

*Deported Druid Becomes Cause Celebre:  
Religious Freedom Advocates Defend Healer*

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**(with highlighted corrections)**

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Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif) and Sen James Inhofe (R-Okla.) probably couldn't agree on what to order for lunch. So it must have come as a surprise to FBI agents to see both names attached to the same case.

But there they were, listed as backers of a group of concerned citizens – a group that was warning, in documents distributed to the FBI and several other government agencies in November, that the United States had just relinquished one of its most valuable weapons in the war against terrorism.

It was a weapon with varied and highly relevant powers – to make reluctant witnesses talk, to heal burn victims. Not a bomber or a vaccine, but a man, or more like a superman, named Philippe Sauvage, faith healer and spiritual leader of Brittany.

Also, an outlaw of sorts: On Nov. 9, 2001 the Immigration and Naturalization Service deported Sauvage to France on a plane from LAX. (INS agents falsified removal documents to state that agents saw him board the plane on Nov. 11). The INS also says that Sauvage entered the United States 10 years ago on a false passport. (In 1991, Sauvage had a valid French passport at the time of entry which entitled him to enter legally as a visa waiver tourist).

And the INS says that Sauvage had exhausted his appeals for political asylum (even though court documents show he had five unadjudicated appeals still pending at the Board of Immigration, the Federal District Court, and with the INS District Director) when the INS deported him.

Since then, his supporters have launched an international campaign to bring him back to the United States, a campaign unusual both for the range of support it has received and for its implications for the budding international religious liberties movement.

Usually, the target of a deportation effort would be lucky to persuade the lawmaker in his district to write an inquiry on his behalf. But on the day INS agents showed up at Sauvage's Southern California home to deport him, his supporters persuaded about two dozen House members and senators from both parties, as well as State Department officials, to write letters to various agencies and place emergency calls to the INS to reverse or at least delay its decision.

They joined hundreds of admiring fellow healers and patients grateful to Sauvage for saving them (or, in some cases, their pets) from cancer, cystic fibrosis, third-degree burns and other ailments.

To the healer and his patients, Sauvage is the Dalai Lama of the West, a holy man persecuted by an occupying power. As State Department reports confirm, France is a country with little patience for faith healers, particularly ones who channel the indigenous folk traditions of unruly Brittany.

And Sauvage's supporters believe that the United States needs him.

"They haven't caught Osama bin Laden yet and we're heading for Christmas," said Jane Dillon, a sociologist at the University of California at San Diego who started the Philippe Sauvage Support Committee. "We need him nearby and ready and able to help in case something terrible happens."

Sauvage's popularity sets up an interesting test case for the religious liberties movement. Driven mainly by evangelicals, the movement seeks to have the United States fight for the rights of religious minorities abroad. Usually it chooses cases in which Christian missionaries are trapped in a country that has luke-warm relations with the United States – say, China or Sudan.

But in this case, the country in question is a Western ally. And the victim is someone whose resume describes him as the "last lineal Druid of the only surviving matriarchal clan," the "father of subliminal influentiality" and an archeofuturistic bio-cosmic cop" dedicated to the "reconciliation of man and earth." Not to mention defender of "targeted groups,"

meaning gays, lesbians and colonized Eskimos.

Traditional Christian legislators have risen to the occasion, partly out of respect for religious liberties and partly because nearly every district is home to one of his grateful patients. (With the exception of a few such as Waters, however, most legislators cooled after a single letter or phone call.)

Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.), Sen. Don Nickles (R-Okla.) and Rep. Henry J. Hyde (R-Ill.) were among the legislators who called or wrote the INS the day Sauvage was given his walking papers.

"Given the well-documented climate of intolerance in France toward religious minorities, I request that the INS stay the order of deportation and further investigate the case," wrote Rep. Christopher H. Smith (R-N.J.), co-chairman of the commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Sauvage, 47, comes from a famous clan of Celtic faith healers, almost all of them women. He was brought up austerely in a small town in Brittany – "no toys, no candies, not many friends," he said recently from Denmark, where he lives now. But he did have heavy responsibility for saving souls.

"When I was a boy I thought other people were like me," he said, meaning capable of healing others.

From a very young age, he said, he could pass his hand lightly over someone, barely touching, and something would happen. First, both he and his patient would feel utterly spent. Then, within hours or days they'd be rejuvenated, and the patient cured of whatever ailed him. By the age of 40, Sauvage claimed more than 50,000 recoveries.

In December 1990, Sauvage appeared on a popular French television show, "If We Were Told Everything." Five of his patients testified on air that Sauvage had cured them of cancer or a similar disease. Over the next week, the station received millions of letters and calls, according to French officials.

Sauvage began healing people remotely, requesting a lock of hair and a writing sample, in addition to a down payment.

