

# Prof challenges psychic's mystique

Think of a two digit number. Make it easy — keep it below 50. Only use odd-numbered digits and don't repeat numbers like 11 or 55.

You were thinking of 37. Or maybe 39.

"It looks like you have a lot of choice," chuckles Ray Hyman, University psychology professor. "But actually you are restricted a lot."

He points out the choice has to be an odd, two-digit number and since the numbers one and five were mentioned you would be unlikely to choose them. This only leaves 37 or 39.

Hyman says many magicians and so-called psychics use techniques like this one to let people think they have a free choice, but they are actually working in a very structured situation.

For example, when a magician asks you to draw anything, perhaps a simple figure, statistics show that 80 to 90 percent of people draw a flower, house or ship. Magicians also know what the most popular numbers are and the most picked cards for card tricks (the ace of spades).

Hyman notes there are thousands of ways to force a person to pick the correct card. To illustrate this, he tells of how the Mystic Seven, a group of magicians in Baltimore, were fooled by member Hen Fetch.

The group met at a member's home. Fetch gave the cards to the group, asked them to make sure they were all different, select one card, show everyone and replace it in the deck. When they were done, he came back into the room and asked someone to say the name of the card — seven of spades. Then, he threw the deck at the window shade. The blind rolled up and after the cards dropped to the floor the seven of spades remained stuck to the window — on the outside.

None of the magicians could figure out the trick. Actually, Fetch had entered the house earlier in the day and placed five different cards around the room. Then he put only five cards in the deck, figuring a group of magicians wouldn't check carefully.

"You can fool any group if you determine how their minds work," Hyman says. Another group might have checked the cards more carefully, because they would be suspicious.

"It's the hardest to fool children," Hyman adds, "because their minds are not predictable."

But Hyman isn't totally disbelieving of all psychic phenomena because of the self-fulfilling prophecy — if a person believes it will work then it probably will.

Hyman points to the case of Jamil, a Eugene psychic who used to meditate in his bathtub about people's contracts and business deals. "What would have been different if he hadn't meditated for them?" queries Hyman. "I asked him if he thought that their belief in him just gave them more courage and more confidence."

Hyman pauses. "He said he would buy that." Hyman attributes people's gullibility to



Ray Hyman

Photo by David Corey

ignorance about their minds and the way they work. For example, there are many parts of the memory which are inaccessible to each other. This can lead to feelings of reincarnation, split personalities and *deja vu*.

*Deja vu* is "probably due to a familiar clue to a place. Perhaps a tree is bent in a certain way that gives you the feeling the scene is familiar although there is no way of having been there before," Hyman says. Other psychologists attribute the *deja vu* feeling to one half of the brain being slightly ahead of the other.

Predictions like those made in "National Enquirer" and like magazines are also easily explained, says Hyman. A study done at Harvard had students make predictions about what would happen in the following year. The students ended up with a higher percentage of right answers because psychics always "throw in a few far out ideas that probably won't be true. . . ."

Magicians' ability to find hidden items is not mysterious, Hyman says. "People unwittingly give away clues." For example, when looking for an object in a studio, the magician will hold onto the person and by clues given by their response — increased pulse rate, resistance to the wrong way — will be able to narrow down the area to find the object.

Palm reading is somewhat more complex. There are certain basic conclusions that can be drawn from just the lines on the hand, but specific

details are filled in by the subject who tries to fit what the psychic says to their own lives.

"When I read palms I let the clients know I know what I'm doing," Hyman says. "I define the situation and let them know it must be a cooperative effort. Most people who go to a palm reader already have a problem and they want help. They are open to make whatever I say fit their situation. They make themselves believe it."

Two psychic phenomena have a physiological explanation, according to Hyman. During meditation, many people feel like they levitate and leave their bodies. But sitting still for a long time causes the nerves to adapt and no longer send signals to the brain. This can bring a feeling of levitation.

Some people also claim they see auras. Hyman explains that looking at something for a long time can cause an afterimage to appear to the side of the object. Both of these conditions are actually felt or seen, says Hyman, but there is nothing occult or mysterious about them.

Hyman belongs to the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, which publishes "The Skeptical Inquirer," a quarterly magazine.

He does feel bad about destroying the "romance" of life for many people. "I hate to take away their Santa Claus," he laments. "But maybe they'll learn something about themselves."

By Sandy Johnstone

## LAST DAY FOR BOOK REFUNDS!

Wednesday,  
April 21, 1982

No refunds can be made on purchases after April 21st.  
Keep this in mind when making late purchases.

Thank you

**UO** 13th & Kincaid  
BOOKSTORE Mon-Fri 7:30-5:30  
Sat 10:00-3:00  
Textbooks 686-3520



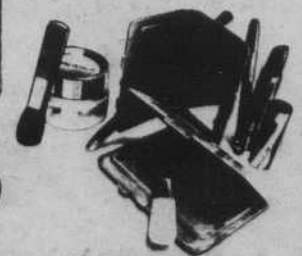
## MERLE NORMAN®

### Spring Cosmetic Sale

MAKE-UP KITS  
25% OFF

Blushers . . .  
3 for \$10.00

Handsome Travel Bag . . . \$12.99  
(reg. \$20.50)



We also have a wide selection of colognes  
and nail polish on sale in time for Spring!

**MERLE NORMAN®**  
The Place for the Custom Face®

20 Oakway Mall  
342-4483