

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

ATW-24

Now You See It, Now You Don't - IV: Faith Restored

Eugene, Oregon

October 18, 1973

Mr. Richard H. Nolte
Institute of Current World Affairs
535 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10017

Dear Mr. Nolte:

At the end of September Uri Geller appeared before a capacity audience at Town Hall in New York City. By now, articles about him had appeared in still more periodicals, including THE NEW SCIENTIST in London. Almost all of these stories took him at face value -- as a gifted psychic come to demonstrate the reality of mind over matter. I heard his name invoked to bolster the claims of various groups that a New Age was upon us. But NEW YORK Magazine ran a story suggesting Uri was a fraud and quoted James (The Amazing) Randi in support of that thesis. Meanwhile, more and more Geller stories were in circulation. Edgar Mitchell -- former astronaut, ESP buff, and Geller backer -- made it known that Uri was going to try to teleport a camera back to earth from where Mitchell had left it on the moon. Dr. Puharich described some of the more spectacular materializations he had seen Uri perform and hinted strongly that Uri had been in communication with intelligent beings in flying saucers. Stanford Research Institute was going to be doing more controlled studies of Uri. Bell Laboratories might be working with him, too.

In the midst of this swirl of stories, the Town Hall appearance was somewhat disappointing. Puharich gave his usual introductory talk, then Uri appeared and asked for everyone to be with him. "If there are any skepticals here tonight, just don't interfere with me," he cautioned. Then he launched into the same demonstrations of telepathy I had seen him do last spring in Berkeley,

guessing a color written on a blackboard (blue) and a capital city (Denver). Then he tried something different. He had one woman volunteer write a color on the blackboard (it was purple), and he attempted to receive this color telepathically from the audience and project it to a second woman volunteer. After several tries he shook his head. "No, I'm not getting anything."

"Ask her if she got anything," someone called out.

"No, it's not working," Uri said, "I'm just getting confused impressions."

"Ask her anyway," several people shouted.

"O.K., what did you receive?" Uri asked the lady standing next to him.

"I got purple," she answered. There was a loud cheer from the audience.

"Sometimes it happens that way," Uri said. "When people are around me, their telepathic powers come out. It's like when I'm on television, the stations are getting hundreds of calls from people who say that spoons and forks are bending in their homes while I'm on. Just last week I heard that in the Texas attorney general's office in Austin, a secretary was listening to a tape of a radio show I did there and a fork started to bend in the presence of four witnesses."

After completing the telepathy portion of the show, Uri asked for questions and talked a lot about himself. He waxed rather defiant at several points and, particularly, lashed out at critics who said he should not be turning his powers to use in stage performances.

"Look, it's my life," he said, "and nobody is going to tell me how to live it. If I want to make money, I am going to make money." This brought a round of applause. But the talk went on and on, and the audience grew restless. By the time Uri was ready to start repairing broken watches, people were not with him as much as they had been. Perhaps for that reason, he could not get a single watch to run, though he tried working on many.

Then he attempted to bend rings but could not do that either.

People in the audience shouted out suggestions. Uri ran through a great many rings and a great many women volunteers without success. Finally, at the very end, he tried concentrating on two rings at once and caused one with a zodiac insignia to pop apart. A televised image of the ring was projected onto a screen above the stage for all to see. With that, Uri ended the show.

The audience appeared pleased. That night I heard a radio announcer describe the performance and declare that Uri had to be real because no magician would have tried so hard to fail.

Three days later, on a Friday afternoon, I went again to Uri's apartment, this time equipped with several keys; a long, threaded steel bolt; and a stopped watch. The watch had not run for a long time, and if jarred would go for about five seconds and stop. When I got to the apartment, five others were present: four people from ROLLING STONE and a reporter from Boston's REAL PAPER. I walked into the middle of an intense session. The table was littered with bent spoons, a bent key, a gold ring on a piece of paper, a watch, many papers with drawings of geometrical figures, and tape recorders. Everyone was very animated.

Uri seemed tired but enthusiastic. He told me to ask him anything. I said I'd prefer to sit and listen for a time. The talk focused on flying saucers and astral projection but also included many questions I'd heard Uri asked before (When did you first notice your powers? Do you meditate? Can you heal people?). One of the ROLLING STONE men asked if Uri could teach others to do the things he does. "How can I?" he answered. "Where would I begin?" I asked him if there ^{were} any verification of the bendings reported by home viewers of his television appearances. "Oh, yes," he replied and repeated the story of the fork in the attorney general's office in Austin, Texas. "And that was just with a tape of a radio show!" I suggested that these occurrences, if true, might represent the mobilization of the psychokinetic abilities of other persons. Uri agreed. He also talked about reports of broken watches starting to run again in the homes of people watching him on television.

