



DEAN RADIN, PHD

BIOGRAPHY

I was born on February 29th. I will celebrate my 14th birthday in 2008. For my 13th birthday I rented a roller skating rink for an evening, invited all my friends, and we ate hot dogs, cup cakes, and shared a Spiderman-themed birthday cake. That seemed appropriate for a 13 year old. I haven't decided yet what to do for my 14th birthday.

My first career interest, at chronological age 4, was to be "jet propelled." It took many more years before I could better articulate what I meant by that, but that's how I responded when adults asked what I wanted to be when I

grew up. My next career interest was the classical violin, which I started at age 5 and continued to play for the next 20 years, the last five as a professional. Then I switched to fiddle and 5-string banjo and played in bluegrass bands for a number of years. Between gigs, I pursued other interests and graduated with a degree in electrical engineering, *magna cum laude* with senior honors, from the University of Massachusetts (Amherst), a masters in electrical engineering focusing on cybernetics and control systems, from the University of Illinois (Champaign-Urbana), and then a PhD in psychology, also from the University of Illinois. For my dissertation I developed and tested what may have been the first computer-based touch typing training system.

For a decade after my PhD I worked at AT&T Bell Laboratories and later at GTE Laboratories on advanced telecommunications R&D. Projects included designing the human interfaces to telecomm network operations centers in the US and Japan, developing a rapid prototyping system for complex human-computer interface designs (this was before there were personal computers), and studying ways of enhancing brainstorming and creativity in industry. While at Bell Labs, for fun I wrote a series of humorous articles for the science spoof magazine, [Journal of Irreproducible Results](#). One of those articles later almost accidentally started World War III in a way that would have appealed to Stanley Kubrick's Dr. Strangelove. I'll explain why some other time.

Throughout my formative years and first jobs, I never forgot my original interest to be jet propelled. Ultimately I understood that what I was trying to express as a child was an overriding fascination about the outer limits of inner space -- the depths and capacities of the human mind. As a pre-teen I read everything I could find on mythology, fairy tales, folklore, eastern philosophy, western psychology, and lots of science fiction. Around age 13, as my interests in science and engineering grew, I started to conduct experiments on hypnosis and psychic (or "psi") phenomena. In hindsight, I think these interests were probably encouraged by growing up in an artistic family and bolstered significantly by roughly 10,000 hours of practicing the violin.

While at Bell Labs I started to publish some of my psi experiments. Then I started to attend the annual conferences of the [Parapsychological Association](#) and the [Society for Scientific Exploration](#), and to present talks at their annual meetings. I was delighted at having found groups of scientists who were as interested in these phenomena as I was, and the contacts I made eventually led to my gaining appointments to conduct psi research at Princeton University, University of Edinburgh, University of Nevada, SRI International and Interval Research Corporation. At SRI International I worked on a secret government-funded program of psi research. Much of that program has since been declassified and accounts about it (some more accurate than others) can be found in many books. In 2000 I cofounded the Boundary Institute and since 2001 I've been Senior Scientist at the [Institute of Noetic Sciences](#). I also hold an adjunct appointment in the Psychology Department at Sonoma State University and am on the Distinguished Consulting Faculty at Saybrook Graduate School.

I've now spent the majority of my professional career doing what the 4 year old Dean expressed as being jet propelled -- experimentally probing the far reaches of human consciousness, principally psi phenomena. Very few scientists are actively engaged in research on this perennially interesting topic. This is not because of a lack of interest. I've found that most scientists are very interested in psi phenomena, but science, like any social enterprise, has strictly enforced rules of publicly acceptable beliefs, and so it is not safe for one's scientific career to pursue highly controversial topics (that goes for many controversial topics, not just psi). In addition, funding and controversy in science are inversely proportional, so even iconoclasts who don't care much about what other people think are severely resource limited. Perhaps because of my unusual choice of profession, and the risk that that choice entails, I was featured in a *New York Times Magazine* [article](#) in 1996.

My interest in psi was originally motivated out of a child's intuitive sense that the mind is far more mysterious and powerful than we know. Through education and experience I've also come to appreciate that these experiences are also responsible for most of the greatest inventions, artistic and scientific achievements, creative insights, and religious epiphanies throughout history. Understanding this realm of human experience thus offers more than mere academic interest -- it touches upon the very best that the human intellect and spirit have had to offer. I discovered while working on these topics that I enjoy the challenge of exploring the frontiers of science, and that I am comfortable tolerating the ambiguity of not knowing the "right answer," which is a constant companion at the frontier.

After experimentally studying these phenomena as a scientist for about 30 years, I've concluded (so far) that some psychic abilities are genuine, and as such, there are important aspects of the prevailing scientific worldview that are seriously incomplete. I've also learned that many people who claim to have extremely accurate or unfailingly reliable psychic abilities are delusional or mentally ill. There are also reprehensible con artists who claim to be psychic and charge huge sums for their services. These two classes of so-called psychics are the targets of celebrated prizes offered by magicians for demonstrations of psychic abilities. Those prizes are safe because the claimed abilities of these people either do not exist at all, or they're far weaker than the claimants wish to believe. But the vast majority of the scientific evidence for psi effects, and in particular the evidence that convinced me, is based on the accumulated laboratory performance of people who do not claim to possess special abilities.

There is ample room for scholarly debate about these topics, and I know a number of informed scientists whom I respect who have reached different conclusions. But I've also learned that most of the hostile rants one reads about this topic are pure bluster proclaimed by those who don't know what they're talking about. Their rejections seem to be motivated by fundamentalist beliefs of the scientific or religious kind, rather than by rational, well-reasoned arguments.

You may contact me via email as dean at noetic dot org, but due to the huge volume of emails I receive, I can't promise to reply.

I thank [John Zeuli](#) for taking the above photo in August 2005. Last update October 14, 2007.