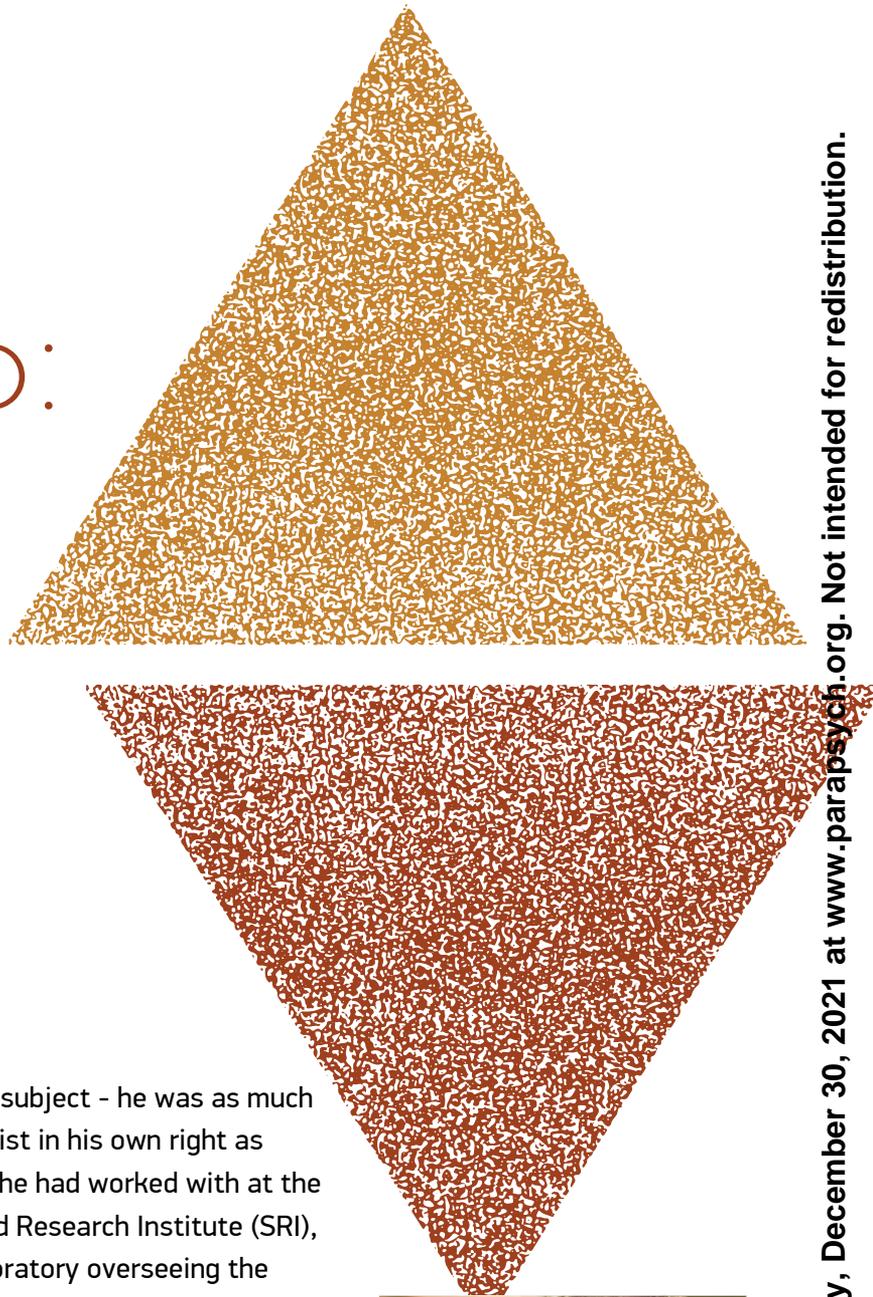


# Fridays with Ingo:

## Scientist and Psychic



When I first began volunteering in the Ingo Swann archival collection, located in the basement of University of West Georgia's Ingram's Library (which doubles as the university's tornado shelter), I thought of Swann mostly as a talented psychic. I was aware he had exhibited convincing evidence of PK and was the creator of the controlled remote viewing (CRV) methodology, which I had been studying and practicing for several years. By the time I left campus after spending most Fridays with Ingo (posthumously) for two and a half years, my view of him had dramatically changed. From what I had learned through cataloging his correspondence files, followed by an independent study of his SRI files as part of my doctoral work, I was convinced Ingo was not just a

psychic subject - he was as much a scientist in his own right as anyone he had worked with at the Stanford Research Institute (SRI), the laboratory overseeing the clandestine U.S. governmental remote viewing operational programs that spanned two decades. I'd classify Swann as both an experimentalist and social scientist. I also discovered he was not merely a naturally gifted psychic, but rather had spent an exorbitant amount of time developing his skills and then trying to figure out how he could pass on his knowledge to others, even while continuing to hone his own.



