

# Psychics rely on mindgames, not supernatural

"By the eagerness of the human mind things which are obscure are more easily believed."

— Tacitus



**FRANK STANFORD**  
COLUMNIST

In the '70s, David Marks and Richard Kammann wrote a book showing how every feat and seemingly unexplainable display of psychic ability has a rational method of occurrence.

Their research, published in *The Psychology of the Psychic*, discusses the methods that so-called psychics utilized to create belief in their craft.

But in the '90s these old methods have a new twist. I'm talking about the recent surge of interest — not to mention profit — in the "personal psychic" industry.

Unlike their predecessors of the '70s, today's psychics act as advisers or therapists for individuals.

This new method of trickery uses the old and practiced skill of "hyperperception," using probable assumptions and basic psychology to generate millions of dollars.

Hyperperception is the ability to take notice of most physical and psychological characteristics of a client. Using this information, the psychic makes assumptions, or "educated guesses" to mysteriously "know" their client. Then they mix some suggestive psychology with a little client

feedback.

Add to this scene a person who not only wants to believe help is on the way, but has paid for it already. Now the stage is set for some serious psychic chicanery.

In order to test these findings, I decided to visit a person who makes a living as a psychic.

I'll call her Zelda.

"Populus vult decipi."  
People want to be deceived.

— Roman saying

Zelda graciously welcomed me into her place of business. Religious icons, old photographs and various knickknacks covered the walls to provide a suitable "spiritual" environment.

For a ridiculous price, she held my hand and asked me to tell her a wish I had. Then she began to tell me about myself by experiencing my "vibrations."

"Frank, I feel you have problems in your life, and you don't know where to turn. Am I right, Frank?" she said.

I made a point of agreeing to all of her vibrations, true or not.

A number of her statements regarding personal problems were quite true, but they would be true for almost everyone. It is a likely assumption that someone nervously visiting a psychic has a serious

problem, at least by personal standards.

"Frank, I feel that you may take strong drink to escape your problems. I also feel a pain in your head and stomach in the mornings. I feel a pain in your knees, as well. Am I right Frank?"

Since I am a young male apparently with serious problems who arrived on a motorcycle unshaven and sullen, she assumed I probably drank. Anyone who looks as bad as I did that day, certainly might drink their problems away on occasion. The pain of a hangover usually follows.

However, I don't drink excessively very often, never get hungover, and I've only had three headaches in my entire life.

**A number of her statements were quite true, but they would be true for almost everyone.**

I realized she mentioned my knees because I had told her two days earlier that I laid floor tile for a living. I neglected to mention I haven't laid tile in six months and have never had any pain in my knees.

"Frank, I feel that you have had a strong faith in God, but you have had less faith lately. Am I right, Frank?"

She obviously made this statement under the assumption that most people have faith in some sort of supreme being.

A person who has a problem severe enough to vis-

it a psychic most likely has tried praying to no avail, or has had some loss of faith due to the problem.

And even very religious people experience fluctuations in faith periodically.

However, I have been what most people would call an atheist for most of my adult life and have never had a total belief in a god. Still, I lied to Zelda and told her she was correct.

Then, using the assumption that I had some belief in God, she began to imply I was going to hell unless she was allowed to remove the demon spirits that I was cursed with at birth.

Only special candles would help me, she said. Twenty-nine of them. At \$10 each. She even had a payment plan.

I left her place of business feeling better than when I arrived. Although I think psychics are bunch of bunk, Zelda really did help me in several ways.

I now have a greater knowledge of "psychic" methods.

