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URI GELLER BENDS *THE SPOOK'S* EAR

BY DOMICK CANCELLA

In the early seventies, Uri Geller became a sensation with his claims of paranormal powers. He is best known for his ability to bend spoons — a seemingly minor feat which has brought him global fame.

To be sure, there is no shortage of people who naysay his claims of telepathy, dowsing, psychic object breaking and fixing, and moving compass needles, causing seeds to sprout, and erasing computer disks with the power of thought, since an accomplished magician can perform any of these feats. However, there is no question that Geller is a unique, charismatic individual who has impacted the lives of people around the world.

THE SPOOK: On your Web site, you describe yourself as a “controversial paranormalist.” Could you clarify that a little bit?

URI GELLER: I don't know if I describe myself as a controversial paranormalist, but since I became well known world wide with spoon bending, mind reading, and all of the scientific experiments I've been a part of, obviously I immediately attracted controversy. I've been quite controversial in the past.

SPOOK: How about “paranormalist”?

GELLER: Paranormalist — I think that I coined that myself or it was Newsweek that used it first in the context of Uri Geller. It is someone who deals with the paranormal. And the paranormal, obviously, means extrasensory perception, psychokinesis, ghost hunting, etc., etc.

SPOOK: Judging by your Web site, you're keeping very busy. Can you tell me something about the various products you are endorsing? On your site I see teddy bears, crystals, meteorites — quite a lot of things.

GELLER: When you say “endorsing,” I don't put my name on to many products, although I've certainly been asked to do that. I have a line of jewelry which I present on QVC that I'm very proud of. They're very beautiful pieces of art and I designed them myself. I have been designing for over 45 years. Unfortunately, it was the spoon bending that dwarfed everything else. I studied under Salvador Dali for

almost two years and today I design pottery. I have a line of pottery that is sold in many department stores, including Harrads here in England, and soon I will be available also in Bloomingdales and Sak's Fifth Avenue. I love designing. I've been painting for many years and I have been exhibiting my artwork.

SPOOK: Do you feel that your reputation sometimes prevents you from doing things that you would like to do?

GELLER: Yes, in a way the spoon bending was such a bizarre phenomena, and it was so weird in a way that everyone around the world wanted to see it, and they wanted to experience it for themselves. Suddenly I was caught up in the whirlpool of this massive want to see Uri Geller phenomena

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and I kept doing it for years and years and years. But I never gave up my painting. I constantly continued painting. I met people like Andy Warhol, Picasso, and Peter Max, and that is really where my passion lies.

SPOOK: Are you having success getting your name known more for your artwork?

GELLER: It's definitely beginning now, because you know I designed Michael Jackson's latest CD. If you open Michael Jackson's *Invincible*, in the booklet you will find my drawing in there. I also designed Belinda Carlisle's, one of her CDs, and believe it or not, you've seen it on my Web site, I designed NSYNC's logo. NSYNC were relatively unknown when they came to me five years ago for inspiration and I told the group, let me design your logo and just put it on your first CD and

you will be number one, and they have. They are still using my logo on every product they do.

SPOOK: You have written quite a few books. I just read *Uri Geller's Life Signs*, which was a lot more fun than I thought it would be. Can you tell me how you came to write that?

GELLER: Well, I always believed that there was something mysterious about enneagrams. I studied it and I wanted to take it a stage beyond just being an enneagram. You know, *ennea* is the Greek word for nine, nine points, and I managed to get hold of part of the CIA's and the Israeli Moussad's profile questioning — you know, when they ask different questions from their agents — and I devised this quite complex and intricate questioniering, and you can recount and discover your true personality. I'm very proud of the book also because it took a long time to put together. It's a beautiful color book, and it's published in the United States by Reader's Digest. It's also out in many different countries around the world.

That's my latest book, but I also write fiction, I'm a novelist. I'm now in the middle of writing my fourth novel. The novel of which I'm most excited about is *Ella*. *Ella* has been bought by a young director, a British director, who lives in Los Angeles who is going to turn it into a major motion picture. His name is Bernard Rose — I don't know if you know of a movie named *Candyman*, he directed the original *Candyman*. He also directed *Immortal Beloved* and *Anna Karenina*. He did some big movies.

SPOOK: Is fiction writing something else you've been interested in for a long time?

GELLER: Yes, since I was a child. I believe I am a great storyteller. You know that when I was six, seven, eight years old, the teacher would call me up to stand in front of the class and invent stories. I visualize, I am a great fantasist, I fantasize a lot, and I think the key ingredient for a good novelist is the power of fantasy. To be able to create scenes, come up with interesting and unusual characters, and so on. That is very difficult for me to break into, because

most of the academia, the hard critics, say to Uri Geller, “Well, stick to bending spoons” and things of that nature. But my novels have been selling pretty well. I’m nowhere near Michael Crichton in sales, but they are selling okay and I can’t complain. And if the movie, *Ella*, will be successful, that will definitely open a very major door for me.