| by *DEBRA LYNNE KATZ*

*Swann was described as having had many spontaneous intuitive experiences as a child, particularly those he associated with OBEs. However, multiple archival and published documents (Swann, 1977, 2004) show that he did not think about developing these until his mid-thirties [...]*

Swann (1993) defined remote viewing as a “particular kind of experiment - not a particular psi ability”, claiming to have coined the term along with Janet Mitchell, Gertrude Schmeidler and Karlis Osis when working together at the American Society for Psychical Research (p. 74). Swann’s scientific contributions to the development of remote viewing can be



Figure (1). Photos from the file room of the collection. Debra Lynne Katz, top center; Blyne Olivieri, head of special collections, lower right.

divided into three categories. The first was the overall experimental design of RV; the second was the creation of the larger societal/environmental structure in which operational remote viewing could succeed (as would be established at Ft. George A Meade Army Installation in Maryland); and the third was co-creation of a systematic methodological process that a psi participant could use for the purpose of decreasing analytic interference while accessing and reporting information in a detailed and consistent manner without the ongoing need for an monitor/interviewer.

Swann's  
Contributions to  
an Evolving and  
Expanding  
Experimental  
Protocol

Discoveries in PK

Swann was described as having had many spontaneous intuitive experiences as a child, particularly those he associated with OBEs. However, multiple archival and published documents (Swann, 1977, 2004) show that he did not think about developing these until his mid-thirties, when some of his socialite friends in New York

convinced him to join them in a darkened room where someone was attempting to capture anomalous images on camera. Much to their amazement, they discovered lights that appeared only above his head.

Ingo soon made the acquaintance of the controversial CIA interrogation specialist Cleve Backster (Backster, 2003), who was curious to know if Swann might be able to impact plants that were being monitored by a polygraph instrument. Swann's task was to project either loving or hateful thoughts towards them, the latter of which he found challenging. They began a series of experiments together in which Swann tried out different approaches, finding "that plants could learn to recognize between true and artificial human intent." Swann (2004) wrote that this realization "came as a thunderbolt." (p. 112).

Eventually He and Backster moved onto a new set of experiments, in which Swann attempted to use PK to create changes in chemicals and minerals, such as graphite. Swann explained that they quickly abandoned the popular idea of "mind over matter." Instead, what seemed to work was "interacting" with the graphite through "mind probes" in which Backster directed him to think of hot or cold. He wrote, "amongst all

this astonishment, I came across the concept of the "learning curve" which ultimately was to play THE feature role in the development of remote viewing" (p. 79).

In subsequent demonstrations of PK, such as when Swann was asked by Hal Puthoff without advance notice to influence a manometer/quark detector in front of a room full of scientists, Ingo, not knowing what else to do, decided to probe the equipment, which means he turned his focused attention to its internal mechanisms with the intent/hope of receiving visual impressions that would help him understand

*In 1970, after a three-year period of studying on his own, Ingo decided to reach out to researchers at the American Society for Psychical Research (ASPR) with the hope they could teach him further about his intuitive abilities.*

how it functioned. As he began to visualize the device buried underneath the cement floor, an effect was registered. He would go on to note again that it was not the sheer willing of it to respond that made a difference but this intensive focus. I discovered that this same theme was carried out later with his experiments in influencing thermometers, led by Schmeidler (1973). Swann was failing to register an impact on the equipment during the scheduled trials. However, during his lunch break, he once again decided he needed to understand the internal workings of the thermometer better and tried to tune in clairvoyantly. Fortunately, he still was wearing his monitoring equipment, as this was precisely when a fluctuation occurred. This approach I believe holds promise for those studying PK. Personally, I've had some success with it myself — although "success" is not the same word my spouse used when I shut down a heating system in the middle of winter, after attempting to change the setting on the thermostat with my mind alone.

One of my top finds in Swann's UWG archives was a typed transcript entitled "Dialog between Duane Elgin and Ingo Swann, 1977," marked "Confidential, not for quotation or distribution." In

this they outline their theories behind PK. Swann shares his time-related theory — that the person who is trying to create an effect at a distance is using sense perceptions and it takes time for this process to take place, since the person is operating in a “linear” manner, which means they are always operating behind the event. Therefore “in order to bring a PK event a person has to anticipate a universe that is one second, even one iota of a second — in the future.” Swann also reveals that when he began intently studying PK it led to objects exploding in his house for months, including a bookcase. This caused him to feel such study

was not worth the expense and mess involved.

