



'Dr.' Bearden's Vacuum Energy

One of the strangest books ever written about modern physics was published in 2002, and reprinted two years later. Titled *Energy from the Vacuum* (Cheniere Press), this monstrosity is two inches thick and weighs three pounds. Its title page lists the author as "Lt. Col. Thomas E. Bearden, PhD (U.S. Army retired)."

"Dr." Bearden is fond of putting PhD after his name. An Internet check revealed that his doctorate was given, in his own words, for "life experience and life accomplishment." It was purchased from a diploma mill called Trinity College and University—a British institution with no building, campus, faculty, or president, and run from a post office box in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The institution's owner, one Albert Wainwright, calls himself the college "registrant."

Bearden's central message is clear and simple. He is persuaded that it is possible to extract unlimited free energy from the vacuum of space-time. Indeed, he believes the world is on the brink of its greatest technological revolution. Forget about nuclear reactors.

Martin Gardner's latest book is The Annotated Hunting of the Snark: The Definitive Edition, published by W.W. Norton in October 2006. This column is a new contribution to his Notes of a Fringe Watcher column, which ran in every issue of SKEPTICAL INQUIRER from Summer 1993 through January/February 2002.

Vacuum energy will rescue us from global warming, eliminate poverty, and provide boundless clean energy for humanity's glorious future. All that is needed now is for the scientific community to abandon its "ostrich position" and allow adequate funding to Bearden and his associates.

To almost all physicists this quest for what is called "zero-point energy" (ZPE) is as hopeless as past efforts to build perpetual motion machines. Such skepticism drives Bearden up a wall. Only monumental ignorance, he writes, could prompt such criticism.

The nation's number two drummer for ZPE is none other than Harold Puthoff, who runs a think tank in Austin, Texas, where efforts to tap ZPE have been underway for years. In December 1997, to its shame, *Scientific American* ran an article praising Puthoff for his efforts. Nowhere did this article mention his dreary past.

Puthoff began his career as a dedicated Scientologist. He had been declared a "clear"—a person free of malicious "engrams" recorded on his brain while he was an embryo. At Stanford Research International, Puthoff and his then-friend Russell Targ claimed to have validated "remote viewing" (a new name for distant clairvoyance), and also the great psi powers of Uri Geller. (See my chapter on Puthoff's search for ZPE in *Did Adam and Eve Have Navels?*, Norton 2000.)

Bearden sprinkles his massive volume with admirable quotations from top physicists, past and present, occasionally correcting mistakes made by Einstein and others. For example, Bearden believes that the graviton moves much faster than the speed of light. He praises the work of almost every counterculture physicist of recent decades. He admires David Bohm's "quantum potential" and Mendel Sachs's unified field theory. Oliver Heaviside and Nikola Tesla are two of his heroes.

Bearden devotes several chapters to antigravity machines. Here is a sample of his views:

In our approach to antigravity, one way to approach the problem is to have the mechanical apparatus also the source of an intense *negative energy* EM field, producing an intense flux of Dirac sea holes into and in the local surrounding space-time. The excess charge removed from the Dirac holes can in fact be used in the electrical powering of the physical system, as was demonstrated in the Sweet VTA antigravity test. Then movements of the mechanical parts could involve movement of strong negative energy fields, hence strong curves of local space-time that are local *strong negative gravity fields*. Or, better yet, movement of the charges themselves will also produce field-induced movement of the Dirac sea hole negative energy. This appears to be a practical method to manipulate the metric itself, along the lines proposed by Puthoff et al.²¹⁷

The 217 superscript refers to a footnote about a 2002 paper by Puthoff and two friends on how to use the vacuum field to power spacecraft. Bearden's anti-gravity propulsion system is neatly diagrammed on page 319. "Negatively charged local space-time," says the diagram, "acts back upon source vehicle producing anti-gravity and unilateral thrust."

