



*The North Texas*

# Skeptic

Volume 21

October 2007

Number 10

<http://www.ntskeptics.org>

## Conspiracy theories: Weapons of mass deconstruction

by John Brandt

We Americans are well known for our general distrust of our own government. For as long as I can remember, almost every major event has been accompanied by suspicion that our government isn't telling us everything it knows. From Roswell to the Kennedy assassination to 9/11, speculation about what "really" happened abounds.

Of course, the "official" version of events isn't always correct either. The government really *did* cover something up at Roswell, although it had nothing to do with flying saucers or ET. The Watergate scandal is another obvious example. Sometimes our distrust is justified.

Oliver Stone's movie *JFK*, which challenged the official version of the Kennedy assassination, was so popular that in 1992 the first Bush Administration felt compelled to declassify numerous documents from the Kennedy era in an attempt to dampen the speculation about the assassination that the movie had rekindled. Of course, no "document dump" will ever satisfy the true conspiracy theorists. They'll just assume the "real" incriminating documents are still under lock and key at Area 51.

In this case, one of the documents actually *added* fuel to the fire. It was a copy then-Defense Secretary Robert McNamara had kept of a proposal called "Operation Northwoods." The Joint Chiefs cooked up this lame-brained idea in early 1962, in response to the Bay of Pigs fiasco in Cuba.

Realizing the American people would never support a full-scale invasion and "regime change" in Cuba unless Castro was thought to be attacking the U.S., Operation Northwoods proposed to *fake* several attacks, such as "attacking" Guantanamo and blowing up empty battleships, in order to blame Cuba for them, so the American people would support an invasion to overthrow Castro.

### EVENTS CALENDAR

#### October Program

Saturday, 13 October 2007  
2 PM

Center for Nonprofit  
Management  
2900 Live Oak Street in Dallas

#### Abstinence

Kristine Danowski will not  
abstain. She will discuss  
abstinence education.

#### Social Dinner /Board Meeting

Saturday, 20 October 2007  
7 PM  
Good Eats  
6950 Greenville Avenue in  
Dallas

Let us know if you are coming.  
We need to reserve a table.  
214-335-9248

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Our newsletter, *The North Texas Skeptic*, is  
 published monthly by The North Texas Skeptics,  
 P.O. Box 111794, Carrollton, Texas 75011-1794.

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Naturally, Sec. McNamara rejected the plan out-of-hand. Nevertheless, not only did this revelation provide Kennedy conspiracy theorists with a motive for our military to want Kennedy dead, the fact that our military would even *consider* such an audacious plan has meant that every domestic terrorist attack since has been accompanied by a conspiracy theory that the Government really was behind it. The revelation of Operation Northwoods made these kinds of conspiracies more believable.

Which brings us to 9/11.

It's hard to talk about 9/11 objectively these days, because the Administration's reaction to those attacks has been so polarizing. Naturally, most "government-did-it" conspiracy theories come from the government's opponents. Just as many on the Right were convinced President Clinton was a murderer and a cocaine smuggler, many on the Left have become convinced that the U.S. government was involved in the 9/11 plot.

So when John Blanton mentioned "the book that's popular in France," I thought at first he was talking about *Bin Laden: The Forbidden Truth*, which, though it contains useful information, fails by endorsing one popular 9/11 conspiracy theory: that the primary motive for the attack on Afghanistan wasn't their harboring of the criminals responsible for 9/11, but rather their unwillingness to permit the oil company Unocal to build a pipeline for Caspian Sea oil through Afghanistan.

"Afghan Pipeline Theory," if true, would be an amazing coincidence. Just one month after pipeline negotiations broke off, 9/11 happened, giving Bush the perfect excuse to overthrow the recalcitrant Taliban. Or maybe it wasn't a coincidence at all. Maybe bin Laden decided war was inevitable, and moved up his attacks – to 9/11. If only Bush hadn't been so anxious for war, he might have had time to uncover and foil bin Laden's plans.

