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## Psychic claims power to solve mysteries

By **KAREN VOYLES**  
Sun staff writer

WILLISTON -- Levy County's resident psychic, Noreen Renier, etched another notch in her crystal ball Sunday.

Well, maybe not exactly a notch and perhaps it wasn't really a crystal ball, but she did claim her psychic work helped to solve another mystery.

Renier worked with the family of a missing man, Phillip Lester, in the Houston, Texas, area through a series of phone calls. Lester disappeared in November during a church outing.

Sunday, authorities found human remains, tentatively identified as his, just a short distance from the place Renier had suggested the family search for him. Foul play is not suspected in Lester's death.

That situation was similar to Norman Lewis' disappearance from his Williston home in 1994. In that case, Renier worked with Williston police, who used Navy divers to recover Lewis' body from a water-filled pit.

Renier says she has provided psychic information that has helped to solve 300 mysteries in eight countries over 22 years. She said she can't solve all the cases brought to her. But she said some cases take longer than others, and may yet be solved in the future.

Despite the satisfaction of both families in those cases, the founder of a skeptics chapter in Florida said those cases prove nothing because no one can prove that psychic power is real.

In the most recent case, the Harris County Sheriff's Department in Texas said Lester, 74, was last seen Nov. 7 outside Houston with a church group. He had been touring a funeral museum with his wife. Lester's son-in-law, Richard Akin, said Lester suffered from Parkinson's disease and short-term memory loss and had a tendency to wander when something caught his attention.

"What we think happened is that he went to the restroom and then exited from the building through a fire door, which set off the alarm," Akin said. "In all the excitement of the alarm going off, he just walked away and no one noticed him."

Family members and friends immediately launched a search, and the sheriff's department set up a command post as the base for a formal, weeklong search that turned up nothing. After the investigation was suspended, family members kept looking.

In February, a police sketch artist who earlier had worked with Renier recommended the Williston-based psychic to the Akins.

"I had them send me a brush and a comb and a shirt of his," Renier said. "I need to have personal items like that to work with because the more scent an item has, the better it is. I want nothing clean."

Then, by telephone over five Sunday afternoons, Renier explained where she believed the family should look for Lester.

"But they didn't seem to be understanding very clearly so they sent me an aerial map," Renier said. While she looked at one copy from her rural Williston home and Theresa and Richard Akin looked at another in Texas, Renier tried to explain how what she sensed could be translated to a specific site on a map. Her last session with the Akins was May 30. His family found his remains within a few hundred yards of where Renier directed them to search.

"He (Lester) was found in a flood control ditch about three miles from the museum," said Jeanie Davis, of the Harris County Sheriff's Department. "That was an area that we had not searched."

Davis also said it was a policy of the sheriff's department not to involve psychics in cases.

"Careful scrutiny would probably reveal psychic powers did not solve this case," said Dr. Gary Posner, a skeptic. "I have never seen anything that couldn't be explained."

Posner, a former internal medicine specialist who now operates a medical software firm, is the founder of the Tampa Bay Chapter of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal. He and Renier have clashed several times over her claims and his disbelief.

"There is no good scientific evidence that psychic power exists," Posner said. "Many psychics are very good at what they do -- they are charismatic, excellent entertainers and captivating performers, but there is no evidence that they have any special powers."

Renier said she knows there are skeptics who try to debunk anything they cannot see, but she believes that skeptics are "too frightened."

"Having to accept psychic power would force them to change their whole belief system," she said.

Posner said he has already changed his belief system.

"I grew up believing in flying saucers and the whole thing," Posner said. "Why should anyone believe in anything for which there is no evidence? If I believed in it, I would go to a psychic because I sure would like to know the lottery numbers for Saturday night."

Lester's family has heard the skepticism. But, Akin said, "We are so relieved to know what happened. It seems that he just wandered away."



Subj: **Today's article**  
Date: 6/8/99 10:11:19 AM Eastern Daylight Time  
From: Garypos@aol.com  
To: voylesk@gvillesun.com

Karen:

I've read today's article, and hope that you have now read some of my writings about Renier.

Although I don't "operate" the software firm with which I hold an executive position, you came close enough with most of my quotes. But I wish you hadn't misidentified my group as the "Tampa Bay Chapter of CSICOP." As you know, the group's name is "Tampa Bay Skeptics." Although CSICOP encouraged me to found a local skeptics group, we are an autonomous organization rather than a chapter of CSICOP.

-Gary Posner