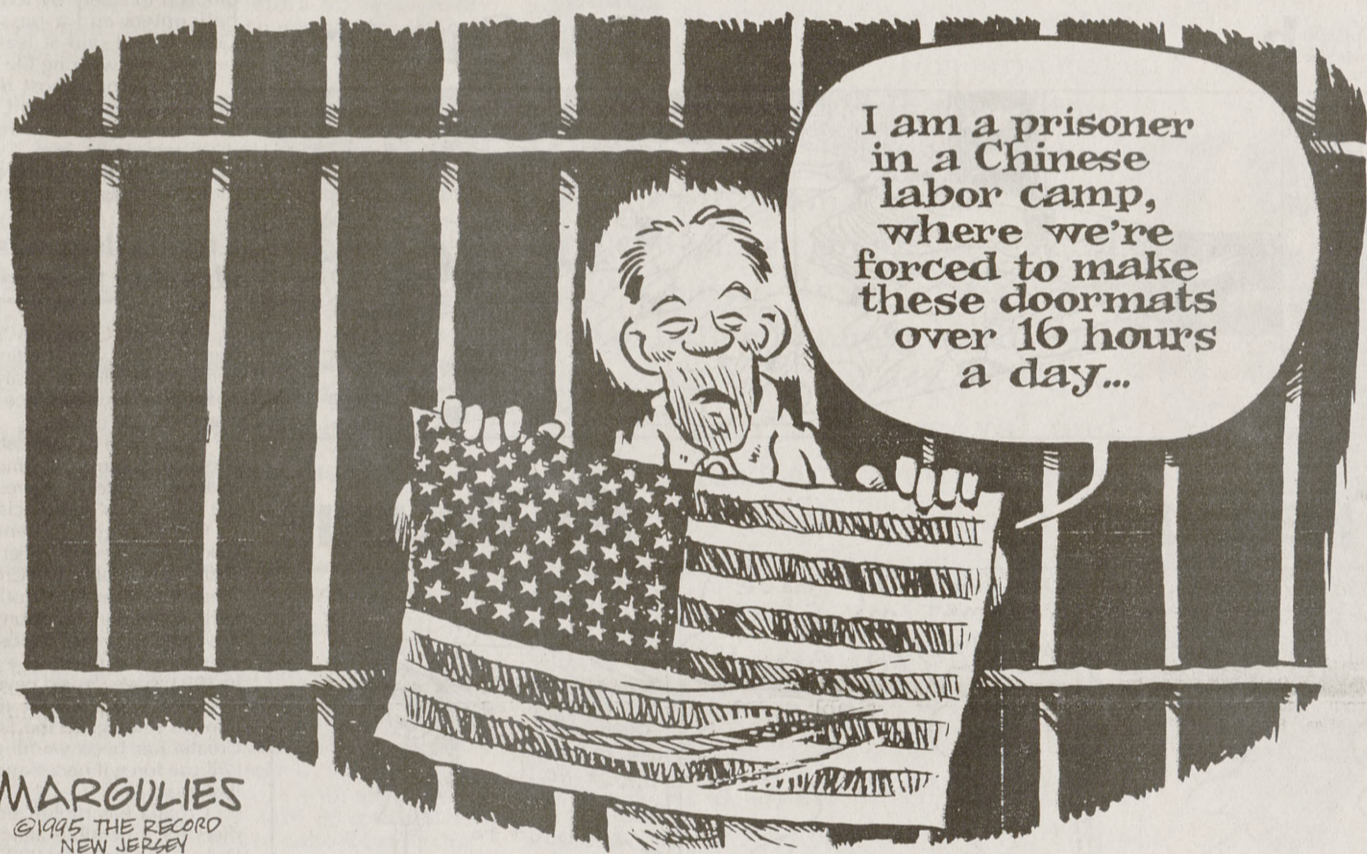
I have a greater understanding of how people can believe in the supernatural and even religious stuff.

And she gave me something to write for you guys.

"As is your sort of mind,  
So is your sort of search; you'll find  
What you desire."

— Robert Browning

Frank Stanford is a philosophy graduate student



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NEW JERSEY

## Cursing expresses nothing but mediocrity

In school we were taught to write and speak clearly and concisely. "Don't ramble on, get to the point." Many of you may have encountered an instructor whose motto was K.I.S.S. — "keep it simple, stupid."

But there is one thing in life that it is good to stray away from being so pointed when possible.

Cursing. Or "cussing," as I grew up referring to it. There is no better way to tell a person how you really feel about them than to couple their name with a curse word.

There's also no better way for this person and others who might hear you to think you are shallow.

Cursing, as we know it today, comes from the ancient practice of invoking evil into the world by careful ordering of words and sounds.

In the middle ages, it was popular belief that the order of the universe could be physically affected by casting spells and curses. Once curses and spells were uttered and introduced into the world, the results were believed to be unpredictable at best.

While most of us don't harbor the same beliefs that words or non-physical things can alter reality, cursing is still considered unrefined and is generally frowned upon in public.

I was taught that when you curse at someone, you are basically damning them or telling that person to go to hell. But often when we curse, we are not intending the words to have this meaning.

In many occasions, curse words are modified and turned into some people's favorite adjectives. When cursing is used as a way to color speech, some might say, "no harm done."



**KYLE LITTLEFIELD**  
ASST. OPINION EDITOR

While this may not have the original message of damnation, using curse words is the easy way out of expressing what you truly mean.

In other words, it's a lazy habit.

Anyone can mouth a four-letter word to describe something or situation. It takes an intelligent person to describe in detail what they actually see or experience.

In fact, even if you curse at someone — and let's say that your degree of anger doesn't merit hoping they end up in hell — there are still other words that could be used to express your anger.

