

# United Temple Bulletin

P.O. Box 12202  
Vol. 6 - Number V



Portland, Oregon 97212  
May 15, 1969

## Plants Tested For Fears, Anxieties

by: Gay Pauley, UPI Feature Writer

Would you believe that plants feel pain, react to human or animal stress, suffer moods of fear and frustration--and even talk?

For skeptics, the man to see is Cleve Backster.

Backster, a polygraph (lie detector) expert, former U.S. Army intelligence officer and former interrogations specialist with the Central Intelligence Agency, is in a fascinating research project probing just such questions. The answers that result could, he believes, open to science and the rest of us a whole new world of understanding of our relations to the greenery and animals around us.

Using lie detectors--with electrodes fastened to leaves of such plants as the common household philodendron--Backster is seeking to determine, among other fascinating possibilities:

Is there an unknown communications link between the cells of plants and animals through which distress signals are transmitted, and which broadcast threats against any member of the living community? When any cell dies, does it signal to a living cell?

And the big question: Does a life signal connect all creation?

...his research already convinces him that there is more to the living world around us than meets the everyday eye, that plants do perceive and react and send out signals.

Since his work began, other researchers have become interested and today several scientists on university campuses are conducting similar studies, Backster said....

In an interview at his plant-filled laboratory just off Times Square, Backster explained the beginnings of listening to plant "talk"...

One February night three years ago, Backster said, he wearied of the routine work around the office and decided since

some of the philodendrons needed watering, he'd hook up one to a polygraph and try measuring how long it took water to get through stalk and into leaf.

A polygraph, he reasoned, will measure a person's skin reaction, why not a plant's? Actually, a polygraph also measures a human's respiration and pulse rates and blood pressure through electrode attachments. Changes show on a horizontally moving sheet of graph paper about 6 inches wide. A pen traces the ups and downs, the peaks and the leveling off, of assorted reactions.

Backster wondered, as he watched the tracings from the philodendron, if a stimulus from the outside would alter them drastically. He turned on the radio to let the plant hear some singing commercials. The tracings remained fairly smooth.

"Then I decided," he said, "to apply some equivalent of the threat-to-the-well-being principle, which is a well-established method of triggering emotions in humans."

He first dipped a leaf not connected to the electrodes in hot coffee. The change in tracings was minimal. After 9 more minutes of charting, Backster said, "I decided to burn the leaf connected to the electrodes."

He went into another room to get a match and came back to find the pen marking a sudden upward, jagged sweep which, on a human, would mean fear and anxiety. It was then that Backster figured the plant tracings might have been triggered by the mere thought of the harm he intended to inflict.

By the time he did touch a match to the leaf edge, the tracings were less erratic. Apparently the leaf had conditioned its reactions.

In the days, weeks, and months of tracings to follow, Backster began checking how the suffering of other species affected plants. He bought some tiny brine shrimp, used ordinarily as live food for tropical fish, and killed them by dumping them into boiling water. The polygraph recording needle leaped frantically. Backster began asking, "Could it be that when a cell dies, it broadcasts a signal to other living cells?"

For further tests in the whole area, Backster decided the human factor must be removed. So he automated some of his testing equipment so that the polygraph could be tuned in on a plant at any time.

Backster feels that plants definitely react to stress in humans. "They might jump sharply at first in a family quarrel," he said, "then level off as they condition to a temporary upset.

"But they tell me that plants just will not thrive in psychotic wards in hospitals, where I suppose the emotional stress is just too much."

One of the mysteries facing Backster is how signals seem to travel distances and cannot be blocked. "We've tried using the Faraday (a nearly impenetrable screen), a screen cage, even lead-lined containers. It seems that the signal may not even fall within our electrodynamic spectrum. If not, this would certainly have profound implications," Backster said.

Even into such profundities as what is eternity?

"I don't want to get into the religious implications," said Backster, "but if you asked me now if I were a more religious person than I was three years ago I'd say, 'You betcha!'"

(Source: Oregon Journal, Monday, March 31, 1969)

#### NEWS BRIEFS

##### Richmond, California

John and Marie Schmidli

We have been witnessing on several campus', churches, street, laundromats, everywhere we happen to be. The students are so receptive and much more tolerant than in the past. Now, they are willing to listen and/or argue.

The way that God is working was shown clearly in this following specific meeting and how God is using each of us together.

After a full day of our trying to seek listening ears and searching minds--and finding all negative--unknown to either of us, God took over and directed us to this particular college. The second young man to whom John witnessed was quite appalled by the words he heard. After listening to John's testimony, and while listening, tears fell down his cheek. Then, he told us about a dream he had had a couple of weeks before, it is as follows: He dreamed that he would meet a man named John who would enlighten and help him spiritually. Stressing that the dream was so very real. This dream he shared with two of his friends. His name is Gary Politzer, 19 yrs. of age, from a Unitarian family--which he does not attend now or has been attending any church.

Bob Sparks and his sister Joanne send their love. Both are working very hard.

We are still seeking to establish a home in Berkeley, and at the present it is most promising. We need your prayers very much and thank you for your prayers in the past. They certainly have helped us.

##### Portland, Oregon

Vernon & Maxine Pearson

We were privileged to have Daikon from San Francisco with us for about a week. Dianne Pitts and Galen Brooks from Seattle were able to be here for a short time during Daikon's visit. Daikon helped us a great deal--and his visit was far too short.

