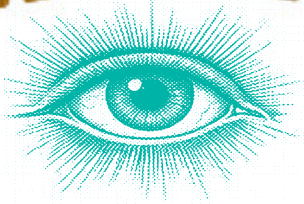


THE URI GELLER EXPERIENCE



URI GELLER has been making headlines and dividing opinion for decades with his claims of telekinetic powers, remote viewing and alien encounters and he remains one of the best known and most controversial figures in the world of strange phenomena. **GORDON RUTTER** caught up with him to talk about his long life in and out of the media and his search for a successor...

Uri Geller has appeared in our newspapers, on our TV screens and in the pages of *Fortean Times* many times

since he first burst onto the world stage in 1973 courtesy of a live appearance on *The Dimbleby Talk In* for BBC television. Back in 1994, the late Merrily Harpur visited and interviewed him for FT at his home in Sonning-on-Thames, Berkshire (see FT78:34-38). Since then, Geller has remained a high-profile personality, but much has changed. In 2009, he bought an island in Scotland, and he's now living in his native Israel where he has opened a museum. It seemed to me that it was high time for a new FT interview. I'd love to be able to report that my initial contact with Uri was by telepathy, or a conversation with him in a dream, but the initial contact was a mundane email from me requesting an interview, to which he readily agreed.

A CHILDHOOD ENCOUNTER

First, some background. Uri Geller was born on 20 December in 1946 in Tel Aviv. He is now a very youthful 78 years old. Aged 11 he moved to Cyprus where he learned English, and then in 1964, aged 18, he joined the Israeli Army. This saw him take an active role in the 1967 Six Days War, where he was wounded in action. He then did some work as a pho-



LEFT: The young Uri Geller with his mother in Cyprus.

“Suddenly in front of my eyes I see this huge sphere of light”

tographic model and nightclub/university entertainer. Then in 1973, he became a media sensation with his claims of psychic spoon bending.

Where, I asked him, did he think his powers came from?

“I was born in Tel Aviv, I am an Israeli, and it really started at a very early age. Everyone knows this story, but I will recount it. I was playing in an Arabic gar-

den across from our apartment building, and suddenly I heard kittens cry. And I was looking for the kittens, but suddenly in front of my eyes I see this huge sphere of light. You know, being only six years old I was just stunned by it. And the next thing I can remember was a beam of light – today I would describe it almost as a laser beam – hit my forehead. It was so powerful, it was so tangible, that I fell onto the grass. I don’t know how long I lay there, but when I went home and told my mother she obviously didn’t believe me. She thought that I was either making it up or I was dreaming.

“I don’t know if you know this, but my mother is a Freud. She comes from Sigmund Freud’s family – actually my name is Uri Geller Freud on my British passport. Then, at the age of seven or eight, I discover that I can bend spoons, and it happened by chance. I was eating soup. Suddenly the spoon bends in my hand and breaks! And then I started demonstrating these abilities in school and I saw how the children and teachers alike were kind of freaking out and I knew that I had something here, something that I could develop into an act. An act to show my abilities.

“But, this story is complicated, because then my mother divorces. She takes me to Cyprus. In Cyprus I go through an incred-





ABOVE LEFT: Uri Geller meets German rocket scientist Wernher von Braun, at this point working for NASA, in 1972. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Uri undergoing tests to monitor his claimed psychic abilities. **BELOW:** Uri serving in the Israeli Army; he was wounded in action during the Six Day War in 1967.

ible war. The Greeks were killing the Greeks, the Turks were killing the Greeks, so all of this is played out in front of my eyes. I see death, I see bodies exploding, I see bombs, curfews – so I believe that also influenced me. I believe that seeing all those horrendous acts of terror triggered something in me.

“Let’s go back to Israel. I am in the army. I fight in the Six Day War. I finish the army and then I really don’t know what to do. I’m a male model, I’m a messenger on my Vespa, and that’s when I got the idea to start performing at parties. People would invite me, and I see how amazed they are. It reminded me of school and the teachers, and that’s when I realised that I’ve got something here that I really have to show the world. The controversy around my abilities started in Israel. Throughout my life – you know this, Gordon – I’m hugely controversial. But going back and deciphering the controversy – it was the most amazing gift I received from the sceptics. Oscar Wilde said 100 years ago: ‘There’s only one worse thing in life than being talked about, and that’s not being talked about.’ So you see the sceptics created the mysteries, the debate, the controversy, and it had already started in Israel.

