

# RANDI

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68 WYLLAND AVE.  
TOLSON, OUT. GRANADA  
M4E 3C9



nota bad impression!

high intelligence  
center



JAMES RANDI

B

very good impression!



*independent*

*orator*

*outspoken*

*marked a few times -  
or a reasonable facsimile*

JAMES RANDI

*attest*

*A*

6/2007 AP writer City West Weekly Miami  
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# Abracadabra! The fraud is exposed

Canadian was accomplished magician before shining light of reason on psychics and their ilk

**MATT SEDENSKY**  
NEW YORK TIMES

FORT LAUDERDALE, FLA.—James Randi has escaped from a locked coffin submerged in the sea, and from a straitjacket dangling over Niagara Falls. If you chose a word from a 200-page book, the Canadian native could guess it. Pick an object, he'd make it fade from sight.

He gave up performing as The Amazing Randi years ago, but his words to the audience at the end of each show foreshadowed his next act.

"Everything you have seen here is tricks," he would say. "There is nothing supernatural involved here. I hope you'll accept my word for that. Thank you and good evening."

For more than two decades, Randi has been skeptic-in-chief, challenging psychics and faith healers, mediums and mentalists. He finds his targets so preposterous and those falling for them so desperate that he has become obsessed.

"It's important," he says, "because any misinformation like this — of people claiming they can subvert nature, they can do real miracles and they want to be paid for it... that's a very negative influence on society."

Toronto-born Randall James Hamilton Zwinge's career as a magician and escape artist came after he dropped out of high school and left home to join the carnival. His stage routine gave way to a nagging need to speak out against those whose work he regarded as nonsense — not just people who read palms and minds. Randi "came out" as a skeptic on a 1972 episode of *The Tonight Show* — he helped Johnny Carson set up Uri Geller, the Israeli performer who claimed to bend

spoons with his mind. Randi ensured the spoons and other props were kept from Geller's hands until show time to prevent tampering. The result was an agonizing 22 minutes in which Geller was unable to perform any tricks.

In the years since, Randi has garnered a prestigious MacArthur fellowship, established the James Randi Educational Foundation and become guardian of a \$1 million (U.S.) prize earmarked for anyone who can prove supernatural powers. It remains unclaimed.

Randi will go to great lengths to expose frauds. Michael Shermer, the publisher of *Skeptic* magazine and executive director of the Skeptics Society, notes he is following in the steps of Houdini.

