

Astrology

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moment of one's birth based on the year, day and time he was born along with the longitude and latitude of his birthplace.

Posey includes with his chart a written explanation of what astrology is, what it examines and why it works. He also provides several pages of his findings made from studying a client's chart. These findings are discussed in depth with his client during four sessions.

Posey has studied astrology for more than nine years and has done charts for more than 300 people. The horoscopes he does are much more complicated than those found in books and magazines—the kind of horoscope with which most people are familiar. Those predictions usually take into account only the position of the sun at the moment of one's birth, Posey said.

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William Posey

Like most serious professional astrologers, he insists such predictions are worthless. While he does use the sun sign to construct a birth chart, he uses with it an individual's rising sign, house positions, planet positions and aspects which are the relationship all parts of the chart have with each other.

The complexity of these factors is enough to confuse any amateur, but Posey makes an attempt to explain to

his client what each of them means and how they interrelate.

The interpretations he makes from the chart are based on the results of centuries spent observing the effects the heavens have on a human's life, he said. Many of the interpretations he makes are memorized, but when he must examine an unfamiliar configuration he can consult astrological literature which explains where a certain subject or characteristic can be found in a chart.

Although charting and interpreting a horoscope are mainly deductive processes, the subconscious mechanisms of an astrologer do come into play, Posey said. "It's like music; anyone can be taught to play, but you have to be inspired to be great."

He admits even astrologers really do not know why astrology works. "There's an elusive quality about it. We don't know exactly why electricity works either," he said. "The patterns revealed in the horoscope show an individual's potential and basic human nature. The basis of our believing the predictions comes from a proven 8,000 years of observations.

"One of the biggest problems astrology encounters is that people say it's fatalistic," Posey said. "Astrology isn't saying the stars control humans; it's saying there exists a meaningful co-existence between the two.

"We all exist together, and each part of the heavens has a definite role to play. All of nature's substance is tuned and time to the movement of the heavens. The seasons give us ground to plant and harvest. Astrologers content that human beings aren't exempt from the natural order," he said.

Astrology's value lies in its ability to teach an individual to realize his potential and develop his consciousness, Posey said.

The world's oldest most popular "pseudoscience" thrives, despite growing criticism from scientists

"The reason I do it is that I find it a useful art. I believe it has potential, and it needs to be communicated to people. What it teaches isn't offered by any other kind of learning today."

He said the poor reputation astrology has disturbs him greatly. "The biggest problem astrology has to overcome is the preponderance of trash written about it," he said. "It's hard to do the work and expect results when you constantly have to defend yourself against 2,800 years of criticism."

The astrologers who write for newspapers and magazines are money-oriented out to make a fast buck, Posey said. The fee he charges is lower than that of most astrologers, and he admits that he puts so much time into a client's chart that he operates at a loss.

But his main purpose is to educate people about astrology, not to make money, he said. "People have asked me to do columns for newspapers, and I've all but spit in their faces," he said.

Even though it is obvious that Posey is not in astrology for the money, many scientists vehemently condemn astrology as worthless, regardless of an astrologer's motives.

In 1975, for example, 186 scientists signed a manifesto sponsored by and published in *The Humanist* magazine which condemned any recognition of astrology as a science. Its practice was characterized by "irrationalism and obscurantism," the scientists said. Among the signers were 19 Nobel laureates.

Morris Davis, a UNC astronomy professor, was also one of the signers of the manifesto. Davis has developed a seminar course at UNC to teach students why astrology is invalid. It is titled "Astrology: The Foundations of a Pseudoscience."

"I don't know of any scientists in the natural sciences who believe in astrology," Davis said. "I feel strongly about it because many people who engage in astrology are charlatans who make a practice out of getting money from people."

There are some astrologers who take their practice very seriously, though, and to them astrology is a religion which they practice devoutly, he said.

Few restrictions on local astrologers

There are no state or national laws barring a person from practicing astrology for money, but some towns do have local ordinances forbidding it, astrologer William Posey said.

Neither Chapel Hill nor Carrboro has such ordinances, attorneys for the two towns said, but they added that astrologers must purchase business licenses.

Posey said there were three practicing astrologers in Chapel Hill, including himself. He estimated that there were 15,000 practicing astrologers in the United States.

Astrologers can belong to two national professional organizations—the American Federation of Astrologers and the American Astrology Association. Numerous smaller groups also are scattered around the nation, Posey said.

To become a member of either national group, an astrologer must pay fees and pass an examination. Posey is a member of both. "They have no real authority, though," he said. "I'd like to see a state licensing exam. It would motivate astrologers to learn more, and our level of competence would be higher," he said.

The state Consumer Protection Agency in Raleigh has never dealt with astrology because it has never received any complaints concerning astrologers, an employee of the agency said.

—PAM KELLEY



Chapel Hill astrologer William Posey