### Learning Curves with OBE Experiments at ASPR

In 1970, after a three-year period of studying on his own, Ingo decided to reach out to researchers at the American Society for Psychical Research (ASPR) with the hope they could teach him further about his intuitive abilities. Osis, Mitchell, and Schmeidler invited Swann to join their study, the aim of which was to develop “perceptual tasks” that might answer the question of “whether a person could localize part of his or

*It was experiences like these that taught him that a higher wisdom could sometimes come through the process of drawing and recording impressions on paper as opposed to verbal utterances.*

her consciousness in space some distance from the body” (Mitchell, 1987, p. 4). Swann was advised that their design allowed for trial runs, so that the subject could get used to the experiment and baseline readings could be taken on their vital signs. He recalled, “I asked if the subject would have feedback at the end of each trial so that a learning curve, if any, could be noted. Yes that was possible — although no one had thought of a possibility of a learning curve” (Swann, 1977, p. 109).

These carefully controlled experiments involved placing two boxes on top of a platform raised ten feet above a bed where Swann lay; he was monitored for blood flow, volume, eye movements, muscle



Figure (2). Sampling of the items found in the archival collections. Slide created by Debra Katz.

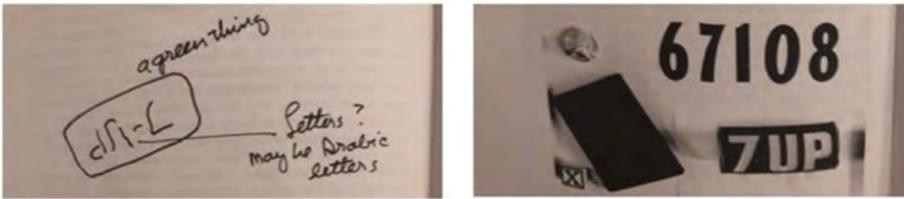


Figure (3). Swann writes “7-UP” upside down while lying ten feet under the shelf where the soda can has been placed, from p. 36 & 37 of Natural ESP, The ESP Core and Its Raw Characteristics (1987).

and observe” ( p. 1). Still, she recorded “many learning curves” with Swann, particularly when she would make an adjustment to the target type or an aspect of their design. She recounted that Swann continued to “sharpen his ability to see at a distance,” as she recorded his achievements, improvements, and frustrations. After a while, Swann (1987)

tension, etc. Research assistants would place items in the boxes to keep both Mitchell and Swann blind to the target material.

Mitchell (1987) observed that Swann was “by far the most talented psi performer I’ve ever had the opportunity to work with