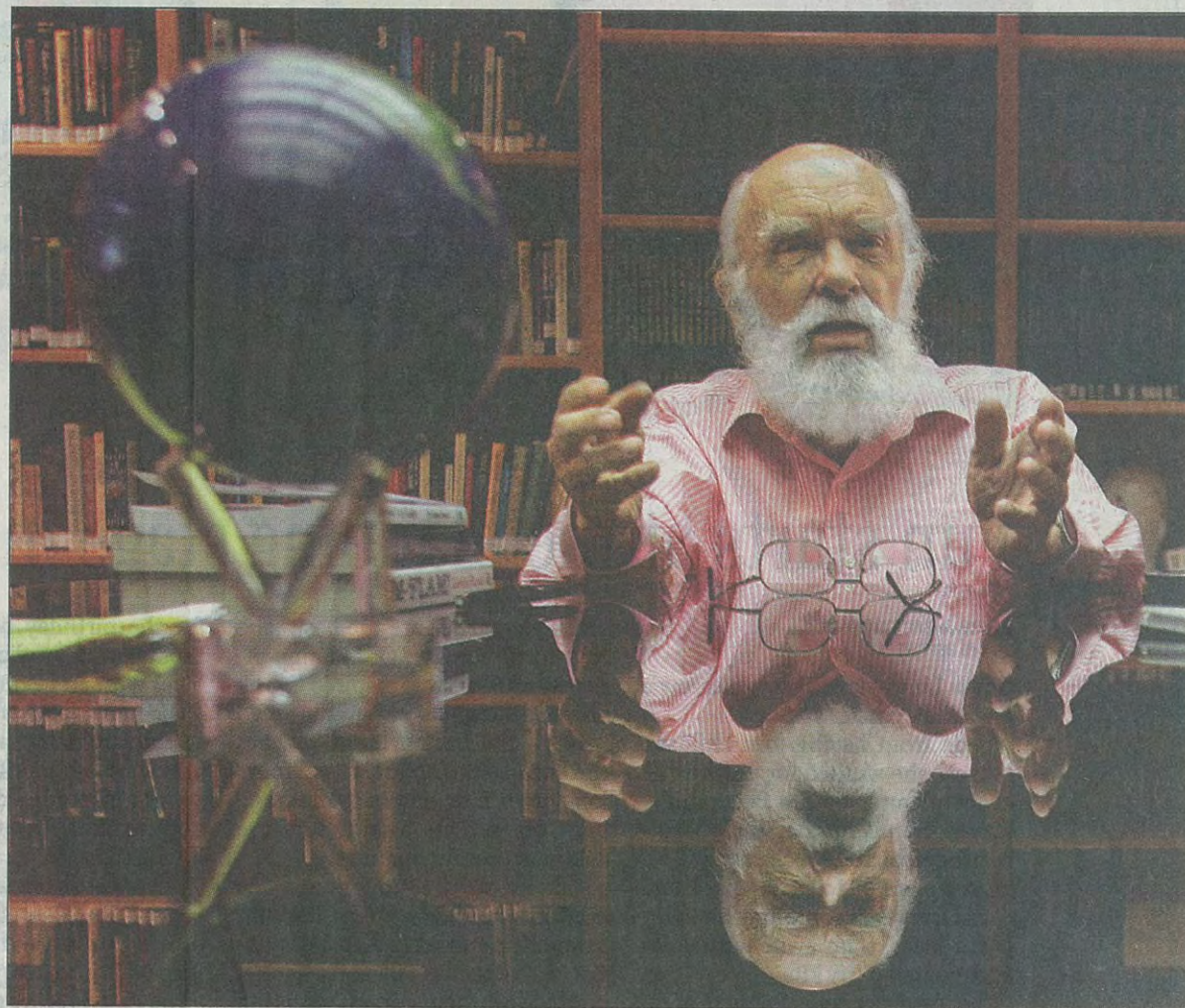
"It takes a magician to know how people deceive purposely. Scientists are not trained to detect intentional deception," Shermer says. "If you care about reality, Randi is a lens through which to see how these claims are put to the test."

Randi's parents raised him Anglican, but he doesn't draw much of a distinction between mainstream religious groups and other spiritual figures on the fringe. The only difference, he says, is more established faiths have more power.

Still, Randi has focused many of his efforts on non-traditional faith leaders. Once, he showed messages that television faith healer Peter Popoff claimed to be getting from God about his audience were actually coming from his wife through an earpiece.

For all the analysis Randi puts into everything, he still finds delight in observing magic he knows is a stunt or watching a film that is just fantasy.

At 78, Randi is 5 foot, 6 inches,



ALAN DIAZ / AP FILE PHOTO

Toronto native James Randi, 78, gives an interview at his foundation headquarters in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

with gold-rimmed glasses, a bald head and bushy white eyebrows and beard. He drives a light blue Mazda Miata with "Amazing" on the licence plate. Peacocks can be heard and seen on the lawn outside the foundation's office and they leave their droppings on the path to the front door. Everyone calls him Randi.

He is energetic and lucid, quick with a joke, and looking back on his life he can't help feeling some frustration.

"I'm not able to do the things that I

want to do," he says. His voice grows louder as he begins the litany of offenders, including Geller and Popoff. "I'm very angry," he says. "I should be able to get them brought to justice."

Geller, who remains a target on Randi's website, acknowledges his appearance on *The Tonight Show* was a humiliation. "I thought, 'This is it. I'm finished.' But exactly the opposite happened," Geller says. "People like Randi — skeptics — actually made my career. They did for me what a PR man would have

asked a million dollars for."

Envelopes continuously arrive at Randi's office seeking to take him up on his seven-digit challenge, seeking to prove the unprovable. None of the entries has made him question his beliefs, but his certainty, he acknowledges, always comes with a sprinkling of uncertainty, too.

"I am probably right. But I'm always only probably right," he says. "Absolutes are very hard to find." James Randi Educational Foundation, randi.org.