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To the Editor,

I notice that, in his study "Music and Spiritualism" (July issue), Melvyn J. Willin cites my *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology* (2nd edition, 1984). The 3rd, updated, edition (1991) has many revisions, and I have since passed editorship to Dr J. Gordon Melton, whose 4th edition was published in 1996.

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LESLIE SHEPARD

To the Editor:

Melvyn J. Willin's very interesting article, "Music and Spiritualism" (July issue), does not accurately express one of my views on the accordion-playing feats of D. D. Home. My suggestion was that Home might have actually played those tunes on a tiny one-octave mouth organ held in his mouth and concealed by his 'soup-strainer' mustache. Author Willin writes that I "suggested . . . that Home probably concealed a tiny harmonica". However, in the reference he cites, I write, "it might be suspected that"; not at all as strong a statement as "probably".

The term that Mr Willin used to describe my speculation, "far-fetched in the extreme", does not, in my opinion, apply. The eminent mouth-organ<sup>2</sup> player Larry Adler, in response to my inquiry, assured me that simple tunes can easily be played as I suggested. Parsimony might call for a more accepting view of my idea.

However, in light of the surprising (to me) revelation from authors Alan Gauld and Donald West in the same issue, that the SPR collection inventory does not list either the white gloves or the one-octave mouth organs that author William Lindsay Gresham told me he found in the Home memorabilia, I must reconsider my statement. I have no reason but this to disbelieve Gresham's account, but since apparently no physical evidence now exists to

<sup>2</sup> The word 'harmonica' refers to a trade name. The redoubtable Mr Adler insists that the correct designation of the instrument is 'mouth organ'.

support his words, I must accept the possibility that he was mistaken, or that he saw the material at another location while he was researching Home.

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JAMES RANDI

To the Editor,

I refer to the 'Telepathic Amplifier' described by the Vasilescus in your *Journal* of October 1996, and the subsequent correspondence in July 1997. It has long been my opinion (for technical reasons discussed at some length in my book *Exploring the Fourth Dimension* (Foulsham (Quantum) 1992) that, if Telepathy occurs, it is most unlikely to be achieved by an electromagnetic wave, and certainly not with one of frequency as low as 6-7 MHz. None the less, after corresponding with Dr Eugen Vasilescu on the subject, I feel that, surprising as his results may be, they require careful investigation. I cannot agree with Mr Greatrex, however, that we can take the case as proven, and extend the investigation to other possibilities. It is essential that Vasilescu's results should be confirmed and consolidated, and the nature of the 'radio signal' investigated. This would in itself lead to more reliable and repeatable results, some clue as to the nature of the 'thought processes' producing them, and most of all (the dream of the parapsychologist), establish a physical basis for an apparently paranormal event.

The last point is the first priority, and I agree with Dennis Roddy that the equipment described is far from ideal, and is very likely to produce anomalous results. I would suggest:-

a) A good synthesized HF communication receiver (professional standard, *not* the small domestic variety) must be operating at all times in the vicinity of the 'sender' and preferably connected to his 'aerial' in parallel with the input to the amplifier. This will measure the strength of the signal, detect any normal background transmissions which may confuse the results, immediately detect a new signal occurring when 'transmission' starts, and, correctly interpreted, will give a good clue as to the nature of the source—a very important factor indeed.

b) If any such signal can be detected, the use of an HF Signal Analyser will add further vital information, such as determining and recording its centre frequency, bandwidth and structure (the nature of the modulation).

c) I agree with Roddy that the wire 'aerials' are very suspect. I would suggest tuned loop aerials, worn like a halo, for sender and-receiver.

d) I doubt if a specially-built amplifier is necessary. Some UHF and VHF receivers (such as mobile communications or radar) use an Intermediate Frequency between 10 and 15 MHz, and such an equipment (of post-1975 design) could be modified by adding input and output facilities directly to the IF amplifier, which would need to be retuned to the required frequency.

All this advice is based on pious but forlorn hope; it is very improbable that a technical study of this kind will be fairly tackled in the present climate. It is