

D. SCOTT ROGO AND HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO PARAPSYCHOLOGY¹

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D. Scott Rogo was one of the most widely respected writer-journalists covering the field of parapsychology. I am greatly saddened to report that on August 18, 1990 Scott was found stabbed to death in his home (Connelly 1990). He was born February 1, 1950, and began publishing articles on psychical research while still a teenager, including some in scientific journals. His first book appeared when he was only 20.

Scott held a unique position in parapsychology, and he made many contributions that deserve recognition. Because he died so young, there is not much published biographical information on him, although Berger (1988), May and Lesniak (1990), and Shepard (1985), all carry brief entries. Some of the recent tributes have provided a bit more personal information on Scott (e.g., Clark 1990; Coleman 1990; Harary 1990; Paul 1990; Siegel 1991; Smith 1990). Scott attended the University of Cincinnati and then San Fernando Valley State College from which he graduated in 1972 summa cum laude with a B.A. in music.² He played the English horn for two seasons with the San Diego Symphony and also played occasionally for the Honolulu Symphony. He played the oboe as well.

I can make no claim to have known Scott well, but he did spend about a week visiting the Institute for Parapsychology in Durham, North Carolina while I was working there. We also saw each other at conventions during the last 10 years. As I became acquainted with him, I found him to have a terrific sense of humor. He was also good partner for intellectual sparring because he didn't take arguments personally.

Scott was best known as a writer and journalist of the paranormal, but in reality he was far more than that. Unlike many authors, Scott was an active scientific investigator. He served as a visiting researcher at both the Psychical Research Foundation (then in Durham, North Carolina) and the (former) Division of Parapsychology and Psychophysics of Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York. He published three papers reporting experimental research on the ganzfeld³ (Rogo 1976, 1977; Rogo, Smith, and Terry 1976) and conducted a study on personality factors of successful ganzfeld subjects (Rogo and Sargent 1982). Scott was also active in field investigations of hauntings and poltergeists (e.g., Rogo 1974, 1982, 1987). Not only did he produce many books and popular articles, but in addition he published full papers in all of the professional, English-language, refereed parapsychology journals. I know of no other popular author who can claim that distinction.

Scott was also a leading authority on the history of psychical research. In this I would estimate that there are only three or four people in the world who might be considered to be in his league. The breadth of his historical knowledge of the field was unsurpassed.

Scott's interests included parapsychology, Fortean⁴, and popular occultism. He knew this wide range of literature of the paranormal probably better than anyone else. His articles appeared in numerous periodicals (see Table 1) and covered near death experiences, autism and ESP, multiple personality research, critiques of James Randi's debunking, and miracles of saints. Much of Scott's writing was related to issues of survival of bodily death. He took the affirmative position on the question, but he did not disregard the evidence challenging his view. His *The Search for Yesterday* is probably the single best book critiquing the research on reincarnation. Ronald Siegel (1991), a noted skeptic and friend of Scott, commented that Scott's position on the question of life after death had shifted over the years as new evidence became available.

Although anthropology was not his main interest, his writings were sometimes enriched by examples from anthropological sources and discussions of psi in non-western cultures; for instance, his book *The Poltergeist Experience* included coverage of a stone-throwing case in Sumatra and a fire-igniting poltergeist in India. His *Exploring Psychic Phenomena* briefly discussed Amazon natives' use of psychoactive drugs to elicit ESP. Scott wrote at least two articles on anthropology for parapsychologists (Rogo 1983, 1984), and he also presented parapsychological ideas to anthropologists at an AAA convention (Rogo 1979).

TABLE 1: SOME OF THE PERIODICALS IN WHICH D. SCOTT ROGO PUBLISHED ARTICLES

Anabiosis; European Journal of Parapsychology; Fate; Human Behavior; The Humanist; International Journal of Parapsychology; International UFO Reporter; Journal of Parapsychology; Journal of Religion and Psychical Research; Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research; Journal of the Society for Psychical Research; Lucidity Letter; New Realities; Omni; Parapsychology Review; Probe the Unknown; Psychic; Psychoenergetic Systems; Research in Parapsychology; Research Letter (of the Parapsychology Laboratory of the University of Utrecht); Spiritual Frontiers; Theta; Two Worlds; Zetetic Scholar

SCOTT ROGO'S UNIQUE POSITION IN PARAPSYCHOLOGY

Scott held a unique position in parapsychology and as such, he faced pressures often unappreciated by others who have not been in similar situations. First, Scott was an independent investigator and not employed in an academic or research institution. A second factor was that in order to support his work, he became a writer of books and articles for the general public.

Scott's status as an independent scholar had both advantages and drawbacks. Those outside academic institutions are not constrained by the paradigms and categories that dictate "acceptable" topics for study, and thus outsiders can investigate novel areas that are overlooked by others. On the other hand, the outsiders receive little peer commentary, and thus the scientific quality of their work can be uneven.

