

## Introduction of the Dinsdale Award Lecturer, William G. Roll

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I have the honor to present to the Society for Scientific Exploration the winner of the Dinsdale prize for 2002, Dr. William G. Roll.

The Dinsdale Award was established in 1992 by our founding member, councilor, and editor of the *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, Professor Henry Bauer, so that the society could recognize “significant contributions to the expansion of human understanding through the study of unexplained phenomena”. Such contributions were made by Tim Dinsdale, in whose memory this prize is named. Dinsdale was by profession an engineer, who chanced to obtain in 1960 what remains still the most striking evidence of unexplained animals in Loch Ness. Dinsdale’s subsequent investigations over three decades were carried on with such integrity that the *Times* of London marked his passing with a respectful obituary, rare indeed with someone whose prominence stems from the pursuit of such unorthodox research. Through the Dinsdale award, our society endeavors to identify, publicize, and reward senior scholars who have made similarly substantial contributions to the understanding of anomalous physical, biological, and psychological events in the spirit of meticulous research, exemplary methodology, and proper scholarly attitude that Tim Dinsdale exemplified.

This year’s recipient was born in Bremen, Germany, in 1926 and holds a B.A. degree from the University of California (Berkeley), a B.Litt. degree from Oxford, and a Ph.D. from the University of Lund (Sweden). He has held research positions at the original J.B. Rhine Laboratory at Duke University and its successor, the Parapsychology Laboratory in Durham, North Carolina; the Psychical Research Foundation in New York City; Oxford University; and Utrecht University. Most recently he has occupied a faculty position at West Georgia State University.

His research in parapsychological topics has spanned such areas as survival, hauntings, psychokinesis, and correlations of ESP capability with personality traits, but he is most renowned for his fascinating work on poltergeist phenomena or, more technically, “recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis” (RSPK). In my view, this last category may be the most difficult of all consciousness-related anomalous physical phenomena on which to perform

systematic scientific research, and yet it is of inarguable importance. It is difficult because such effects are extraordinarily rare and irregular in their appearance, usually arise at locations far removed from the experimenter's home base, and tend to persist only for short periods. By the time the serious researcher has transported himself and his equipment to the scene, he typically finds the site overrun by law enforcement officers, medical and psychological practitioners, clergy, media, family members, and skeptical representatives, who have so confounded and suppressed the effects that valid evidence is extremely difficult to obtain. Throughout the investigation, the emotional welfare of the individual prompting the effects, and the stabilization of the family involved, must be given priority over the observation of further events. In short, research in this arena requires a strong scholarly stomach, and the number of good researchers is correspondingly small. Yet, the acquisition of valid data and their cogent correlation and interpretation seem crucial to broad understanding of the full spectrum of mind/matter anomalies. However irregular in their appearance, the magnitude of the dynamical effects appearing in RSPK events totally humbles the typical bit-level or quantum-level anomalies found in most mind/matter research and ultimately must be accommodated within any comprehensive model of such effects. This in turn puts a premium on the accumulation of trustworthy RSPK observations and it is just this mission that has distinguished the career of our recipient.

It is my pleasure to introduce Dr. William G. Roll, who will speak on the "Physical and Psychological Aspects of Recurrent Spontaneous Psychokinesis."