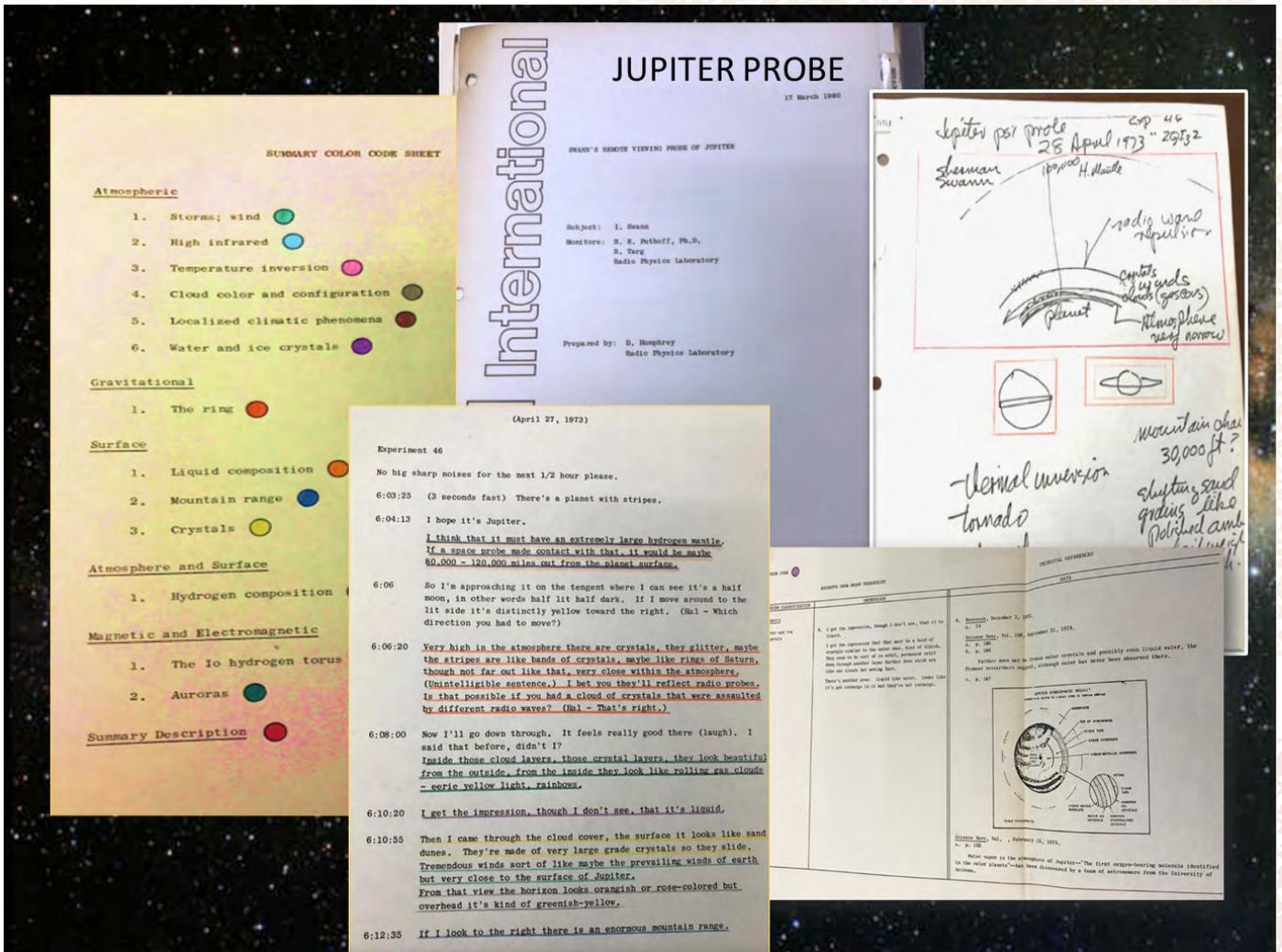


Figure (4). Examples of color-coding analysis of Swann and Sherman’s Jupiter RV transcripts. Slide created by Debra Katz; all documents in his “Planetary RV” archival files.

found himself suffering from the decline effect. He wasn't sure how to reverse it until in one trial he sketched an object that he did not recognize. He wrote "Green" and that it reminded him of "Arabic letters." When the target was revealed he at first thought he had bombed the exercise, as it was a 7UP can — no Arabic letters in sight. However, one of the researchers took his sketch and turned it upside down. It clearly read, "7-UP." (See figure 3, from p.36 & 37 of *Natural ESP*). He recounted how the realization that his body could access and accurately record information that his mind was totally oblivious to was so shocking, that he had to sit right down on the stairs of the New York subway trying to comprehend it all.

It was experiences like these that taught him that a higher wisdom could sometimes come through the process of drawing and recording impressions on paper as opposed to verbal utterances. Sketching, moving from simple reflexive marks referred to as "ideograms" to more detailed and representative drawings to use of three-dimensional clay modeling, would become the hallmark of Controlled Remote methodology. Also, this understanding would lead Swann to formulate theoretic-

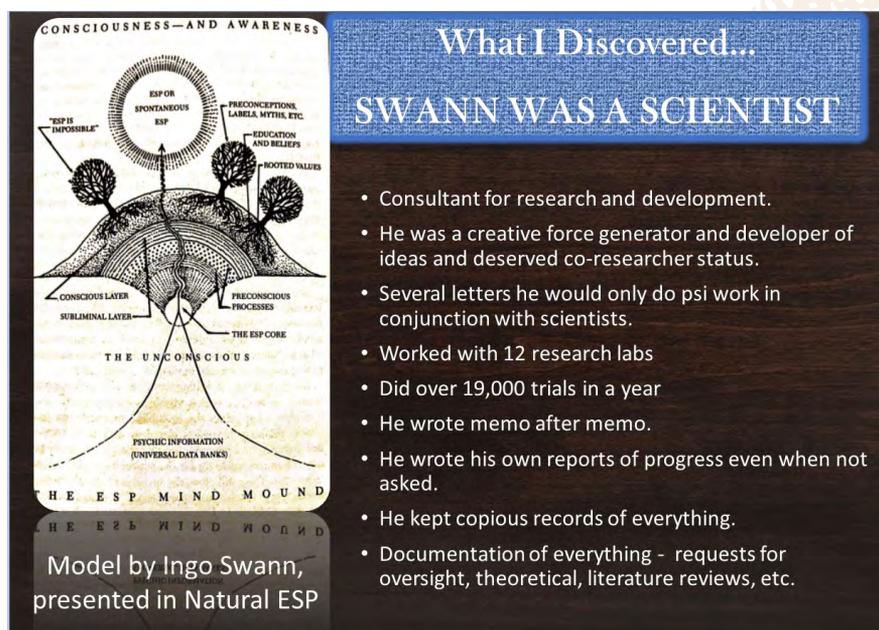


Figure (5). Slide created by Debra Katz.

cal models outlining the process by which information moved back and forth between the unconscious and conscious aspects of the mind. As an artist, Ingo was able to illustrate his models through attractive drawings that would later be published in *Everybody's Guide to Natural ESP* (Swann, 2018) and elsewhere (See figure 5).

