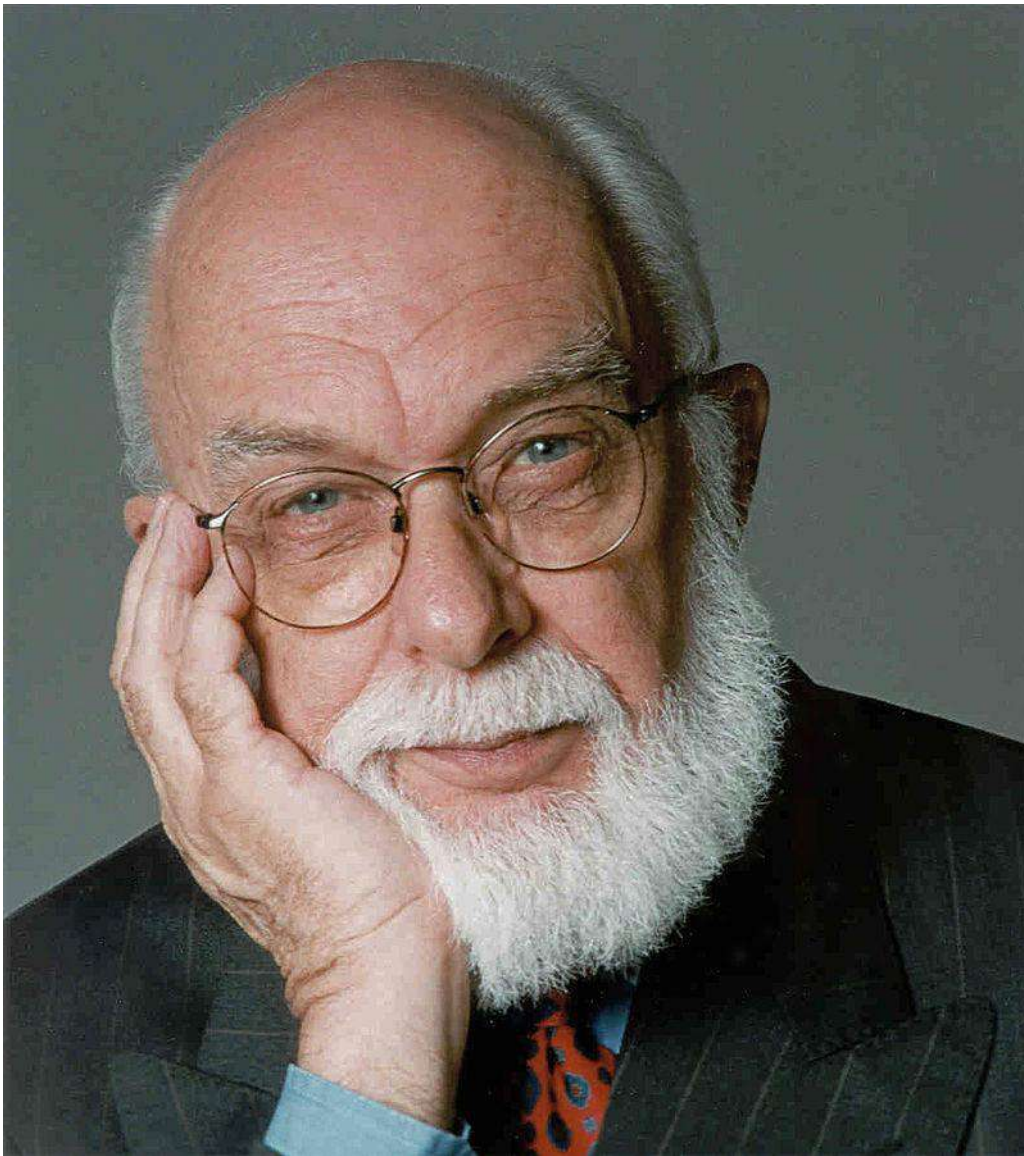


## ***James Randi (1928-2020)***

**James Randi, the scourge of psychics and other flim-flam artists, died on October 20 aged 92. If you are not familiar with The Amazing Randi, it won't take too much research to understand why he was so styled. After dropping out of high school in his native Canada, he became a professional magician, and three decades on would work with Alice Cooper. Amazing though his prowess was as a magician, it was his second career in later life for which he will be principally remembered.**



**In 1972, another magician appeared on the world stage, one whose tricks were no less but no more amazing than those with which conjurers had been astounding the world for decades, if not millennia. In *The Book Of***

***Exodus*, which predates the Great JC by centuries, Moses transforms his brother Aaron's rod into a snake to impress the Pharaoh, whose sorcerers simply yawn and perform the same trick. In other words, even at the dawn of recorded time, people had seen it all before. The tricks performed by Uri Geller included bending spoons (his trademark), making broken watches start, and reading people's minds.**

**Tricks of this nature were still able to impress audiences in the 1970s, but on YouTube and other video sites today, a mouse click or two will show you how they are performed. Perhaps the most spectacular trick requiring a simple prop is the red handkerchief that can be apported out of thin air then vanished again. An eight year old can learn this and perform it proficiently in half an hour. Which begs the question, why was the Western world so impressed with Uri Geller when he claimed to perform his tricks not by sleight-of-hand but by actual magic?**

**Geller would go on to make millions, but while the media and public were impressed with the young, handsome, charismatic newcomer, James Randi wasn't. In August 1973, Geller was booked to appear on the American TV programme *The Tonight Show*, which was presented then by Johnny Carson, who as a young man had dabbled in conjuring himself. Randi got wind of this appearance or was advised about it, and contacted Carson telling him to set in place a series of controls that would frustrate a magician, but not someone who had genuine psychic powers. Needless to say, Geller was unable to pull off any real magic, and predictably this did nothing to dent his reputation.**

**It was probably this incident that properly launched Randi's career as a skeptic and psychic debunker. Shortly, he published *The Magic Of Uri Geller* - reissued a few years later as *The Truth About Uri Geller* - then went on to expose countless flim-flam artists and people who were simply deluding themselves. Two of his most impressive debunkings were of James Hydrick and Peter Popoff. Hydrick is a sad case. After a difficult childhood and serving prison time, he could have made a decent living as a martial artist. Instead he used his prowess to sexually abuse young boys, and since 1989 has been incarcerated in prisons and psychiatric hospitals.**

**Hydrick's brief rise to fame was effected by a clever act of sham psychokinesis. As with Geller, Randi was able to put in place a simple control that would not have thwarted a genuine psychic. And of course, there is no such thing as a genuine psychic.**

**His exposing Peter Popoff was less entertainment than public service, because this *Bible*-thumping con man had been duping vulnerable and at**

times desperate people out of millions. As with Geller, videos of Randi exposing Popoff can be found in abundance on YouTube.

James Randi published ten books, and in 1996 set up the James Randi Educational Foundation. Unsurprisingly, he was an atheist, as well as an active skeptic. He gave many speeches as well as making many [TV appearances](#) as guest, performer, and presenter.

In spite of his lifelong skepticism, like all of us, Randi could be hoaxed. Best though not to mention his personal life which saw him duped so.

He won many awards in his lifetime including the 2007 Philip J. Klass Award for the Foundation. Fellow skeptic Klass published a number of books on flying saucers including the excellent *UFOs: The Public Deceived*. Doubtless, James Randi will continue to inspire generations of skeptics long after his death.

<https://theduran.com/james-randi-1928-2020/>