In the 1950s, numerous distinguished writers, artists, and even philosophers (e.g., Paul Goodman, William Steig, and Paul Edwards) sat nude in Wilhelm Reich's "orgone accumulators" to absorb the healing rays of "orgone energy" coming from outer space. Bearden suspects (in footnote 78) that orgone energy "is really the transduction of the time-polarized photon energy into normal photon energy. We are assured by quantum field theory and the great negentropy solution to the source charge problem that the instantaneous scalar potential involves this process." I doubt if the Reichians, who are still around, will find this illuminating.

To my amazement Bearden has good things to say about the notorious "Dean drive"—a rotary motion device designed to propel spaceships by inertia. It was promoted by John Campbell when he edited *Astounding Science Fiction*, a magazine that unleashed L. Ron Hubbard's Dianetics on a gullible public and made Hubbard a millionaire. Only elementary physics is needed to show that no inertial drive can move a spaceship in frictionless space. On pages 448–453 Bearden lists eighty patents for inertial drives. They have one feature in common: none of them works.

Counterculture scientists tend to be bitter over the "establishment's" inability to recognize their genius. Was not Galileo, they like to repeat, persecuted for his great discoveries? This bitterness is sometimes accompanied by paranoid fears, not just of conspiracies to silence them, but also fears of being murdered. Bearden's pages 406–453 are devoted to just such delusions.

Several kinds of "shooters" are described that induce fatal heart attacks. He himself, Bearden writes, has been hit by such devices. An associate, Stan Meyer, died after a "possible" hit by a close-range

shooter. Another ZPE researcher was killed by a bazooka-size shooter. Steve Marikov, still another researcher, was assaulted by a sophisticated shooter and his body thrown off a rooftop to make it appear a suicide. When his body was removed, the pavement "glowed."

One day at a Texas airport a person three feet from Bearden was killed with symptoms suggesting he was murdered by an ice-dart dipped in curare! "That was apparently just to teach me 'they' were serious." The colonel goes on to

guarded by friends day and night, for the same reason, else he runs a high risk of the "air syringe" assassination during the night.

Simply trying to do scientific work, I find it necessary to often carry (legally) a hidden weapon. Both my wife and I have gun permits, and we frequently and legally carry concealed weapons.

As early as the 1930s, T. Henry Moray—who built a successful COP>1.0 power system outputting 50kW from a 55 lb power unit—had to ride in a bulletproof car in Salt

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explain that "they" refers to a "High Cabal" who were offended by a friend's "successful transmutation of copper (and other things) into gold. . . . We have had numerous other assassination attempts, too numerous to reiterate. . . . Over the years probably as many as fifty or more overunity researchers and inventors have been assassinated . . . some have simply disappeared abruptly and never have been heard from since." *Overunity* is Bearden's term for machines with energy outputs that exceed energy inputs.

Any significant researcher should be wary of "meeting with a sudden suicide" on the way to the supermarket. Another thing to beware of, is a calibrated auto accident where your car is rammed from the rear, and you are shaken up considerably. An ambulance just happens to be passing by moments later, and it will take you to the hospital. If still conscious, the researcher must not get in the ambulance unless accompanied by a watchful friend who understands the situation and the danger. Otherwise, he can easily get a syringe of air into his veins, which will effectively turn him into a human vegetable. If he goes to the hospital safely, he must be

Lake City, Utah. He was repeatedly fired at by snipers from the buildings or sidewalk, with the bullets sometimes sticking in the glass. He was also shot by a would-be assassin in his own laboratory, but overpowered his assassin and recovered.

Obviously, I'm not competent to wade through Bearden's almost a thousand pages to point out what physicists tell me are howlers. I leave that task to experts, though I suspect very few will consider it worth their time even to read the book. To me, a mere science journalist, the book's dense, pompous jargon sounds like hilarious technical double-talk. The book's annotated glossary runs to more than 120 pages. There are 305 footnotes, 754 endnotes, and a valuable seventy-three-page index.

The back cover calls the book "the definitive energy book of the twenty-first century." In my opinion it is destined to be the greatest work of outlandish science in both this and the previous century. It is much funnier, for instance, than Frank Tipler's best-seller of a few decades ago, *The Physics of Immortality*. □