Or, maybe it's what the book John was actually talking about, *9/11: The Big Lie* by Thierry Meyssan, claims. The U.S. military did it. Operation Northwoods lives!

I'd never heard of this book until John loaned me his copy, but now, having read it, I can say Meyssan got at least one thing right: the title. This book is a collection of the biggest lies about 9/11 I've ever heard.

Actually, "lies" is probably too strong a word. A better word would be "delusions," since I have no doubt that Meyssan believes each and every one of them.

So, why does Meyssan think our own military was behind 9/11? Well, you all remember Flight 77, don't you? The one that hit the Pentagon? The one Barbara Olsen, wife of the U.S. Solicitor General, called from?

Well, Meyssan is here to set you straight. That's just what "they" **wanted** you to think! Actually, Meyssan says, the Pentagon was hit by a cruise missile!

The proof? Well, if you look at a picture of the Pentagon immediately after the crash, the hole the impactor made is **too small** for the plane's wings to fit through! Yet, the wings weren't sheared off, because their twisted remains weren't lying in front of the Pentagon either!

Conveniently, a cruise missile looks – somewhat – like an airplane, thus “explaining” the numerous eyewitness accounts of a plane hitting the Pentagon. But a cruise missile would have easily fit through the hole, stubby wings and all!

Meysan tries to do the skeptical thing by bringing other “evidence” to bear on this mystery. For example, he can’t understand why suicide hijackers would go to the trouble to hit the Pentagon **from the side**, when it would’ve made a much bigger, easier to hit, target if dive-bombed from above instead.

And he wonders why neither automated defenses nor our fighter jets could shoot the plane down before it hit the Pentagon. For him, a cruise missile transmitting a “friendly” IFF (Identification – Friend or Foe) signal makes more sense. He believes that would’ve disabled any automated defenses, and naturally a cruise missile is a much smaller target for a fighter to hit than a jumbo jet.

But Meysan is just getting started. He wonders how hijackers who’d never flown a jumbo jet before could have steered them into the WTC towers so accurately. (His answer: radio beacons were planted in the towers; the hijackers just engaged the autopilot, sat back, and watched their lives pass before their eyes. My answer: extensive practice in simulators.) And he buys into another 9/11 conspiracy theory: the planes *couldn’t* have caused the towers to collapse, so they *must* have been dynamited. (If so, why use the planes at all? Why, because they were needed to blame it on the “patsies” – Al Qaida. Osama was the Lee Harvey Oswald of 9/11.)

Oh, and President Bush’s statement that he saw the first plane hit the first WTC tower *proves* he had advance knowledge - or at least someone who did have advance knowledge (and a camera at the WTC) made sure Bush saw the attack no one else, outside of Manhattan, saw. (Meysan’s got us there! After all, we all know Bush *never* misspeaks, don’t we?)

While he’s at it, President Bush’s erratic flight plan on 9/11 – to Louisiana, then Nebraska, then back to Washington late that day – and his press secretary’s tortured explanation later – that there was a credible threat made against Air Force One, and they knew it was credible because the callers used codes supposedly known only to the President and top military officials – have a perfectly logical explanation: 9/11 was an attempted *coup d’etat* against Bush, since he and Rumsfeld apparently were too unwilling, pre-9/11, to fund all the weapons systems the generals wanted, or to go to war in Afghanistan to get that oil pipeline. (In all fairness, before 9/11, Rumsfeld *did* try to cancel several redundant weapons systems, and he *did* change his tune after the attack, but it seems far more likely that 9/11 changed the political climate to *let* Bush and Rumsfeld do what they wanted, rather than that 9/11 was a coup attempt that *forced* them into wars and military spending they were fundamentally opposed to.)

As skeptics, we shouldn’t reject conspiracy theories a priori. After all, 9/11 definitely involved a conspiracy. The only question is who the conspirators were: Was it Al Qaida or someone else? Was Saddam Hussein involved? Were Israelis? Were members of our own government?