Although the ASPR targets were being constantly changed and learning curves noted, Swann eventually began to find the tasks repetitive. On one occasion he found his mind wandering. He saw an image of a woman standing outside the building "dressed in a ridiculous orange coat" (Swann, 2004, p. 122). Researchers ran downstairs, leaving Swann still strapped to the bed, making their way outside just

in time to confirm his perceptions. Thus, this incident launched a new set of experiments in which Swann would strive to reach out to ever-increasing distances. The first of these projects successfully demonstrated that Swann could describe unexpected weather conditions in another state (rain in Tucson, Arizona), and soon he was tracking actions in real time — describing the locations of researchers as they moved through a museum, correctly describing their predicament of having to turn around when one part of the museum was closed (Mitchell, 1987).

### Development and Discoveries at SRI

These early experiments would be

taken up and developed further by Targ and Puthoff (1977) at SRI, becoming what would be known as their trademark *outbounder experiment* — one that was used with their contracted subjects, such as former police detective Pat Price. Price both impressed and alarmed intelligence officials when he read file names at a top-secret military installation during one such experiment, when he was located hundreds of miles away. This design was also used as a demonstration in which visiting dignitaries and potential funding allies participated as psi subjects while being “interviewed” by Targ, who acted as the “right side of their brain” under double-blind conditions (Targ, 2019). The researchers

felt that the only way to really convince anyone that the phenomenon was real was to have them experience it themselves.

In 1972, Swann received a contract naming him both a “research subject” and “research consultant.” UWG Archival documents show that, rather than merely being invited to participate in experiments, he played a role in the planning and development of the psycho-energetics program, which tested for the possibility of PK while exploring the potential for the development of remote viewing. In an early progress report addressed to Ken Kress of the CIA, entitled “Proposal for Research” found in the SRI Chronological files, dated February 14,

*According to several governmental reports and other correspondence, the success of these projects served to strengthen confidence that remote viewing really did have potential for serving military and intelligence interests.*

1972, SRI’s co-directors, Targ and Puthoff wrote, “of special interest is the fact that Mr. Swann’s abilities apparently were not innate, but rather were developed by a set of training procedures. Therefore, during the course of the study, information as to possible training procedures for the development of such abilities will be compiled.”

For the next several months, Swann participated in 72 forced-choice experiments, some requiring him to identify various sub-



Figure (6). Swann’s collection included many articles documenting concerns over “the foreign threat” and also societal concerns about misuse of psychic power.

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stances hidden in canisters (e.g., mercury) and others that explored his ability to distinguish colors.

However, Swann once again grew bored.

### Coordinate Remote Viewing and Project Scanate

While on a cross-country flight, Swann had an epiphany (Swann, *Penetration*, 2018). If pilots could track locations by longitude/latitude coordinates, he theorized these should make ideal remote viewing targets with applications potential. Longitude/latitude coordinates would also allow for operating under triple-blind conditions. However, SRI directors balked at this idea, since at that time the predominant belief within parapsychology circles was that distant information acquisition required telepathic transference between sender (or an outbunder positioned at a location of interest) and receiver (remote viewer), which this design would deliberately eliminate. Ingo's response was one that became habitual over the next 20 years or so — he threatened to quit. In a series of 1973 memos to Puthoff found in SRI files box 6, Swann complained that he was not there “to produce convincing demonstrations

based upon academic or assumed definitions of psychokinesis or clairvoyance.” Rather he was there to learn about his PK and psi abilities, explore them, and see how to improve them, even if they were not reproducible 100 percent of the time. He wrote that he was starting to feel “as if the directors had something else in mind.”

Puthoff capitulated. Thus, coordinate remote viewing, under the name Project Scanate was launched. In yet another memo dated August 10, 1973, from Swann to Puthoff, Swann summed up their progress:

The preliminary results of Scanate indicate abilities under conscious control, and, having been tested by the sponsor, seem to fulfill the mandate of the proposal under which we assumed works. These preliminary successes also clearly indicate that paranormal ability can be researched and developed under stringent laboratory controls, although Scanate, of course, does not fall within the historical definition of such abilities. This is quite beside the point, however, since the purpose of research is to intrude into hitherto known realms.