Trade-offs are inevitable when one is both a scholar and popular writer. Scott once told me that when he was writing, he would produce 20 pages a day. This rapid production was necessary in order to support himself; he didn't enjoy the luxury of spending years on one book. His prolific output understandably did sometimes lead to errors, resulting in antagonisms with other researchers. I and others had sharp exchanges with him in the pages of the professional journals, yet Scott and I remained on friendly terms.

The fact that parapsychology is not well accepted also created pressures unknown to those in more orthodox disciplines.⁵ The publication outlets available for nonstandard topics often discourage documentation and encourage sensationalistic treatment, yet these may be the only viable outlets for chronicling events deemed "inappropriate" by orthodoxy. In trying to advance the quality of his books, I am sure that Scott must have had battles with publishing house editors because they are often unsympathetic to the inclusion of references and documentation. Yet his popular books typically contain far more references than most other similar works. He frequently referred to scholarly journals and gave full citations. That paid off. Although Scott's books were primarily aimed at popular audiences, a number were adopted as texts in university courses.

SCOTT ROGO'S EFFORTS TO BROADEN THE RANGE OF PARANORMAL RESEARCH

If one looks at the books Scott wrote (see Table 2), one is struck by the range of subjects. Some might consider several of his topics too "fringe" and unsuited for serious scientific consideration, but I believe that such an attitude is mistaken. Even for those few scientists who investigate paranormal phenomena, there are still some claims that most consider "subversive"; they threaten the accepted concepts and categories. For instance, demonic experiences, bigfoot sightings, poltergeist action, and phenomena suggesting survival of bodily death

have all been reported in conjunction with UFOs. Strange animal mutilations have been reported in poltergeist cases as well as with ufo sightings. Striking ESP experiences (even cross-correspondences) have been reported by ufo contactees. Some of the contactees claim bedroom visitations by angels, extra-terrestrial aliens, and mythical creatures. Similar experiences have been reported for thousands of years. These are unsettling claims not only because of their innate strangeness, but also because they fall between the discrete categories most people assume to be valid, and thus most researchers (even those in parapsychology) prefer to ignore them.

TABLE 2: BOOKS PUBLISHED BY D. SCOTT ROGO

- NAD: A Study of Some Unusual "Other-World" Experiences. New York: University Books. 1970.
 A Psychic Study of "The Music of the Spheres" (NAD, Volume II). Secaucus, NJ: University Books, Inc. 1972.
 Methods and Models for Education in Parapsychology. Parapsychological Monograph No. 14. New York: Parapsychology Foundation, Inc. 1973.
 The Welcoming Silence: A Study of Psychical Phenomena and Survival of Death. Secaucus, NJ: University Books. 1973.
 An Experience of Phantoms. New York: Taplinger Publishing Company. 1974.
 Parapsychology: A Century of Inquiry. New York: Taplinger Publishing Company. 1975.
 Exploring Psychic Phenomena: Beyond Mind and Matter. Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House. 1976.
 In Search of the Unknown: The Odyssey of a Psychical Investigator. New York: Taplinger Publishing Company. 1976.
 The Haunted Universe: A Psychic Look at Miracles, UFOs and Mysteries of Nature. New York: New American Library. 1977.
 The Haunted House Handbook. New York: Tempo Books/Grosset & Dunlap. 1978.
 (Ed.) Mind Beyond the Body: The Mystery of ESP Projection. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books. 1978.
 Minds and Motion: The Riddle of Psychokinesis. New York: Taplinger Publishing Company. 1978.
 The Poltergeist Experience. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books. 1979.
 (Ed.) UFO Abductions: True Cases of Alien Kidnappings. New York: New American Library. 1980.
 ESP and Your Pet. New York: Tempo Books/Grosset & Dunlap. 1982.
 Miracles: A Parascientific Inquiry Into Wondrous Phenomena. New York: The Dial Press. 1982.
 Leaving the Body: A Complete Guide to Astral Projection. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. 1983.
 Our Psychic Potentials. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. 1984.
 The Search for Yesterday: A Critical Examination of the Evidence for Reincarnation. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. 1985.
 Life After Death: The Case for Survival of Bodily Death. Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, England: Aquarian Press. 1986.
 Mind Over Matter: The Case for Psychokinesis: How the Human Mind Can Manipulate the Physical World. Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, England: The Aquarian Press. 1986.
 On the Track of the Poltergeist. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1986.
 The Infinite Boundary: A Psychic Look at Spirit Possession, Madness, and Multiple Personality. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. 1987.
 Psychic Breakthroughs Today: Fascinating Encounters with Parapsychology's Latest Discoveries. Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, England: The Aquarian Press. 1987.
 The Return From Silence: A Study of Near-Death Experiences. Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, England: The Aquarian Press. 1989.
 Beyond Reality: The Role Unseen Dimensions Play in Our Lives. Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, England: The Aquarian Press. 1990.