But it comes down to the quality of evidence, and Meysan doesn’t understand that not all “evidence” is equal: some evidence is false, some is conflicting, and some is true but misleading. And negative evidence (If flight 77 had been hijacked, it should have been shot down; since it wasn’t, something must be wrong with the official story) can be the most misleading of them all.

And somehow, most of his “evidence” leaves me nonplussed. First, it seems obvious (at least to me) that the hijackers hit the Pentagon from the side because Boeing 757s aren’t built to be dive-bombers. If they’d tried that, the plane probably would have broken up and missed its target. Besides, coming in low and hitting the Pentagon from the side would be the obvious way to avoid any automated surface-to-air missiles that might ruin the attack, if not the suicide.

Also, I can’t see why any automated defenses would “listen” for a “friendly” IFF signal. If something is about to crash into the Pentagon, **who cares** whether it’s “friendly fire” or not? Just **shoot it down** – it doesn’t matter who’s piloting the thing!

As for the failure of fighter jets to shoot down the plane, Meysan presents one official’s explanation: Since two planes had just hit the WTC towers in NY, the fighter planes that were scrambled to intercept this third plane headed north, toward NY. They had no way to know the plane was doubling back on Washington. By the time they figured it out, it was too late.

Meysan claims that explanation doesn’t hold water, and indeed, PBS’s “Clear the Skies” special last Tuesday contradicted it. But PBS’s explanation – fighters *were* scrambled to protect Washington, but they were scrambled from too far away to reach Flight 77 before the crash – is far more believable than Meysan’s explanation – the coup-masters never relayed Cheney’s shoot-down order to the pilots.

That still leaves the photographic “evidence.” I have to admit I was perplexed at first. Surely the momentum of the plane would have smashed the wings through the outer wall of the Pentagon. It’s not surprising there wasn’t much of the plane left outside the building – as seen on PBS’s *Nova* last Tuesday, the wings, being made largely of light aluminum rather than an armor-piercing material like depleted uranium, would have disintegrated into shrapnel on impact, and the kinetic energy from the plane’s high speed would have carried most of this shrapnel, along with the fuel from the plane’s fuel tanks, into the building. But where were the holes from the shrapnel?

I spent half a day Googling around in search of a convincing answer. At last I found one at the site of *The New American*, an ultraconservative magazine.

I don’t much agree with their politics - they appear to hang with the black-helicopter, one-world-government paranoids – but in this instance they’ve produced a useful analysis. Maybe the best debunkers of left-wing conspiracy theories are *right-wing* conspiracy theorists, and vice versa.

At any rate, it turns out Meyssan's photos are misleading. The holes made by the wings are indeed there, but are obscured in the photos by smoke and water from fire hoses.

The wings, being wide but not very high, for the most part entered through (and destroyed) the ground floor wall. The top two floors, which are more visible in the photos, were left relatively unscathed, at least until the facade collapsed later.

Speaking of holes, there's a rather obvious one in Meyssan's theory: Since Flight 77 was hijacked, if it *didn't* hit the Pentagon, *what happened to it?* Incredibly, Meyssan doesn't even try to answer, calling on the *Government* to "come clean" about the "true" fate of Flight 77!

Other conspiracy theorists have tried to fill in this gap. Maybe Flight 77 was shot down. (But then, where's the debris?)

Or, since some witnesses claimed to see a jet with an American Airlines logo heading toward the Pentagon, maybe Flight 77 overflew the Pentagon at low altitude, so when the missile hit, people would think it had been the airliner. Flight 77 later landed somewhere in Kentucky, and the passengers were all taken to Area 51 so they can't talk about not dying when their plane didn't crash into the Pentagon.

This is a hallmark of an incorrect theory. The harder you try to explain away contradictory evidence, the more evidence appears to contradict your theory! But rather than abandon it, Meyssan simply published another book, *Pentagate*, in which he tries to explain away all the evidence against his first book!