“Then I worked with Mossad, and Mossad in 1969 had no tools to test my abilities, so they called up the CIA. And the CIA are very interested. They send [astronaut and fourth man to walk on the Moon] Edgar Mitchell to Israel. He gives me a call and he sends me a signed photograph. For me it was mind-blowing, because, you know, I’m just an ordinary Israeli and suddenly I get a phone call from a man that walked on the Moon! To make a long story short, I did not need convincing. I jumped on a flight to San Francisco, a drive down to Palo Alto, and then I meet Mitchell. And then he puts me into the Stanford Research Institute and the CIA test my abilities. And you know the



“It’s either an extraterrestrial encounter or a holistic spiritual phenomenon”

quote that the CIA comes out with is very surprising – it was amazing for me! And then I start filling auditoriums in America.”

The quote Uri is referring to is a statement that he “demonstrated his paranormal perception ability in a convincing and unambiguous manner”.

“Now going back to my gift, for decades

it was only me that was telling the story of the strange encounter I had in the Arabic garden. Then, about 20 years ago, the BBC did a documentary about me,¹ and in it I was talking about that encounter. The documentary played in Israel, and the next day I got an email from a retired officer who tells me ‘Uri, I heard you yesterday saying that you had an encounter in a garden. I watched the BBC documentary. Well, I want to tell you that I saw you too, because I was there.’ So, you can imagine, I jumped on the phone. His name was Ya’akov Avrahami and he told me that when he was a young soldier he was walking on Yehuda Halevi Boulevard to his parents’ home. The garden was on the side of Yehuda Halevi Boulevard, and he totally described me, and he says he saw me with a huge sphere of light. He saw the laser beam and he saw me running away from it. And this sphere of light kind of followed me, and he described it as it exploded on the facade of our apartment building. Well, you can imagine for me, this was ‘Wow!’ It wasn’t just me telling this story any more – this was a respected high-ranking Israeli Air Force officer!

Now, to end this amazing saga and mystical experience I decide that I will do an MRI of my brain! Because I always felt that I received something from that laser beam, from that beam of light. And, lo and behold, the doctors discover inside my brain a space. They have no idea what it is. It is not dangerous and it’s been there for decades. And to me, for the first time in my life, this was the final validation that there was an encounter and I did receive something on that amazing day and it’s still in my brain.”

ALIENS, DEAD AND ALIVE

I didn’t want there to be any ambiguity, so I asked Uri if he definitely believed that his powers came from that event and from the anomaly in his brain. His reply was clear.



ABOVE LEFT: Gellermania in the UK: Uri and DJ Jimmy Young inspect the key that bent during Geller's appearance on Young's Radio 2 show. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Performing the same trick in 1974 for Professors John Hasted (left) of Birkbeck College and John Taylor of King's College, London. **BELOW:** Uri's eponymous 1974 LP.

"Exactly. It's either an extraterrestrial encounter or it's some kind of spiritual holistic phenomenon. There could be also a down-to-earth scientific explanation for what I've seen. But, having said that, I've seen UFOs and extraterrestrial bodies... and I'm sure you read *The Sun*. I believe I sent you the article about Wernher von Braun taking me on a tour..."

Uri had also sent me a film by a German filmmaker about Uri's encounter with von Braun; it presents an animated version of some of the events he recounted to me.

"There is absolutely no doubt in my mind today. I don't have a question mark any more. I think it was an extraterrestrial experience."

That was exactly the sort of clarity I had been hoping for. Naturally, I had notes and a list of questions that I wanted to ask Uri, but as we were speaking he always managed to touch on areas I was hoping to find out about. I shall resist the urge to say he read my mind, but this was one of those moments. Uri had mentioned seeing dead aliens. I asked him about the aliens at, or underneath, the Goddard Space Centre. Was it just the Grey type that he saw?