Also in 1973, Swann devised yet another experiment designed

*Another fascinating set of files was titled the American Prophecy Project — a 17-year project spanning 1971 through 1988, spearheaded by Swann, in which three psychics attempted to describe events that would occur in the near future.*

to stretch the limits of what was possible with remote viewing. Swann's archives contain boxes marked “Planetary RV” that document his now-legendary viewing of Jupiter, co-piloted by his friend Harold Sherman, another SRI consultant. An undated transcript of a conference talk by Swann and Sherman entitled, “psychic probes of Jupiter and Mercury” outlined how the two initially came up with the plan of using remote viewing to get ahead of the NASA satellite photos that would be giving Earth never-before-seen images of Jupiter in the months to come.

Just as they had been with project Scanate, SRI researchers were dubious of this plan but eventually came on board.

What I found interesting about this project was it redefines concepts of blinding, which would normally require that the viewer and any immediate researchers have no idea of the target location. In this case, everyone involved knew up front that the target was Jupiter. The goal was

to discover something significant about Jupiter that no one on Earth knew. This could only work if there was high confidence feedback would be available reasonably soon. In their conference talk, Swann and Sherman find humor in the fact that, prior to actual feedback, their reports were sent to leading planetary scientists, such as Carl Sagan, who dismissed Ingo's observations of Jupiter's rings as being ridiculous. The pho-

tography retrieved from the probe would show who knew more about the planet.

In reviewing Swann and Sherman's original transcripts, it was fascinating to see the way in which their impressions were analyzed. Each type of data (temperatures, land conditions, atmospheric conditions, sensory descriptors such as smells) was color-coded (see figure 4). NASA's mission to Jupiter was



Figure (7). A collection of articles found in the archives highlighting Swann's super psychic powers.

*Ingo, when the modern history of the field is finally written, you must occupy the top position.*

covered extensively in virtually every leading magazine of the day, including *Scientific American*, *Popular Mechanics*, *Time*, and *Newsweek*. SRI researchers collected around 20 full articles and then set out to rate every perception recorded by Swann and Sherman, giving it credit if it was mentioned in more than one article. Besides proving that psi can operate at any distance, memos in the archives demonstrate that the Jupiter project got the attention of other government agencies interested in the potential of remote viewing as an intelligence-gathering tool. I believe the design of this project continues to serve as a model for parapsychologists interested in exploring real-world locations, objects, or events in the present or future.

According to several governmental reports and other correspondence, the success of these projects served to strengthen confidence that remote viewing really

did have potential for serving military and intelligence interests. In a 1977 report, Ken Kress recommended that SRI replace National Geographic photos with more real-life targets in remote viewing tests and practice. He wrote that he was encouraged by Swann's and Pat Price's results, although the mixture of highly accurate and inaccurate information made it unclear how useful remote viewing would be as an intelligence-gathering tool.

### Ongoing Documentation of Learning Curves

Throughout his archives, there are memos, notes, and reports in which Swann documents occasions when "learning has happened." This was true not just for himself but for others in the lab he was monitoring or assisting. An example of this was found in SRI Chronological files box #1, dated 1973, in a document entitled, "learning has happened with corrective action on perceptual difficulties." He noted: "The experiment was run 5 X 20. Gradual shifts can be observed. Corrective action was taken by the subject on perceptual difficulties, between sessions 3 and 4. Immediate improvement is noted. Learning has taken place. Graph

1 shows learning pattern by run number and accumulation of hits by trials. Graph 2 is included, since the black box experiment of last summer also demonstrated similar learning curves."

It was this fascination with learning that motivated Ingo to develop his methodology, which eventually became CRV. Because this topic is so extensive, it will be covered in a separate future article.

### Swann as Architect of Ft. Meade Operational Unit

In September of 1977, the U.S. Army's remote viewing program was established at Ft. Meade Army Installation in Maryland under the command of Lt. Frederick Holmes "Skip" Atwater. Atwater studied the work already being carried out at SRI, as well as approaches in OBE exploration by Robert Monroe of the Monroe Institute. Atwater established protocols on his own (Extended Remote Viewing) as the unit waited for more formal training procedures to be developed at SRI. Still, the work environment at Ft. Meade was set up per Swann's specific instructions, based on observations of the environmental factors that had either helped or worked against him to date. These instructions called for a location



Figure (8). Various photos of Ingo Swann, some found in his scrapbooks, some published online.

in which remote viewers, their “interviewers,” analysts, and project managers would be able to work unencumbered by the stressors of the outside world. They would have freedom to take plenty of breaks, work limited hours if needed, and focus only on remote viewing rather than being assigned other tasks. Memos show that Swann in later years had to continually advocate for this organizational setup, as when Army contractors at one point went behind his back to try to convince his superiors at SRI to switch to a training model that would simply allow them to temporarily send personnel from any unit for short-term training. Ingo vehemently

opposed this, again threatening to quit. He got his way, but there were repercussions to his stubbornness, as will be explained in future articles.