SPOOK: You keep mentioning your reputation and the problems it causes. Do you find that people expect you to be on stage all the time? Do they come up to you on the street with spoons?

GELLER: All the time. In England, I cannot walk in the street. I’m very, very well known here. But even in America, if you stop a hundred people and ask them do you know the guy who bends spoons, many of them will say, “Yes, Uri Geller.” I’m still on television quite a lot in the states. I’m actually doing something for Discovery. The BBC have just sold an Uri Geller documentary to A&E which will be coming out shortly. Larry King just called me last week. So I get so many requests for American television, but you know I’m a person who thinks about what television is for. I just don’t do an interview, on any show. I don’t jump on that bandwagon. I would rather have something talk about, like a book, like something that could help other people. Also you’ll notice on my Web site, you know some people are poor, some people don’t have the money to buy a book, so I make at least five books available on

my Web site to be read free. My own books. You can download them, you can print them out, and you don’t have to pay for them. You don’t see any other author doing that.

SPOOK: Actually, our magazine works the same way. We give it away and make our money through advertising. Do you find that people sometimes give you a hard time because of other aspects of your reputation? I’m thinking of things like people saying, “If you’re so psychic you should have known I was going to stop by” — that sort of thing?

GELLER: Oh, yes. Look, there will always be cynics and skeptics, and they continuously tried to debunk Uri Geller. But they didn’t go far, they simply couldn’t, because what I do is nothing new. I think that we all have mind powers. I ebbed away from the spoon bending. Today I teach people about positivity, and about believing in themselves, and about being optimistic, and I talk about the power of prayer. I talk about spirituality. That’s what I do today. And less and less cynics are in that field, because even skeptics are beginning to realize that there is a side to life that they could touch if they only had faith which is spirituality. And I do believe that if people become more spiritual they will become happier people. Did you know that people who go to church — this experiment or poll was conducted by the British educational authority — that people who go to church and pray, people who go to mosques and

pray or who go to a synagogue and pray live longer, are happier people, and have less disease?

SPOOK: So you are trying to have a positive impact on people’s lives instead of just being a showman.

GELLER: Exactly. That’s what I’m trying to do. Also, you know I own a football club here in England, which takes a lot of my time. And so I divide my life into four or five very distinct categories. I paint, I’m an artist, I write — both fiction and nonfiction — and I do my presentations about positive thinking, and I have enough time to spend with my football club.

SPOOK: Quite a number of high-profile people — for example, you mentioned Michael Jackson — have faith in your abilities. Do you ever worry that these, I’m going to say endorsements, might give validity to people who are trying to imitate you?

GELLER: Um, look, people who I know and who know me who are very famous, we know each other because of our very strong and warm friendship. Nothing else, nothing more. It’s really nothing to do with my abilities, or my powers, or my talents. It’s called friendship, for goodness sake. Even David Blaine, who is a magician, has given me endorsements. He believes that what I do is real, and he is taking a risk by saying that but he doesn’t care. That’s what he believes, that’s his belief system. But my contact with David Blaine goes beyond what he says about me. It’s true friendship, the same with Michael. The same with many, many other celebrities that I know.

SPOOK: It seems to me that you are in a very unique position to be able to look into people who claim to be psychics. For example, people who say that your money is cursed and then run off with it. Have you ever considered trying to expose people like that.

GELLER: No I haven’t, and I’ll tell you yes there are a lot of these kind of charlatans who pretend to have prediction powers, who read your palm, your coffee cup, tarot cards, and so on. Now I can’t say, I can’t rule out that most of them or all of them are fakes. How can I? Who am I to come to that conclusion? Many people do palm reading or do predictions or use the tarot cards — they’re really using their mind power, but the tools they use are tarot cards. It’s certainly not from the tarot cards, for goodness sake. Even when, I did my television show, I asked people to touch my orange circle and they would feel more

positive. Now, come on, we're grown-up people, my orange circle is not going to make you feel better, but it's the power of your self belief. You turn that orange circle or the tarot cards into a tool for your mind. Now there are definitely people out there who will take someone's money, but I can't rule out the fact that there may be legitimate paranormalists, and psychics, and mediums, who can really contact the other side, and why should I go after anyone like that? I want to live a positive life, not a negative life. This is why I am so sorry for all the skeptics. This is my opinion, they really live a pretty miserable life, dealing with negativity all the time.

SPOOK: Are there any final thoughts you'd like to leave our readers with?