So, if I were to grade *9/11: The Big Lie*, I'd give it a D. The only reason it doesn't get an F is because of its appendices, which actually do have useful information, including the (official) list of the hijackers, and the Operation Northwoods memo I mentioned earlier.

So, Meyssan is wrong. Still, sometimes a fact turns up which coincidentally appears to support a conspiracy theory. A case in point: There were flights on 9/13 which gathered up Saudi nationals, including members of the bin Laden family, while U.S. airspace was still closed to general aviation – all the better to quickly whisk them overseas once our airspace opened up again.

Liberal filmmaker Michael Moore publicized that fact in a January 2002 interview with Al D'Amato and Alan Colmes on Fox News, saying:

"Why did this country allow the bin Laden family, two days after – two days after September 11, to fly around America and pick up all the bin Laden relatives, about 24 of them, and take them to Europe? Not a single one of them was interrogated by the FBI."

Moore also reminded us of this in his anti-Bush documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11*.

There are two plausible interpretations of why Moore brings this up. One, favored by Moore's political opponents, is that he's conspiracy-mongering. And these flights do fit with the conspiracy theory that Bush knew about the 9/11 plot, and let it happen anyway, so his Administration could ram through the "PATRIOT" Act, go to war against Afghanistan to get that oil pipeline, and so on.

As a result, when rumors surrounding these flights began to circulate, the usually-excellent snopes.com urban legends website initially overreacted, denying that these flights took place, deeming them "Flights of Fancy" and even denouncing Moore on their Webpage about the rumors. Snopes.com has since corrected that Webpage to acknowledge that those flights did indeed take place, and apologized to Moore, while continuing to dispel some of the more conspiratorial allegations related to this story. For example, the FBI did get the chance to talk to these Saudis, and interviewed a few of them, although Moore was technically correct: none were officially interrogated.

One wag, writing in the *New York Observer*, even accused Moore of conspiracy-mongering merely for showing Bush sitting in that Florida classroom, reading *My Pet Goat* after he was told America was under attack. Apparently he believes that Moore believes (or, at least, wants us to believe) Bush was thinking, "EX-cellent – everything's going according to plan."

But have we really gotten to the point in this country where merely showing an unflattering video clip of the President constitutes conspiracy-mongering? Let's hope not.

A more reasonable interpretation of Moore's emphasis on the Saudi flights is that he believes Bush *didn't* know about 9/11, but the *reason* neither he nor anyone else knew was that his "kid gloves" treatment of the Saudis, as exemplified by these flights, interfered with the FBI's investigations.

Still, Moore isn't entirely blameless here. While he's never claimed Bush knew 9/11 was going to happen, he's never denied it either. I can't help but wonder if Moore played the same game with Bush that Bush played with Saddam Hussein – carefully wording his statements so his listeners will infer a conspiracy he knows doesn't exist.

If so, it weakens his case, since it lets his opponents lump him in with the likes of Thierry Meyssan.



*John Brandt is President of the North Texas Skeptics.*

## Book Review

### The God Delusion

Reviewed by John Blanton

We first met Richard Dawkins when he attended the CSICOP convention here in 1992. Some of us were fortunate to travel with him and with Ronnie Hastings to the dinosaur tracks near Glen Rose where Dawkins recapitulated his appearance there in a previous TV documentary.

Dawkins holds the Charles Simonyi Chair for the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University, and he is the author of popular books relating to biological evolution. He is also outspokenly anti-religious, said religions often tending to be anti-evolutionary and prone to preaching against science. Dawkins' most recent book is *The God Delusion*.<sup>1</sup>

Dawkins previously wrote *The Selfish Gene*, espousing his concept of genes acting to preserve themselves through evolution. *The Blind Watchmaker* was Dawkins' early take on the concept of Intelligent Design. The title alludes to William Paley's early 19th century argument for Intelligent Design that used the hypothetical discovery of a manufactured watch to illustrate his case. *Climbing Mount Improbable* argues for the conclusion that highly improbable biological configurations (e.g., the human species) are not only possible but probable through the stepwise mechanism of mutation combined with natural selection.

