

Jack Houck

Jack Houck (1939-2013) was an American engineer noted for his mass demonstrations of psychokinesis at metal bending workshops or 'parties'.

Career

George (Jack) Brandt Houck worked as a systems engineer at Boeing, holding an MS degree in Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering from the University of Michigan. His interest in the paranormal began in the 1970s, influenced by [Stanford Research Institute's remote viewing studies](#).

Houck pioneered psychokinesis (PK) parties and was recognized as an authority in the field. Over 23 years he conducted more than 360 workshops, educating over 17,000 participants and keeping meticulous records of his research.

Historical Context

Spoon bending using paranormal abilities to deform metal cutlery gained attention in the 1970s, notably through [Uri Geller's](#) televised performances. The media furore generated by demonstrations led to extensive parapsychological research which in some cases produced seemingly solid evidence of psychokinesis in some cases, for example, the work of [physicist John Hasted](#).

More often, researchers uncovered standard techniques used by magicians including misdirection, physically bending the spoon, or employing prepared spoons. Such techniques can create convincing illusions for the scientifically naïve but are not examples of genuine psychic ability.

PK Parties

PK parties were social events staged by Houck, where participants learned and practised psychokinesis. Houck hypothesised that a fun and emotionally engaging atmosphere would enhance the likelihood of success. He started to hold these events in 1981 and by 1988 over 8,500 people had attended, with about 85% succeeding in metal bending.

Participants began with 'kindergarten' metal bending, using minimal force and focusing on feeling the metal soften. Participants gradually attempted harder tasks, like twisting forks or buckling spoon bowls, transitioning from using normal muscle power to psychokinesis.

The events often generated high excitement and collective energy that Houck believed to be crucial for PK success, sometimes enhanced by chanting, music, and a supportive atmosphere. He asserted that PK parties revealed latent mental abilities achieved through altered states of consciousness and heightened emotions. Houck believed these principles applied to everyday problem-solving, creativity, and stress reduction. Participants also engaged in other activities such as

influencing dice rolls or moving small objects, often succeeding in bending otherwise resistant objects.[1](#)

Metallurgical Analyses

A paper published in 1984 describes a series of 12 "PK Parties," gatherings where approximately 85% of participants purportedly experienced metal-bending phenomena, dubbed "warm-forming." This process entailed a brief window, typically lasting 5 to 20 seconds, during which the metal became noticeably warm and exceptionally pliable, only to revert to its original state thereafter. Notably, during a PK Party in April 1981, Houck relates an episode in which a steel rod exhibited a striking change in surface colouration when subjected to warm-forming by an attendee named Tim. Subsequent analysis by a metallurgical laboratory revealed intriguing surface alterations resembling volcanic rock and containing traces of chlorine, indicative of chemical reactions possibly triggered by human perspiration. [Scanning electron microscope \(SEM\)](#) images depicted marked surface transformations in warm-formed rods compared to control specimens. [Energy-dispersive X-ray diffraction](#) and cross-sectional analyses provided further insights into the surface changes observed, suggesting potential avenues for future investigation into the mechanisms underlying warm-forming phenomena.[2](#)

Conceptual Model

Houck provides a theoretical framework for the PK effects found from his gatherings and psi abilities in general. He proposes that emotions, typically associated with humans and animals, extend their influence to inanimate objects and even atomic structures. Through examples like psychometry and telepathy experiments, Houck illustrated how emotional peaks can profoundly affect perception and access to information across vast distances and through time. Furthermore, Houck discusses the intriguing relationship between quantum mechanics and paranormal phenomena, suggesting that consciousness plays a pivotal role in collapsing the wave function.[3](#)

Scepticism

The standard skeptical explanation for ostensibly paranormal effects from PK parties is exemplified by skeptic and former magician [Joe Nickell's](#) conclusion based on his experience of a spoon-bending party he attended in 2012. Nickell writes:

What I think really happens in such situations is that one simply exerts sufficient strength to cause the bending while being somewhat distracted from the process. An ability to *dissociate* (to separate a mental activity from the main stream of consciousness) seems a definite asset, because the bending relies heavily on the *ideomotor effect* (the psychological phenomenon in which, unconsciously, one moves his or her hand sufficiently to affect dowsing rods, Ouija-board planchettes, and the like.[4](#)

However, explanations based on unconscious physical effects do not obviously account for PK bending observed in well controlled conditions.[5](#) Nor are they easy

to reconcile with microscopic effects revealed by careful metallurgical testing (described above).

Legacy

Houck hosted hundreds of PK parties and many of the attendees went on to host their own events, some [conducted online](#) or held in conjunction with [scientific conferences](#).

Website: <http://www.jackhouck.com/index.shtml>

Literature

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Endnotes

Footnotes

- [1.](#) Houck (1983a).
- [2.](#) Houck (1984).
- [3.](#) Houck (1983b).
- [4.](#) Nickell (2012).
- [5.](#) Panati (1976).