"When people describe the Greys... yes it's very, very close – almost identical to the ones in this German guy's documentary. Yes, that's how they looked. Some were mangled and injured, but they were all dead. Some bodies looked like they were pulled out forcefully from the craft, or when the craft hit the ground, they were shot out of the vehicle, the UFO, whatever it was. So, you know, that shocked me and stunned me, but it did not surprise me. I always knew that they existed because I had already had experiences in Israel with Andrija Puharich the American doctor and scientist with ties to the CIA. So I'll tell you one more thing that is interesting. Even before the experience in the garden, I remember myself as a little



boy – maybe three, four or five years old – and my father was a soldier. He was in the British Army, then he was in the Haganah.² And then, when he was in the Israeli army, and he used to bring me bullet heads home. They were copper and I used to play with them and pretend I was an astronaut and I was inside that bullet head; I would hold it between my two fingers and imagine I was flying through space to other planets. So my question is: how come I already had those visions and those ideas before the encounter with this sphere of light? And this is something I've actually never told anyone."

We have an exclusive for *Fortean Times* – excellent!

I followed up my question about the aliens by noting that in the video he had sent me, there was talk of the fact that he'd had a camera with him. So were there photographs? I knew he was a bit of a hoarder and that it can be quite difficult to find things. If he still had the film, was he unable to lay his hands on it now?

"Exactly. I got a German Minox camera from the CIA to spy for them in Mexico in the Russian embassy. That is exactly the camera I gave to my brother-in-law [Shipi

Shtrang] who took the photos of Werner von Braun and me, and then I took the camera with me. With that camera, I believe you cannot take a photo with one hand – you have to slide the case."

As a keen photographer, I knew the type of camera he was talking about: you will have seen them in pretty much any spy film when they pull out a tiny rectangular camera to photograph documents. I confirmed to Uri that to wind on the film, you push it in.

"Yeah, and I did take photographs, but you know that this is 50 years ago, Gordon. You know how many containers I have? How many boxes and packages?³ Do you know how many negatives I have? There's a documentary being made for Netflix based on my life story and the directors asked me to try to give them all the films I have which I collected over 50 years from different TV stations and home movies. I was mind-blown by how many negatives I have, because 30-40 years ago you took pictures with cameras and then you had to give the negative for development. The only camera that you could produce a photograph with immediately was a Polaroid, so the fact is I would have to probably spend months to find those Minox negatives, because they are tiny. So, yes, there are photographs. But you can be assured that even if I produced those photographs the sceptics will say it's Photoshop, and it's AI and it's... you know. They'll come up with something."

Mention of a new documentary piqued my interest, so I asked when it was likely to be coming out?

"The directors are amazing – the main one is Daniel Sivan. He's done quite a few films for Netflix, the last one got 13 million views in three days. It was about Osama bin Laden.⁴ This is not my initiative, they approached me and I really have no say in what they're doing. So I'm looking forward to seeing the final product."



ABOVE LEFT: Uri pointing to his 2009 purchase – Lamb Island, off the east coast of Scotland. ABOVE RIGHT: The Uri Geller Museum in Jaffa, Israel.

AN ISLAND AND A MUSEUM

I mentioned to Uri that I am based in Edinburgh and that I was familiar with his 2009 purchase of Lamb Island (see FT251:11, 255:26) and with his museum in Israel. At both sites he has found incredible things, or suspects they are present. What could he tell us about those?

“There’s no doubt in my mind that Scotland is named after Princess Scotia, who sailed 2,000 or 3,000 years ago to Northern Europe. She moved around Lamb Island and I’m absolutely sure that there is Egyptian treasure buried there. Also, and this is an amazing fact, Robert Louis Stevenson, who wrote *Treasure Island*, lived across from Lamb Island in North Berwick, and every day he looked at my island...

If, as Uri believes, Lamb Island hides Princess Scotia’s treasure, then it would be a real treasure island! Was there any other piece of land he’d like to own, I wondered, and what would he hope to discover there?