In *The God Delusion* Dawkins confronts religion head-on, highlighting the false bases and illogical conclusions of major religions. Doing so, Dawkins seeks to peel off the moral authority claimed by religion. He holds up the example of religious principals who draw moral lessons from contradictory texts of dubious authenticity.

We have the delightful tale from Judges of Jephthah, a military leader who made a bargain with God in which, in exchange for victory, he would make a burnt offering. Jephthah was victorious, and the sacrifice turned out to be his only child, which God graciously accepted. Either moral standards are much improved since the time of Jephthah, or else modern theologians will have to dig deeply to find a moral to derive from this sad circumstance.

Usually they do not, and Dawkins notes the cherry picking that abounds in biblical interpretation. That reminds me. On a

shelf back home I have a book with thousands of words, and if you piece them together just so, you can derive marvelous lessons for life. The book is a dictionary. Dawkins suspects, as have so many, that the moral authority of religion is from the moralist and not the book.

But, Dawkins is a biologist, and it's the field of biological evolution that's mostly of interest to Skeptics.

Intelligent Design "theorists" argue that life, particularly human life, is too well-planned to have derived only by chance natural law. Advanced thinking from a source unknown (wink-wink) must be behind it all. The obvious response is this: Intelligent Design provides no answer to who or what created this advanced thinking in the first place. For their part the Intelligent Design people have no problem with the origin of intelligence. They typically remind me that "God is eternal" and needs no explanation. In his turn, Dawkins argues the intelligence behind life must be at least as profound as life itself. I can't bring myself to follow this reasoning completely-Dawkins misses the point that the Space Shuttle was designed and constructed by people whose ancestors only recently hid from danger in the cold and dark without benefit of fire. There was a large chunk of advanced thinking going to waste back in those days, or else it's possible for intelligence to arise from ignorance, given enough time.

Dawkins particularly likes Michael Behe's claims regarding "irreducible complexity." Behe is a real scientist doing real research and teaching at Lehigh University, a real institution of higher learning. He is also a fellow of Intelligent Design's main promoter, the Discovery Institute.

After first surfacing as an Intelligent Design proponent at the 1992 SMU symposium "Darwinism, Science or Philosophy," Behe published *Darwin's Black Box*, a presentation of his core idea.<sup>2</sup> We have previously reviewed *Darwin's Black Box*, and you can read the review on line.<sup>3</sup>

Arguing Irreducible Complexity, Behe says life is complex, and we find in it a complexity that could not have been inherited from a less complex entity because such an entity would not be viable. All this time the Discovery Institute publicly and loudly ached for the opportunity to present their arguments in a public venue. Decrying censorship of their ideas, the Discovery Institute sought to present their case using staged debates and mock trials. They could have waited.

In 2004 the school board of Dover, Pennsylvania, decided to introduce Intelligent Design into the science curriculum. It was a barely disguised promotion of religion, and several parents sued. No longer aching for public exposure of Intelligent Design, the Discovery Institute elected to watch from the sidelines. Too late. Behe had already agreed to testify and had

been deposed. Dawkins delights in Behe's agony on the witness stand. He quotes from Judge Jones' decision in the case:

In fact, on cross-examination, Professor Behe was questioned concerning his 1996 claim that science would never find an evolutionary explanation for the immune system. He was presented with fifty-eight peer-reviewed publications, nine books, and several immunology textbook chapters about the evolution of the immune system; however, he simply insisted that this was still not sufficient evidence of evolution, and that it was not "good enough."<sup>4</sup>

Dawkins continues on his own:

Behe, under cross-examination by Eric Rothschild, chief counsel for the plaintiffs, was forced to admit that he hadn't read most of those fifty-eight peer-reviewed papers. Hardly surprising, for immunology is hard work. Less forgivable is that Behe dismissed such research as 'unfruitful'. It certainly is unfruitful if your aim is to make propaganda among gullible laypeople and politicians, rather than to discover important truths about the real world. After listening to Behe, Rothschild eloquently summed up what every honest person in that courtroom must have felt:<sup>5</sup>