A girl from ROLLING STONE told me that he had fixed the watch on the table just by holding his hand over it. The REAL PAPER man reached for the watch to show it to me and suddenly became excited. "Has anyone reset this?" he asked. Everyone looked at the watch and gasped. Apparently, it was now four hours ahead of where it had been. Uri picked it up and exclaimed: "My God! Look at that!" He put it down. Moments later it had advanced again. "It's always like that," Uri explained. "You never see the hands moving; you just find them in a new position."

I said I had a broken watch with me, but even as I drew it out of my pocket, I had a funny feeling that it would be going. And so it was -- quite happily and steadily. Uri took credit for this even though he had not known the watch had been in my pocket. Had he mobilized my latent psychokinetic ability, I wondered to myself? We set both watches to the correct time and left them side by side to see what would happen.

The ROLLING STONE people told me that the ring on the piece of paper had levitated earlier, or, at least, it had dropped out of mid-air onto the table; no one had seen how it got to a position in mid-air. And they had seen a key bend. And there had been much correct guessing of drawings made out of Uri's sight. I took out of my pocket my collection of keys (three) and my long bolt and put them amid the clutter on the table, hoping Uri would consent to work on them. The bolt rolled a little -- I think because I bumped the table. "Who moved that?" Uri asked, very excited, grabbing me by the shoulder. "Did you touch that?" I said I did not know, and it became another miracle. Miracles were happening right and left.

"Let's try an experiment by phone," Uri suggested to me. "Call up someone you know, and I'll try to send him a number." I called up ICWA fellow Jeffrey Steingarten, whose broken watch I had borrowed for the afternoon. I told him his watch was fixed and asked him to try to think of the number between one and ten that Uri Geller was trying to send him. Just then, Jascha Katz, one of Uri's promoters, came into the room to say that Uri had a call from Paris on another phone. Uri left. The phone I was hold-

ing went dead. When Uri came back, I told him the phone was dead. "My God!" he exclaimed, "I hope I didn't knock him out." But another call discovered Jeffrey alive and well and dimly thinking of the number 3. Uri had been sending 7 (he had written it down) but showed us that he had first written down 3 and crossed it out.

I asked if he would try to bend one of my keys. He took up a short brass one. "O.K., I'll try, but don't be disappointed if it doesn't work. I'm very tired and I don't know whether I can do it now." He stroked the key while I hunched over him. Nothing happened. "No. I'm too tired. Maybe later. I had to do two early morning performances in Cleveland on television, and I'm exhausted." Another call arrived -- this from someone in Denver who wanted Uri to do a show for 10,000 people; it was referred to Jascha Katz. The atmosphere was very manic, and the ROLLING STONE people began to get headaches. "There's a lot of energy in this room," one of them said.

Uri asked me to shoot a roll of film of him using one of the reporters' cameras with the lens cap on. "I'll try to make images come out on the film." He held his hands in strange positions in front of the covered lens and assumed looks of great concentration as I went through the roll. "I think I may have done it," he announced.

Then more people came in: the director of the Channel 5 (WNEW) news show and Martin Abend, the political commentator for Channel 5. The director had spent the early part of the afternoon with Uri and was now a solid convert. Uri had detected metal in film cans, caused a key to bend, and done much successful ESP. Channel 5 was going to do a feature on Uri that night and wanted Martin Abend to comment afterward. Abend seemed unsure of all this. "It's not my line," he kept saying. But the director kept assuring him that he would have an amazing experience if he would just suspend his doubts and watch. "But if it is real, I can't say that over the air," Abend protested. "Do you know what kind of a storm we'd stir up?" He frowned. The ROLLING STONE people urged him to be open-minded and told him proudly that they had always been believers. "Just try to help him -- you'll see." Then the five reporters left,

leaving me with Uri, Martin Abend, and the news director. The director was very keyed-up, anxious for Uri to convince Abend as he had been convinced earlier. They tried some simple ESP -- Abend drew a geometrical figure and Uri looked away, then tried to reproduce the figure while Abend concentrated on it. He did not do very well. Then he tried to bend a key and did not succeed. Finally, he sent the news director away: "You're making me nervous."