### Swann as a Social Scientist

Swann’s collection is filled with his and other people’s writings about the zeitgeist. His metaphysical book collection exceeds 1,000 volumes. His cosmic art collection is enormous, consisting of his own collections and those supplied by Raymond Piper. His chronological files include a vast collection of newspaper and magazine clippings documenting the social

discourse and attitudes about psi from all regions. While he was often personally the subject of such articles, he tracked reports about other psychics as well. Some of the newspaper clippings in his files were quite entertaining, demonstrating both awe and fear over those with psychic powers. (see figures 6 & 7). He also tracked the “foreign psychic threat,” which was written about in both the popular media and formal governmental reports. Ingo kept scrapbooks of his own media appearances, including invitations, programs, and transcripts of his invited talks before the U.S. Army, which he seemed quite proud of. One topic he wrote extensively about in his correspondence (and every book he ever wrote) was the inhibiting impact of materialistic philosophies and institutionalized power structures on the advancement of both science and humanity, particularly in relation to awareness of humanity’s intuitive potential. This is true whether he was discussing alien life on the moon in *Penetration* (Swann, 2019), or *Psychic Sexuality* (Swann, 2018) or in volume one and two of *The Secrets of Power* (2018) and even posthumously, in his most recent book, *Resurrecting the Mysterious* (2020)

which comprises two unpublished manuscripts found in his archives and edited by British fiction writer Nick Cook.

### Other Notable Items Found in the Archives

I was surprised to discover boxes containing hundreds of astrological reports that Swann himself created. Not only was he an avid astrologer, but it turns out, according to his niece who lived with him as his assistant in his later years, he wouldn't even allow anyone to come into his house if he hadn't checked out their chart first. He also kept files on psychopathic killers, porn stars, movie stars, musicians, politicians and some other remote viewers.

Another fascinating set of files was titled the *American Prophecy Project* — a 17-year project spanning 1971 through 1988, spearheaded by Swann, in which three psychics attempted to describe events that would occur in the near future. Rigorous criteria for predictions dictated that only those that could not be logically inferred would be analyzed. A prediction that it would snow in December in the Midwest would be ignored — but a prediction

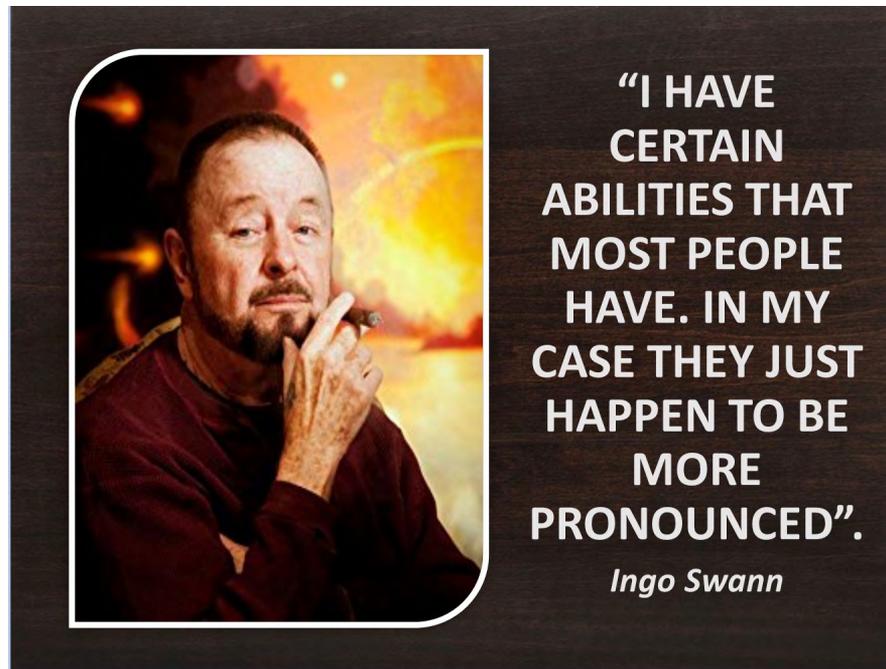


Figure (9).

of snow in mid-August would be included. Additionally, Swann published a newsletter inviting members of the public to submit predictions, a project continued by his estate (Swann-Rider, 2021). In these files, there was also evidence of other groups exploring precognition, such as a Mensa group located in the Midwest that had formed specially to make intuitive predictions. They successfully predicted an earthquake, describing both the place and date it would occur.