“Yeah Gordon, at my age, that is enough. I travelled the world for 55 years and I don’t want to fly any more. I’m happy with this incredible museum I have. It is really incredible, not because it’s mine, but because of what I have managed to collect in the last 60 years. It’s totally eclectic – from aliens, I jump to Taylor Swift’s guitar, and from there I jump to rock crystals that are 55,000,000 years old. An unbelievable journey, and I’m kind of sorry that I called it a museum, because it’s more like an experience. And I do the tours myself. This is why it’s so riveting, because I tell the story and there’s a big screen on which I show videos. And then there is the incredible olive oil soap factory that I discovered with remote viewing under the building. So I exposed that, and I have glass over it. That’s an amazing story!

“So there’s everything there, even the rock crystal that Salvador Dali gave me, that belonged to Leonardo da Vinci from

“There is no doubt in my mind that there are people who have real powers”

which he painted the sphere, the orb in Jesus Christ’s hand in the famous painting *Salvator Mundi* – so I own that, the crystal that is in Christ’s hands!”

The museum, of course, is in Israel, so I asked what prompted his move back there. Was it just the feeling of getting on a bit and thinking “I want to go back home”?

“Yes, exactly. After 48 years living all over the world, mainly in England. My kids were born overseas and I just thought it was time to go back. I used to come back every year, and now we have a little apartment with an incredible view of Old Jaffa and the museum is literally two minutes’ walk from here. So we’re back in my homeland, where I was born; I’m back with this incredible spiritual aura around me and around the country and it is... look, it is the Holy Land. Let’s face it, Jesus Christ walked here.”

MYSTIFYING THE MEDIA

Talking about what Uri is doing now prompted me to ask about a term he uses to describe himself. He calls himself a ‘mystifier’. How did he come to use that word?

“You know, Gordon, I don’t think there is a magician in the world, or mentalist, or mystic that has managed to be in the media almost every day of every week; and I think I achieved that first, because I’m controversial, and second, because I knew how to reinvent myself. So from being a psychic, I became a paranormalist, and then from

a paranormalist, I became a mystic, and in the last 10-15 years, I decided that ‘mystifier’ is the best word to describe me and what I do. It’s basically sitting on the fence. It’s not here and not there: you can’t really debunk a mystifier!”

As part of Uri’s work as a mystifier he has made several television shows in different parts of the world, all on the same theme: the search for the next Uri Geller. I asked if he had found anyone he would regard as a successor, or somebody who has the same sorts of powers as him?

“OK, a very good question. Look, in my opinion 99% of what I’ve seen in my shows was either magic or mentalism. There were some demonstrations that blew my mind and I thought maybe that is real telekinesis, maybe that is real levitation, but it’s hard for me to know the truth because I move on. I don’t anchor myself on one issue. That’s another part of the secret of success – originality. I created spoon bending, and that’s why I became successful, because I was the originator. There is no doubt in my mind that there are people who have real powers. Maybe they’re not developed yet, but the fact is that whenever I did my interactive TV shows, millions of children were bending spoons at home. I look at it this way: 50% of them were faking it – they were bending the metal with their hands, let’s say. Another 25%, the spoon was already bent and they thought that they bent it. But then you have to ask the big question: what about the remaining 25%? The genuine phenomena that happened in people’s homes – spoons were flying in the air, spoons were bending, clocks started ticking. So there is absolutely no doubt in my mind that powers do exist – telekinetic powers, remote viewing, telepathy, psychokinesis...”

I asked if he felt that if some of those individuals, with the appropriate training, could get up to the level of powers that he feels he has?



ABOVE LEFT: Uri in the museum with his bent spoon-covered 1976 Cadillac. ABOVE RIGHT: Uri holds up a card from his newly published *Extraterrestrial Oracle*.

“Oh absolutely. I mean already, decades ago, there were remote viewers for the CIA. There were people there who were much better than me at remote viewing. To this day governments use remote viewers because it’s a very cheap way to spy and gain information. You send your minds through space and time, and you bring up – especially now in these volatile times, with Russia and Ukraine and Israel and Iran – people to help intelligence agencies gather information psychically.”

I was interested in what the future held. Did his move back to Israel represent a kind of slowing down? Will he ever stop?

“There’s no way I’m slowing down. I have two hours of tours every day.”

I clarified my question: I meant slowing down in terms of travelling around the world and all of the things associated with that. Or was he still keeping busy, but in a different way?