Abend and Geller tried more drawings with equivocal results. Uri tried sending drawings to Abend. "Come on," Abend said, "I don't have any ESP power." But they tried, and again the results were equivocal. Then Abend drew two intersecting circles. Uri received, first, two circles tangent to each other, then two circles, one inside the other. Abend was impressed. "That's really something," he said. "I can do much better when I'm not tired," Uri told him. "No, that's good," Abend replied. There was another unsuccessful attempt at key-bending. "I've got to go," Abend said, "I have to get back to the station." The television people took their leave, telling us the show would be on at ten o'clock on the evening news, only a few hours away.

Uri and I were now alone, sitting together on a couch. I told him I hated to ask him to perform again, but I had really never seen him bend anything of mine and had to do so before I could report that he did it. "Let's try the key again," he suggested. We did but with no luck. "What else do you have?" he asked. I brought out two other keys on a small chain attached to a little knife. "I used to have a knife like that," he said and put it into my hand. He covered it with my other hand, then put his hands on mine. He concentrated intently but to no effect. Then he looked at the other keys and asked which I was most attached to. I was not sure. He piled all the keys into my hand and added the knife on top. Then he repeated the operation. I felt a pulsation and told him so, but there was no change.

"Dammit!" he said, "Why can't I do anything?"

"Don't be disappointed," I told him. "I'm very patient, and if nothing works now, there will be another time."

Uri seemed wrought-up. "Don't you have anything else metal?" he asked. "Maybe in your boots." He pointed to my boots that I had left across the room. I looked at them.

"No, all I've got is a belt buckle, and you told me once you never worked with belt buckles."

"Let's try it," he said. I took off my belt and put the large brass buckle in my palm on top of the three keys and the knife and chain. I covered the pile with my other hand. Uri put his hand on top. More intense concentration. Suddenly, I felt a distinct throb inside my hands, like a small frog kicking. I told him so. "You did?" he asked excitedly and opened my hands. I could see no change in the buckle. He pulled out a long steel key and cried out: "It's bent, yes, it's bent! Do you see?" I did not see at first. But then I did notice a slight bend. It was very exciting. Uri put the key on the table to check it. Yes, it was definitely bent.

Uri was almost jumping up and down for joy, and I shared his emotion. "Let's see if we can bend it more," he said. He touched the key to the other keys, stroked it again. After a few minutes the bend was about 25 degrees. Uri patted me on the back, making me feel that I had participated in the miracle. "It's good you felt it jump, man," he told me; "not many people can feel that." I was elated.

He ran into the other room to tell Jascha Katz of the success, then hugged me warmly. I gathered up my things, thanking him profusely, and telling him I had seen exactly what I wanted. He walked me to the elevator. As we were saying goodbye there was a plink! and the long steel bolt I had brought bounced off his left arm onto the floor. "Is this something of yours?" he asked, picking it up. "Yes," I said, "I brought it along but must have left it inside." His eyes widened. "My God! Just like their ring. You've just seen a materialization!" He grew even more excited and rushed back inside to tell Jascha the latest. Somehow, I was less impressed by the materializing bolt than by the bending key; it could so easily have been a sleight-of-hand trick. The only reason I believed it was that it seemed unlikely that Uri would have noticed the bolt

amid all the objects on the table, recognized it as mine, and pocketed it for a later trick.

In any case, I left his apartment a convert and rushed back to Jeffrey Steingarten's loft to give him his still-running watch and show him the bent key. "I have no doubt that Uri Geller is real," I announced. Then we watched the Channel 5 news. There was Uri again, in a very long segment, bending a key, getting drawings, locating metal hidden in cans. The reporters presented him as unquestionably real -- there was "no possibility" that he could have deceived them. Then came a round-table discussion with the reporters, Martin Abend, and a professional magician out to discredit Uri. The magician came off badly. He did not believe in any psychic phenomena and said Geller had to be aphony. Abend defended Geller by recounting his own experience with him.

"I drew two intersecting circles," Abend told the magician, "and tried to send them to Geller. Now I think that's an unusual sort of figure. Geller first drew two circles tangent to one another. Then he drew two intersecting circles. It was an amazing thing."

I noted with interest that Abend had not reported this incident correctly. In fact, Uri had come closest with the tangent circles. His second attempt had been one circle inside another. Initially a skeptic, Abend had remembered what happened in a way that made Uri look better.

I called several friends to tell them of my evening with Uri and my new faith in him. In a way I was sorry I had made an appointment to see The Amazing Randi at his home in New Jersey the following day. After all, what could he possibly show me that would change my mind?

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew T. Weil". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'A'.

Andrew T. Weil

Received in New York on October 24, 1973.