We have had several new people coming to lectures--which we have been having two or three nights a week. Some of the contacts were met on campus and others in churches. We are greatly encouraged.

TESTIMONY:

Sarah M. Witt  
Chicago, Illinois

On Saturday, February 14, at about 9:00a.m., John Schmidli and Vernon Pearson stepped off the plane at O'Hare Airport where Lothar Blankenberg and I were there to meet them on their first trip to visit my home in Chicago. Lothar and I were excited and thrilled beyond words to see them, me especially, since I had never met them before.

My home was greatly honored with the presence of these two wonderful representatives of the United Faith Movement from David Kim's spiritual group. I didn't realize how greatly I needed the fellowship of the United Family. What an inspiration they were, and how I enjoyed talking to both of them! My two sons were quite impressed, too, especially the younger one, who seemed to fit right in with the two men. The older son, Mark, is not as much at ease with visitors as my younger son, Norman. This has been true since he was very young.

I will not dwell on minor details, but suffice it to say that their visit was most enjoyable, and, as sure as I was that it would be impossible for me to make the trip to Washington, D.C., suddenly, as I was driving them to the airport to catch a plane to Washington, I felt that it was absolutely essential that I be there at least for a couple of days over the weekend, and when I said "Goodbye," that Monday, I told them that I would see them in Washington, D.C.

Not having the slightest idea how I was going to raise the money for the ticket, or how I was going to recuperate sufficiently from my terrible virus cold (I had been unable to work for two months prior to this date) just as soon as I had returned from the airport, I called United Airlines and made a Reservation for that never-to-be-forgotten weekend of the 22nd of February. Thanks to the financial help I received from Lothar Blankenberg and several other members of the United Family from the Northwest and other sources, I was able to make the trip, arriving in Washington, D.C. on Friday, at 2:00 p.m. or thereabouts, where I was met by Galen Brooks and Vernon Pearson.

When I entered the Washington Center, and was ushered into the reception hall, I got my first glimpse of Master and Mother Moon. The effect of this was so great that I can never fully overcome the feeling of awe that swept over me as I gazed upon the earthly, yet Heavenly countenances of this truly handsome man and this unbelievably beautiful woman who have been designated to be Our True Parents.

I was fortunate enough to have a seat quite close to Master Moon that Friday night, as we were suddenly summoned into His private quarters for a meeting. I sincerely hope he didn't think me rude, but I just couldn't take my eyes away from Him. I just stared and stared, hoping to make that visit last at least a year. Maybe I should write a letter and apologize for staring so. Actually, I was so terribly tired and sleepy from not having slept for two nights prior to arriving at Washington, that I just had to fight to keep my lids open.

I was terribly grateful to be able to meet, at long last, Mr. David Kim, my Spiritual Teacher, who encouraged and sustained me for three years and a half via U.S. Airmail, and an occasional long-distance phone call.

The many people I met at the Center who were members of my Spiritual Family, are truly the most wonderful people one could ever hope to meet anywhere. God certainly knows how to pick the best human beings on earth, doesn't He? I feel truly honored to be among the United Family members.

Saturday, the 22nd of February, I witnessed the most amazing prayer meeting I have ever attended. The power generated by this gathering of close to 100 people dedicated to the United Faith Movement of Master Moon was truly beyond description. Talk about faith moving mountains--that was surely a good example!

I haven't stopped talking about my trip to Washington since my return, and my thoughts are constantly with those wonderful new sisters and brothers I have just found, like John and Marie Schmidli, Vernon and Maxine Pearson, Galen Brooks, and all of the United Family who are studying under other spiritual teachers. In fact, just two weeks ago, on April 20, when I attended a bridal shower given for my niece, I happened to be talking about my trip to Washington with one of the guests present, and she told me she had heard about the movement from one of her friends, whose son was in the movement. And this friend happens to be a Rabbi! Golly, was that ever a good bit of news!

I have only one regret as to my trip to Washington, and that is not being able to remain longer than the two days I spent. I was terribly sorry to have missed seeing Gerald Johnson again, after not having seen him for over three years, since he left Chicago. Perhaps we can see each other next year when Master comes to the U. S. again, God willing.

Lothar Blankenberg and I wish all of the United Family members success in your individual missions, and may we all meet again next year.

Love in Our True Parents,

Sarah Witt

Visiting With God

by: John & Marie Schmidli

We chose a mountain side in the high Sierras, to pray and sing praises to God. What a memorable and exquisitely beautiful time it was and we would like to share this with you.

The day was clear and sunny. There was much snow upon the ground. Majestic trees so stately and tall, reaching into the heavens...with varied hues of emerald greens, glistening in the sunlight. The air cool and crisp. We walked further into the wooded and more quiet areas--away from the noisy highway. As we prayed, the all presence of God was exquisitely aware. Later, while standing there quietly...just listening to the heavenly sounds of birds, a rippling brook and the gentle whistle of the breeze through the trees..cool air upon our faces, our bodies... liken to God's gentle kiss and encompassing love.

As we walked further, we stopped near a small pond to sing praises to God...when a frog decided to join along with us and the birds. And that little ole frog croaked along with us until we stopped singing...and we did not want to stop..it was a most joyful time indeed! We left with grateful and full to overflowing hearts.