“Exactly. And, you know, I get invitations almost daily from TV channels in Japan, Germany, France, America, Spain... and then you’ve got the spiritual gatherings, the UFO gatherings the magic circle – I mean it’s just endless. I get invitations all the time, but I have no time really, because of the museum.”

That seemed fair enough, but before I could ask another question Uri turned the tables on me and started conducting his own interview. How old was I? Was I married with a family? What did I do outside of writing for *Fortean Times*? For each answer, he had follow-up questions, and then other questions about me and my life. I won’t bore you with Uri’s interviewing of me, other than to say that he was genuinely listening and thinking about our conversation.

KEEPING BUSY

But I did manage to get one last question in before we finished. I simply asked Uri what is the single thing that he is most proud of?

“Look, Gordon, I’ve done so many things – besides family, because that’s what I’m doing now – but I think that there are certain amazing events, like the Red Cross. I managed to get the Israeli Red Cross into the international Red Cross. It took me three years.”

The clincher was apparently when he bent a spoon in front of the delegates!

“I also influenced the Russians to sign the nuclear arms reduction treaty, and that was with senator Claiborne Pell, the head of the American Foreign Relations Committee.”

According to Uri, he bombarded the minds of the delegates with the instruction “Sign” before they eventually did so.

“So I used to do certain things of that nature, that I think are very, very important. But I am definitely proud of my family.”

And that was the end of the interview.

Except that I continued to receive WhatsApp messages from Uri, in particular one he was very keen I followed up. It was an article from the *Jerusalem Post* dated 17 July. The headline was “Uri Geller: Israel used secret group of military psychics, AI to attack Iran”, and the story was that “Israeli psychic Uri Geller claimed that he and a secret group of military psychics made the Israeli attack on Iran possible – with the help of AI.”

Naturally, I had to include it. Abdollah Ganji, former chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, claimed on X that Benjamin Netanyahu was meeting with occult specialists and using “occult and supernatural forces” against Iranian Nuclear sites. In the report, via a telephone interview, Uri claimed that Ganji was “right”. He went on to say: “The circumstances in Iran were so mysterious and so bizarre that the Iranian government realised that this cannot happen with mechanical means or cyberattacks. They cannot happen with anything known to the human

mind from a scientific point of view. They came to the conclusion that it was something supernatural, and they were basically right.” Uri also claimed that AI was used in the work in some unspecified way. In 2024, he also claimed to have stopped Iranian drone and missile attacks. During the interview Uri claimed that a missile had been fired at Tel Aviv as they were speaking and that it would set off the sirens. A few minutes later sirens did go off and he excused himself from the call saying, “I’m going to go do something about the missile.”

So, Uri is keeping himself busy. His latest project is a pack of Tarot-style cards, *The Extra-Terrestrial Oracle: 52 Divination Cards to Channel the Wisdom of the Aliens*, which has just been published in conjunction with Watkins Publishing in London.

NOTES

1 *Reputations: Uri Geller*, first broadcast 19 Sept 2002.

2 A Zionist paramilitary organisation set up in 1920 that established Jewish settlements and supported what was then illegal Jewish immigration to Palestine. In Hebrew, Haganah means “defence”.

3 A story emerged in 2024 of Uri finding a New York library book among his possessions some 47 years after he had borrowed it. The book was about him! See **FT459:8**.

4 *American Manhunt: Osama bin Laden*, 2025.

For some of Uri’s FT many appearances over the years, see: **FT2:5-6, 3:6-8, 5:6, 19, 59:44, 69:19, 73:09, 78:34, 80:54, 81:16, 87:15, 87:54, 94:09, 95:09, 101:10, 104:52, 111:16, 122:08, 126:39, 144:12, 159:07, 162:25, 165:66, 174:36, 178:19, 187:19, 194:24, 208:58, 210:73, 215:28, 218:51, 221:49, 250:56, 251:11, 255:26, 321:16-17, 368:24-25, 379:2, 406:5, 413:34, 417:22, 426:10, 448:34, 459:8**.

➡ **GORDON RUTTER** is the founder of the Edinburgh Fortean Society, editor of *The Magazine of the Society for Psychical Research* and a regular contributor to FT.