"Thankfully, there are scientists who do research for answers to the question of the origin of the immune system... It's our defense against debilitating and fatal diseases. The scientists who wrote those books and articles toil in obscurity, without book royalties or speaking engagements. Their efforts help us combat and cure serious medical conditions. By contrast, Professor Behe and the entire intelligent design movement are doing nothing to advance scientific or medical knowledge and are telling future generations of scientists, don't bother."<sup>6</sup>

Dawkins will not make any friends from the religious crowd with *The God Delusion*. What he says is too close to the truth, and he says it without remorse. Usually this is a bad combination.



## References

- 1 The God Delusion by Richard Dawkins. Houghton Mifflin Company, 406 pages, 2006.
- 2 Symposium proceedings are available here: <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/fte/darwinism/index.html>

Behe's SMU presentation is available here:  
[http://www.arn.org/docs/behe/mb\\_smu1992.htm](http://www.arn.org/docs/behe/mb_smu1992.htm)

3 <http://www.ntskeptics.org/1999/1999november/november1999.htm#behe>

4 Decision by federal judge John E. Jones III in the case *Kitzmiller et al. vs. Dover Area School District, et al.*, 20 December 2005, p. 75.  
<http://www.ntskeptics.org/creationism/Dover.pdf>

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## Skepticism: This time it's personal

by Kristine Danowski

In my experience, being a skeptic is much more an academic exercise or hobby. Sometimes it's personal.

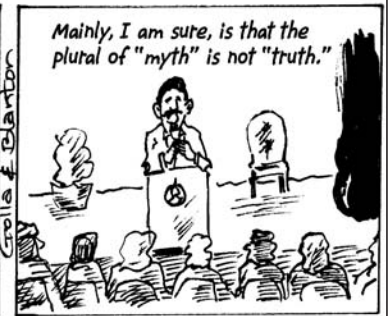
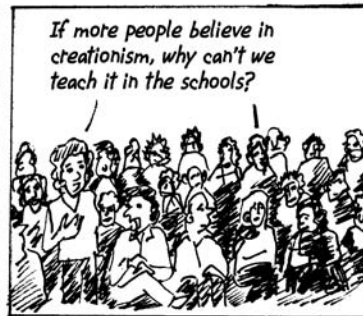
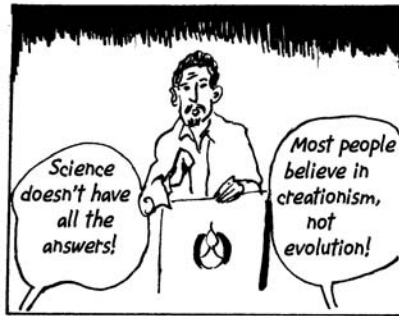
For example, several years ago a "Debbie," a good friend of mine, went to an iridologist for some reason. Debbie had always been suspicious and even hostile towards allopathic medicine for reasons unclear to me. Another friend ("Sue") and I did not even know Debbie had seen an iridologist until Debbie tearfully told us she was dying. She had terminal pancreatic cancer, she cried, diagnosed by the iridologist. Angrily she claimed that no physician would ever be truthful with her about her cancer. Debbie began giving away her possessions, planning her funeral, writing her loved ones goodbye letters, and of course seeing the iridologist. Far from wealthy, Debbie did not even have a decently-paying job. Nevertheless, over two months she gave the iridologist over \$4,000, which was nearly all of her meager savings.

Sue and I discussed Debbie's situation at length. We knew she was gullible and somewhat hypochondriac — in other words, an easy mark. Yet both of us were appalled at Debbie's insistence that she was dying and her adamant refusal to see a legitimate health care provider for a second opinion. We questioned her at length about what "tests" the iridologist performed, how he had diagnosed her "cancer," and for what "treatment" she was paying so exorbitantly. Debbie was alternately vague and defensive. He shone a light in my eye, she said, then he measured my aura. Measured your aura? How did he do this? She said he had some special lights that he shone on her to measure her aura and apparently from this he discovered her terminal condition. Her "treatment" consisted of sitting in various colors of light for an hour a couple of times a week.

