbor who is home during the day.

I decided to write about the incident, and as I typed, the apartment would shake. But then, there was a storm outside. On the evening of that next day, I called a friend to discuss the experience. She has had some run-ins with the occult. But my account became filled with lengthening pauses. Finally I apologized to her. I was seated at my desk, and the pauses came when I tried to hold the desk still — for it was trembling as though alive. After that, all was still, — no rumblings, no tremblings, and the vibes were back to normal.

The ghost, Rob told me, made no noises the day after I visited the condominium, but was back in force the following night.
EAT UP NOW, LITTLE CO-PILOT, WE STILL GOTTA CRUISE THIS BURG.

OKAY PARTNER, LET'S SEE WHERE THIS RIG TAKES US...

BURP!

WHATS HE THINK THIS IS... STAR TREK?

HEY! HERE'S SOMETHING, SURELY THEY WOULDN'T MISS WHAT YA SAY WE EXAM IT BACK UP BUCK-O-

YOU THINK IT'S WORTH THAT MUCH?

I DUNNO, HOW CAN YOU PUT A PRICE ON ART?

YEA BOUT IS IT ART?

WHAT'S AN ARTIST?

SOMETHING AN ARTIST MAKES...

SO WHATS ART?

FIN.