A four-letter word leaves a lot to the imagination. It gives no clue to what the person did to make you mad or if you just had a bad day.

Upon inspection, cursing doesn't express much at all.

But who cares, they're just words, right? A philosopher might say that words are only symbols for ideas.

Popular four-letter words could be replaced with other words that mean the same thing. However, these words would still grate on us as much as the original ones do.

Remember, it isn't the combination of letters that form a word that is thought of as profane, it is the idea behind the word. If the word "bitch" was replaced with the word "tree," the new word would still offend those offended with the original word.

Our society has an unhealthy fascination with curse words. Almost every movie features a character releasing a filthy string of curse words which is basically an attempt to make the character seem cool. Lyrics to songs are frequently peppered with curse words, often with the same objective.

There could be times that the only poetic thing to say is a curse word. There occasionally are exceptions, in fact, within the world of art.

But many "artists," be they musicians or filmmakers, lose sight of this. Most fill their work with curse words not to capture a feeling or a mood, but to "sell" their works to an audience that is easily entertained.

College students in particular have a bad habit of using curse words too frequently. Obviously, the surge of personal freedom one experiences after leaving home carries over into the language they use.

Of course, if you grew up hearing these words at the dinner table, it may be hard to recognize you have a bad habit.

However, society has deemed certain words profane which do grate on people's ears.

**Anyone can mouth a four-letter word to describe some thing or situation. It takes intelligence to use other words in descriptions.**

I realize we cannot get rid of curse words. After all, if an idea behind a word exists apart from the word itself, then there probably are words that express that idea also.

But who knows, maybe the ancients weren't completely wrong, maybe there are some sounds that compose words that we should try to avoid. There could be consequences of which we might not be aware.

Such as someone thinking you are shallow.

Try not to keep it too simple.

Kyle Littlefield is a senior journalism major

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## EDITORIAL

### SILLY SUITS

Congress should limit the number of frivolous lawsuit filed by inmates.

Much attention has recently been given to tort reform, especially within the prison systems. Each year, taxpayers spend millions of dollars to defend thousands of groundless lawsuits filed by prisoners.

As a result, 27 states, including Texas, have requested that Congress pass national legislation that would give the states more authority to limit these costly and unnecessary suits. Currently, Texas is the only state that has passed similar legislation.

Congress should seriously consider assisting the states in this endeavor.

In 1993, Texas prison system inmates filed 659 lawsuits against both the state and other parties. In 1994, that number grew to 994. Considering that Texas prison capacity will double in the near future, the number of lawsuits could rise to as many as 1,500 in 1995.

The problem with this is not inmates practicing their right to due process, but that the majority of these lawsuits are frivolous and are a ludicrous waste of taxpayers' money and court time.

For every lawsuit filed by a Texas inmate, court costs are paid by the state. For a one-day hearing, taxpayers pay approximately \$1,700. For a one-day jury trial, the cost is around \$3,000.

The state should pay court cost for those whose freedoms are being infringed upon, but who cannot afford to pay the bills. The state should not give criminals a blank check to entertain themselves with the Texas court system.

Examples of some of the cases filed by inmates:

• One inmate sued 90 different defendants, demanding a full-length toothbrush so that his teeth could be as "healthy as on television and

on each box of Colgate toothpaste."

• Another prisoner sought damages because he claimed that his dessert was too small.

• And yet another inmate sued for \$15,000 because he burned his finger while playing with a box of matches.

Things seem out of hand, but fear not, because help is on the way.

During its last session, the Texas Legislature passed legislation that expedites the dismissal of such frivolous lawsuits, but the courts still need more leeway.

Texas Attorney General Dan Morales Monday outlined a plan to lessen the strain on the courts and on the pocketbooks of taxpayers.

Morales said his office will "encourage Congress to pass meaningful legislation to help curb this abuse of the criminal justice system."

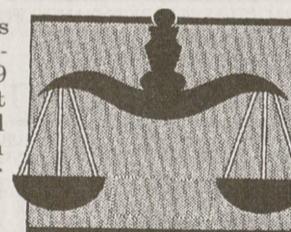
Morales' program includes several reforms, such as inmates losing good-behavior credits for suits found to be frivolous; judges hearing cases in prisons or by video teleconference; and settlements in judgments ruling for inmates going toward offsetting the costs of the inmates' incarceration.

These ideas could help curb the problem, but the real solution is using common sense.

The Texas court system should be able to discern lawsuits with merit from those that are a waste of time and money.

Prisoners cannot and should not be denied their right to due process before the law, but the line must be drawn somewhere.

Prisoners are incarcerated because they have abused the laws of our society. Society should not let them abuse the justice system also.



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