Sue and I begged Debbie to see a real physician. What is the harm, we asked her, in her seeing a physician to confirm the

## Skeptic Ink

by Prasad Golla and John Blanton.  
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diagnosis? The worst that could happen was that she did, in fact, have cancer. She might even be a candidate for radiation or chemotherapy. We had some heated arguments, pleaded with her, until finally Debbie relented. The iridologist had warned her that medicine could not help her, she told us, but if we were so closed-minded that we would not regard the iridologist as a “real doctor” then she would see her family physician. She said she wanted to get us off her back. That was good enough for us.

I drove Debbie and Sue to the office, and Sue accompanied Debbie to the appointment. We did this to be sure Debbie kept the appointment; twice before she hadn't show up. Her family physician examined her, performed some tests, and declared Debbie to be healthy and completely without cancer. Sue reported to me that Debbie's physician pronounced the iridologist a quack and castigated Debbie for taking him seriously. Unfortunately, her physician's remarks infuriated Debbie, who was even further convinced that conventional medicine was concealing her true condition. Why, we asked her - for what conceivable reason would her physician lie to her about not having cancer? Debbie replied so that he could get her to spend money on useless treatments. Oh, like the iridologist, we replied. Over our strenuous objections, she continued to waste her money on the iridologist and his colored light bulbs. I inferred that she had some defensive anger; perhaps Debbie was reluctant and embarrassed to admit she'd been had.

Debbie remained healthy. She showed no signs of any debilitating illness. Years later she is still alive. She said the iridologist saved her life. Sue and I said the iridologist was a quack and Debbie was never terminally ill. Who's right?

This may help. One day Debbie showed up at the iridologist's office and found it abandoned. A note on the door addressed to his patients said that because he was being unjustly prosecuted for fraud, he had to leave the state. Debbie never heard from him again, and she had no way to contact him. What about her cancer treatment? Apparently she didn't need it anymore. If this guy were legitimate and ethical, how could he abandon his patients?

Shortly after her cancer scare ended, Debbie involved herself in another gimmick. She became a “distributor” for a multilevel marketing scheme selling blue-green algae. Debbie said

she had used a lot of the algae herself and it “worked.” She called me and Sue daily, and even several times a day, urging us to purchase some algae from her. We declined.

I don't know what Sue told Debbie, but I told her that I had investigated the algae company's claims and found them dubious at best. Therefore I would not buy any. Debbie persisted. Not only did she want me to buy algae from her, she wanted to sign me up as a distributor. Again I declined. We fought over it. Debbie insisted that “friends help friends” and that if I were really her friend I would help her out and buy her algae. I inferred she was experiencing some financial trouble and could not unload the algae she had agreed to sell. I agreed with her that friends do help friends, but friends also do not encourage friends in foolish ventures or detrimental activities. I told her that I would never buy any blue-green algae from her, and I asked her to stop asking me. She was furious, and never spoke to me again.

I feel bad for Debbie, but Sue and I did all we could to discourage her credulity. Ultimately all of us lost. Debbie might still be out there, caught in the wild blue yonder of quackery, wondering why she is always broke and her friends are exasperated.

Maybe it's just me. Maybe I encounter unusually credulous people. Maybe I am, as a former neighbor's “medical dowser”-husband told me, one of *those*. But I find my own critical thinking most often employed dashing the hopes of those around me. Yes, iridology and blue-green algae are quackery; yes, your medical dowsing is nonsense; no, copper bracelets don't cure arthritis; and yes, you should keep taking those big brown pills your doctor prescribed even though you feel better already.

It just never stops.

*Kristine Danowski is Vice President of the North Texas Skeptics.*

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