What struck me repeatedly during my two and a half years of working in the archives were Ingo's decades of meticulous organization and record-keeping. For example, in his chronological

correspondence files there were hundreds of folders consisting of thousands of items: letters, memos, notes, birthday cards, photos, receipts, bills, flyers, brochures, newspaper clippings, and publishing contracts. These were almost all in perfect order. Most of the papers were in perfect condition except for an occasional coffee stain. There were times I'd be sitting in the archives and have a sudden whiff of cigar smoke. (I could never tell if this was coming from the papers themselves or had otherworldly origins, however.) Ingo kept all his experimental notes, including raw data sheets, progress reports, calculations, commentary, and informal yet structured write-ups in which

he took the liberty to document himself. In the SRI files he kept almost every contract that he had with the government, agreements often updated or renewed every 3 to 6 months. Accompanying memos clearly demonstrate that salary increases were a result of intensive discussions in which he challenged SRI directors to explain why he should be making \$90 per day when they were earning \$400 per day. Eventually he received equal pay, although in his words not always equal respect. He felt his name was left off research reports or that he was sometimes not included in meetings because there was a well-established norm within parapsychology and all the natural sciences in which research subjects were considered beneath those running the lab. However, Puthoff pointed out that there was a difference in status between full-time SRI employees and contractors and that Ingo himself consistently turned down offers to join their team as a regular employee. Swann often wrote that he didn't wish to relocate permanently to California from New York or lose his freedom to pursue other interests.

When cataloging his correspondence, I was struck by Ingo's typed, gracious, thoughtful responses to the hundreds of the fans who wrote to him about their own

exceptional experiences (he used a typewriter and snail mail — this was in the days before computers or emails). He kept their letters and his responses filed neatly together alongside those from publishers, researchers, reports, friends and family, and, on occasion, lovers. This was in juxtaposition with his often cantankerous (yet still neatly typed) memos to SRI personnel or their liaisons with other governmental agencies.

### Ingo's Work Ethic

Beyond anything he or anyone else could say about him, Ingo defined himself by his actions. At the time Puthoff retired as director, he and Swann exchanged letters in which Swann mentioned he had completed 19,000 trials in a single year. Puthoff acknowledged this, suggesting it might have been too much, leading to Swann's stress. In various other writings, it was suggested he did close to a million while working with 12 different labs. Why did he do this? Perhaps his own words written in a memo entitled, "for the record" and dated March 5, 1973, provide some clues, which I will share in closing:

I have reasonably satisfied myself, by research and personal experience, that men and women are possessed of qualitative

mental, intellectual, intuitive, and spiritual factors which often are not operative, but which when functional provide quantitative phenomena the nature of which indicate possibilities of life and living far beyond the expected. Since I am convinced and enheartened fundamentally that these extraordinary factors exist, I should be remiss both in duty and in personal satisfaction were I not to wish to move positively in these directions, and where it is possible for me to so, contribute to the accumulating body of evidence of the extended nature of man.... in doing so I have created the personal ethic of working only with proven researchers in the field, should they express interest, with the personal insistence that research methods and after-the-fact inspection of those results conform to those standards acceptable to the creative body of scientists working today.

Ed May took over as SRI's director when Puthoff left in 1986. According to many documents found within the archives at UWG, at this time the CRV training program was disbanded at SRI and moved "in-house" to the Army unit at Ft. Meade. Still, Swann continued to do occasional work for SRI and spent

much time exploring the realm of analytics — describing letters and numbers, reporting directly to May on further discoveries and learning curves. When the board lost their funding for the RV programs at both Ft. Meade and SRI in 1996, Ed May wrote the following note, dated to Swann on August 30, 1990:

Ingo, when the modern history of the field is finally written, you must occupy the top position. While others have contributed greatly, none have matched your input. Of course, your skill as a practitioner is important, but I am referring to your unique contribution as a researcher. There is no one in the field who is as intensely committed to understanding the phenomena as you...no one I know works as hard as you do. It is this commitment and the resulting insight that ultimately should receive recognition. The SRI project would not have happened without it. The fact that our scientific oversight committee is unanimous in its opinion about the existence of an important anomaly is a by-product of your initial work.

The Ingo Swann archival collection is open to all serious

researchers. To visit the archives, one should contact Director of Special Collections Blyne Olivieri (bolivier@westga.edu). Furthermore, there is an Ingo Swann fellowship opportunity for serious researchers (<https://www.westga.edu/library/special-collections/swannfellowship.php>).

Swann's papers are in good company at West Georgia, alongside those of other psi researchers like Bill Roll and Janet Mitchell. Eventually the papers of Stanley Krippner, Stephan Schwartz, and Angela Thompson Smith will be housed there as well. A select number of Ingo's papers have also recently been made available to the public online.

*Special thanks to Ingo's estate and Elly Flippen for providing permissions to share the attached photos.*

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