COAUTHORED BOOKS

- Rogo, D. Scott, and Raymond Bayless. Phone Calls From the Dead. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. 1979.
 Rogo, D. Scott, and Jerome Clark. Earth's Secret Inhabitants. New York: Tempo Books/Grosset & Dunlap. 1979.
 Druffel, Ann, and D. Scott Rogo. The Tujunga Canyon Contacts. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. 1980.

NOTES

As far as I am aware, this is a complete list of Rogo's published books. Several of these have been released under other titles; those titles have not been listed.

D. Scott Rogo also edited the English-language version of *Wolf Messing: The True Story of Russia's Greatest Psychic* by Tatiana Lungin (Translated from the Russian by Cynthia Rosenberger and John Glad). New York: Paragon House, 1989.

While this article was being prepared, the book *Pathways to Inner Healing* was being readied by a publisher.

As a result, many strange and unusual occurrences have been left for journalists to investigate and chronicle. In actuality it has been popular writers such as John Keel and Scott Rogo who investigated and reported on such phenomena long before they were acknowledged by academics. The connections among many of the Fortean areas are now starting to be recognized by the academy. Only recently have topics such as the "old hag phenomena" (Hufford 1982; McClenon 1990) or "men in black" (Rojcewicz 1987) received serious, sympathetic treatment rather than being dismissed as delusional, hallucinatory, or pathological. There is a growing recognition within parapsychology that such topics need to be studied (McClenon 1991). The existence of the Society for Scientific Exploration and its *Journal of Scientific Exploration* testifies to the fact that various anomalistic areas have issues in common. Still, many find that associations with bizarre phenomena taint more acceptable topics. Scott did not ignore these phenomena no matter how unsavory others might consider them, and this did not always endear him to his more orthodox colleagues.

The appropriate ways of interpreting bizarre phenomena are problematical, and anthropologists may be among the scholars best equipped to deal with them. However, if social scientists study only the cultural meaning of the phenomena while neglecting the underlying reality, the phenomena can be perceived as being devalued. At times such research has been conducted with the hidden agenda of discrediting the phenomena. Scott Rogo was interested in the underlying reality, and it may yet be that ESP and PK will help explain them.⁶

SCOTT ROGO AS COMMUNICATOR

Perhaps Scott's greatest ability was to effectively communicate the complex findings of psi research to a larger public. In this, I think he was unsurpassed. I have met many people with a moderate interest in psychic phenomena whose only contact with scientific parapsychology was via Scott Rogo. He reached an immense number of people. One of Scott's contributions was that of consulting editor for *Fate* where he wrote a regular column on parapsychology. He also recruited a substantial number of prominent researchers and skeptics to write articles for the magazine, bringing a high level debate to the attention of the public. His popular articles and columns would nearly always cite scientific work and give the reader enough information to track down the original research papers.

Although his role as communicator was not always appreciated by some of those who wrote only for other academics, communicators like Scott are very much needed in parapsychology, a tiny⁷ field that depends almost entirely on the generosity of private individuals for support. Scott was one of the very few writers who brought responsible, scientific psi research to the wider public. Scott also served in the role of critic and warned the public of dubious and unfounded claims. He was more effective in this than the self-proclaimed debunkers, because he had much more credibility with those who really needed warnings about uncritical acceptance of paranormal claims.

Scott's loss is a tragedy not only for his family and friends but also for the science of parapsychology. Scott made significant contributions and played an important role in helping other scholars reach a wider audience. There is a severe shortage of capable researchers and knowledgeable, responsible writers who cover the field. Parapsychology will feel his loss for years to come.

NOTES

George P. Hansen has recently completed a study of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP), published in the January 1992 issue of the *Journal of the American Society for Psychological Research*.

¹I wish to thank Jack Rogo, Scott's father, and Arthur Berger for providing information on Scott. Thanks also to Robert Durant for comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

²Scott graduated in January 1972; in June of that year San Fernando Valley State College changed its name to California State University Northridge.

³The ganzfeld procedure involves partial sensory deprivation and seems to enhance ESP functioning in the laboratory.

⁴The term Fortean is derived from Charles Fort, an author who, in the first few decades of this century, collected thousands of reports of anomalous events.

⁵The pressures faced by investigators of the unusual have been insightfully discussed by Henry Bauer (1986), former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences of Virginia Polytechnic and State University.

⁶A strong case has been made for the existence of some relatively mundane forms of psi (extrasensory perception, ESP, and psychokinesis, PK). For major reviews in mainstream scientific journals see Child (1985), Jahn (1982), Radin and Nelson (1989), Rao and Palmer (1987), and Winkelman (1982).

⁷In the U.S., parapsychology has approximately 10-15 full-time professional researchers. Most who contribute to the professional literature are either self-supporting independent researchers or professors who devote part of their research to the field.

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Published in:

Anthropology of Consciousness, 1991,
Volume 2, Issue 3-4, pages 32-35.