

The PK Man: A True Story of Mind Over Matter by Jeffrey Mishlove. Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing Co., 2000. 283 pp. \$14.95, paperback, ISBN 1-5717-4183-6.

Jeffrey Mishlove is a talented parapsychologist used to handling controversial subjects, and in *The PK Man*, he tackles Ted Owens, a tough one indeed. Owens was a well-known “super-psychic,” with apparent phenomenal psychokinetic (PK) abilities, especially with regard to the weather.

Mishlove’s avowed purpose in this book is to present his many years’ documentation of Ted Owens’ spectacular powers. He started in 1976, after meeting Owens at a parapsychology conference. Mishlove kept a growing file of newspaper articles, affidavits, personal testimonials, and letters about Owens’ predictions and warnings and their often dramatic fulfillment. Mishlove was often in contact with Owens, who would tell him when he was causing another storm, or what football team he was going to have win a game. Mishlove also sometimes enlisted other parapsychologists to help design another “experiment” around Ted Owens, and to help him gather affidavits and check for appropriate newspaper articles.

Mishlove’s documentation is impressive, although, of course, it is not rigorous proof for the skeptical-minded. If Owens predicted a great storm and it occurred, as evidenced by newspaper articles, scientific proof is certainly incomplete. But at the very least, it brings up the old parapsychological conundrum of whether an event has been psychokinetically caused or precognitively predicted.

The PK Man is very well written using simple, clear prose. The story sometimes reads like a spy thriller; it is truly fascinating. Mishlove includes his own reactions to Owens’ personality and powers, which is a useful gauge for the reader, since Mishlove is a parapsychologist with experience in psychic matters. But readers may not be satisfied with Mishlove’s treatment of a fundamental issue about Ted Owens: his vindictive, vengeful, egocentric nature, which led him to cause many PK events that caused massive property damage and also cost human lives.

Ted Owens was born in Indiana in 1920 and was largely raised by his grandparents. Psychic phenomena were familiar to the family—his great-grandmother was an expert at the ouija board and could predict deaths; his grandfather taught him to dowse.

Mishlove recounts Owens’ discovery of his extraordinary psychic powers. By Owens’ own account, these powers began to manifest themselves when he was four; he spontaneously levitated one afternoon at his house. His early reading concentrated heavily in psychic matters. As a teenager he became a stage hypnotist and gave public demonstrations. After Navy service in World War II, Owens wrote to Dr. J. B. Rhine, head of the famous parapsychology lab at Duke University in North Carolina. Rhine invited Owens to Duke, and Owens worked there as Rhine’s assistant for a time.

Owens was best known in his lifetime for his PK control of the weather.

Owens told Mishlove he really realized his weather control abilities in 1963, when he was living in Phoenix, Arizona, with his wife. It was extremely hot and Owens, remembering a conversation at Duke about weather control among shamans, decided to try to bring rain. So he pointed at the sky and focused his mental imagery on storms and rain. A little while later, a rain and lightning storm developed. Owens was delighted and began doing many weather experiments.

A key aspect of Owens' work, which Mishlove explores at length, is Owens' claim that he was the contact person for Space Intelligences (SIs, as Owens called them). He apparently was not in regular conscious contact with them until the 1950s. But then his psychic powers began slowly to be enhanced, and by the 1960s he communicated with them regularly. In 1965 he wrote in his diary, "Tonight they told me that they could give me only so much power, so much knowledge, at a time. Matter of fact, they said I'm an experiment with them—to find out just how much of the PK power a human being can absorb and stand" (p. 65).

For a long time the SIs initiated all the contacts. Only once Owens had developed (with their help) a visualization technique was he able to also contact them. Owens claimed he was the "prophet" of the SIs and that his demonstrations of massive, and often dangerous, PK were done at their behest and with their power.

Owens placed himself in the rank of the great prophets. As Mishlove states, "Owens used many metaphors to justify the outrageous ends to which he focused his mental powers. He often compared himself to Moses wreaking the ten plagues upon Egypt with the help of God" (p. 7). Mishlove points out that this metaphor is "inappropriate and vainglorious," but he doesn't engage the issue deeply.

Owens tried to help sometimes, such as in predicting and then (by his own account) causing storms that ended a drought in California in 1976, and similarly in England the same year. But when people disbelieved his predictions or ridiculed his claimed powers, he often slashed an entire city or state with vengeful weather. Owens was a football fan, and when teams he disliked were on winning streaks, or when a team to whom he had offered his psychic help scorned him, he vengefully caused that team to lose many games, sometimes even an entire season's worth of games. He predicted his revenges ahead of time to Mishlove as well as publicly, so Mishlove was able to collect newspaper articles about the fulfillment of Owens' predictions.

Mishlove notes, "...many of Owens' so-called demonstrations had an unsavory aspect to them. There is a clear sense that he went about with a chip on his shoulder—challenging the world to believe in his miracles and then lashing out when people reacted with sarcastic ridicule" (pp. 90–91). But Mishlove did not really explore Owens' unhappy background as part of the reason he used his PK as he did—Owens' father took to gambling, his mother rejected the child, and he was raised by his grandparents.

Mishlove also half-heartedly seems to agree with Owens' characterization

of himself as a prophet, without analyzing the vast difference between a prophet, whose spiritual character is humble and sophisticated, and Owens, who was vengeful and childish. Mishlove was clearly disturbed by Owens; near the end of their lengthy relationship, he wrote Owens a long letter chastising him for his unwillingness to grow spiritually. But his basic conclusion is that Owens was the way he was mostly because he received so little respect from society for his powers. This is quite a weak conclusion, especially concerning a man who misused his massive powers so stupendously.

However, Mishlove explicitly encourages readers to draw their own conclusions about Owens' behavior. He also addresses several other major issues, including Owens' ability to manifest UFOs and his allegations that the power came from beings. This last is an interesting topic, little researched. But, as Mishlove points out, these superpowers may in fact come from extraterrestrial beings, though smaller paranormal powers, more widely distributed, may not. He also provides a short end chapter on some of the new ideas in modern physics that make many of Owens' claims less outrageous than they might otherwise seem.

There is no other book like this one about a unique man and his abilities. Mishlove has done a very good job by bringing the issues before the public eye, and for this we should be thankful to him.

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The Madness of Adam and Eve: How Schizophrenia Shaped Humanity by David Horrobin. London: Bantam Press (Transworld Publishers), 2001. 275 pp. £18.99, cloth. ISBN 0593-046498. (Available through amazon.co.uk.)

“All the good and bad characteristics of humanity seem writ large in the children of schizophrenic parents” (p. 144).

Much evidence for this empirical claim is adduced in this fascinating book, which has several facets. In the first instance, it is essential reading for anyone who knows sufferers from schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or dyslexia; the book offers intriguing hints about the genesis of the problems and some genuine hope for better treatments. In addition, this book offers a far-reaching, detailed, and plausible scenario of genetic mutations and environmental factors that led to the evolution of *Homo sapiens* from an ancestor held in common with chimpanzees. For anomalists and students of science, the book offers illustrations of serendipitous discovery (p. 64) and of the (grudging, inadequate, or dismissive) reception of genuinely novel ideas (p. 160). For medical scientists and practicing physicians, the book illustrates the wealth of knowledge and understanding attainable through careful clinical observation of apparent