GELLER: Yes, I'd love your readers to listen to this message very carefully, if you have younger readers. First of all, my message is for everyone to try and be positive no matter what they are going through, whether it is a terrible relationship or no money, sickness, to be positive, and also to be optimistic about their near future, their far future, to be all the time optimistic. Most important is to believe in yourself. If they shut the door in your face, walk through it. Constantly believe in yourself. To the younger readers, to the teenagers, don't smoke, because if you smoke you are a loser. Don't drink, don't touch drugs, that is really my message. Be charming, be nice to others, listen carefully, listen to others, use your charisma, be presentable, be clean, try to get a higher education. If you do those things, you are bound to make it in life. So that's my message. ~

AFTERWORD

In our interview with Uri Geller, he mentioned that he believes spiritual people are happier and that he feels skeptics lead a miserable life because they focus on the negative. We asked a number of people what they thought of these opinions.

James Randi, author of *The Truth About Uri Geller*: "Skeptics don't buy 'bargains' without examining them, they invest in insurance, they don't go to fortune-tellers, and don't follow their horoscopes. What's 'negative' about all that? Those who buy anything without questions, don't have insurance, throw away money on fortune-tellers, and depend on Mme. Lasagna to consult the stars, are losers. Now, *that's* sad!"

Edd Doerr, president of the American Humanist Association: "As a Humanist I do not include anything supernatural in my philosophy or lifestance. I do not focus on the negative and prefer not to identify myself by the things I do not believe, such as leprechauns, trolls, demons, fairies, little people, angels, spirits, deities, magic, etc. Though entropy will undoubtedly catch up with our planet billions of years from now and though I see no evidence of purpose in the universe, I regard life as a wonderful adventure, I enjoy it and savor such things as family and friends and great music and good writing, and feel a strong obligation to work to better the world through work for civil liberties, human rights, sustainable development, etc. My only regret is that life is too short to do all I want to do."

Ron Barrier, National Spokesman for American Atheists. "Mr. Geller's implication that 'spiritual people are happier and skeptics lead a miserable life because they focus on the negative,' raises a serious question. 'Negative' to what? Reality?"

"Similar to the religion industry, Mr. Geller has a vested interest in professional bamboozleism. His forte is to make claims and 'perform' seriously deficient magic feats that supposedly defy naturalistic explanations. If there is a negative to be found here, it's the negative aspect of trying to hoodwink people into thinking that Mr. Geller, a John Edward, or a professional religionist, is privy to specific knowledge and/or tactics that have been denied to the common person, or even the professional scientist. His sad performance on 'The Tonight Show' a few years back bears that out.

"There's an old saying, 'Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.' This can be applied to religious institutions and Mr. Geller — both of whom have built reputations based on unsupportable claims, rhetorical 'evidence,' and especially emotional exploitation, with a sprinkling of lawsuits to silence critics.

"If, as Ayn Rand noted, 'Physical reality is an objective absolute,' then there is nothing inherently negative about dealing with this reality that we find ourselves in. There are essentially two ways of looking at this existence we are in — either we derive our values from the reality we find ourselves in, or we impose values on this very same reality. Since we know so little about this objective reality, any attempt to impose human desires or needs upon it leads to delusion,

and delusion, especially competing delusions, leads to conflict and, thus, an intractable negative condition.

"It's interesting, in fact, almost laughably paradoxical, that those who criticize skepticism and critical thought are more than willing to use all the technology and know-how we have developed as a human race that is a direct result of skepticism and critical thought. Terms such as 'submission' and 'dependency' are not part of the skeptical lexicon — those are religious terms. A person searching for truth has no requirement to submit to anything that has not been demonstrated to be real.

"People without religion have a very healthy and positive view of this reality. It's all we have. It's what we have to deal with. Any attempt to minimize this reality is an attempt to minimize existence — leaving it classified as a 'tier' which one must pass through in order to proceed to some assumed next level. And, as Felix Unger of 'The Odd Couple' noted, 'When you assume, you make an 'ass' out of 'u' and 'me.'

"Demonization and scapegoating are not skeptical tools, but are certainly two of the best weapons of the preacher, the con-man, and the dead-talkers. They prey on peoples emotions. This in and of itself is supremely negative.

"If Mr. Geller, like the clergy, is bent on wrongly labeling skeptics as negative, then one must wonder why he has a such a delicate trigger finger as he seems quite capable of trying to litigate skepticism into silence with ponderous and nonsensical lawsuits instead of just proving his point. Or, as in this case, falsely labeling the skeptic as 'sad.' The truth doesn't need lawsuits to support it. As Jefferson noted, 'The truth can stand by itself.'"

Peter H. Gilmore, High Priest, Church of Satan: "Satanists are skeptics who question all things as they experience the world. Since we believe that there is only the 'here and now' and no afterlife, each moment is exceedingly precious, and is shared when possible with people whom we cherish. We are Epicurians who focus on the joy of existence, and we reject the irrationality of faith, using reason to augment the profundity of our pleasures."~

Readers may be interested to know that the author was unable to get a response from the Vatican for this afterword.~