Soon he felt like an industry, harried and inauthentic.

"Too much fame, too much glory," he said. "I wondered if I was just a reflection of what people wanted, just a spiritual flake."

To test himself, he headed to Greenland. In a place with no TV or radio, he was immediately accepted as an Eskimo shaman, he said.

After he left France in 1991, officials there launched an investigation. They arrested the TF1 TV producer and host of "If We Were Told Everything" as accomplices and later issued an international arrest warrant for Sauvage on charges of defrauding his followers, based on unfounded claims they had testimony from five patients to the effect that their conditions had worsened after their contact with him. (Four of these "complaints" were dated AFTER the French filed their charges and the fifth had been withdrawn well before the French requested his extradition.) Immediately after news of the French raid and arrest on TF1 host, Sauvage knew his own life was at risk and flew to Canada and then to the United States to seek political asylum on grounds of ethnic and religious persecution by the Mitterand government. The US has an extradition treaty with France, which wanted him back and found him in Escondido, where he was living under a fake name with the Eskimo wife he had brought from Greenland, his second wife of three. But then in 1993, a California judge stopped his extradition, saying that what Sauvage had been charged with was not a crime in the United States.

"The miracles of the New Testament, the divinity of Christ, life after death, the power of prayer are deep in the religious convictions of many," wrote Judge Barry Ted Moskowitz. "If one could be sent to jail because a jury in a hostile environment found those teachings false, little indeed would be left of religious freedom."

After the extradition trial, Sauvage filed for asylum in the United States and settled in southern California, a place teeming with labs and institutes dedicated to his crusade:

Subjecting spiritual concepts to scientific proofs.

At one such lab, human scientists mapped his brain on an EEG chart and found an “unprecedented increase” in his alpha band, a standard measurement of brain activity. This was “40 times more than any other human record,” the chart reads. “This phenomenon is unprecedented,” reads the scribble on the chart, a level of consciousness seen previously only in aquatic mammals.

Sauvage became known as the faith healer’s faith healer and won thousands of followers.

Gary Hugoboom is a salesman and kitchen designer near San Diego. Five years ago, he developed a kidney disease and his legs buckled. Hugoboom had a Pentecostal upbringing, so he was open to faith healing. A friend introduced him to Sauvage.

“He barely touched me, he just moved his hand around and did this really heavy breathing thing,” Hugoboom recalled. “I laid there and felt absolutely nothing. Then I stopped breathing. I stayed in this coma-like state for two, three hours.” Then, “boom – all of a sudden it was five years earlier, and I had enormous strength in my legs.”

Sauvage has collected thousands of such testimonials, full of “bewildered doctors” and “complete and miraculous recoveries. Cancer “erased”; AIDS “halted”; Alzheimer’s “reversed.” People with shingles “healed overnight.” Double-blind randomized tests on 10 children with third-degree burns healed in record time. A child born basically a vegetable who, within three months of treatment, could feed himself and talk.

Animals were his specialty. Sauvage cured Alpha, the European TV star rescue dog, who had a tumor on his thyroid and was going blind. He saved a race-horse with unspecified health problems and hundreds of chickens on an industrial farm dying from a killer virus.

He hatched grand plans for America. “I wanted to make amazing experiments,” he said, “just enough to rock the boat of the scientific establishment. Then when everybody was ready to see me as the

messiah or whatever, I would pick randomly 12 children and teach them to do what I do, just to prove that I’m one of many, that everyone has the possibility within them to be a miracle worker. I would create a wave of healing.”

Meanwhile, however, in 1995, Sauvage’s asylum claim was denied by the INS, a decision that he appealed. Immediately after this INS decision, Mitterand’s French government organized a trial against Sauvage, the TV show host and producer, and a dozen people who had worked with Sauvage five years earlier. To Sauvage, who was not there, the court was required to issue a mandatory conviction for being “in absentia” for the same charges that the US Extradition Judge Moskowitz had earlier dismissed as NOT a crime in the US. They fined him the equivalent of about \$240,000. All the others at this trial received suspended sentences. Five years later, in March 2001, that French “in absentia conviction” against Sauvage expired and, according to French law, was removed from his record. Shortly after that, in Nov. 2001, while his asylum claims were still pending in appeals, INS agents unlawfully deported him to France where there were no longer any charges or convictions against him, Mitterand was dead, and Sauvage was welcomed at the airport as a hero by the Paris chief of police.

His supporters have documents that say there were irregularities, and that contrary to INS claims, he had not in fact exhausted his appeals. They also point out that he has a new American wife and a 6-month-old baby here. But once deported, it’s much harder to return.

And in fact, he’s not sure he wants to come back. For all the talk of persecution, Sauvage’s biggest problem right now is an identity crisis.

“When I got to Europe, I was expecting to be abducted,” he said. “But [the Europeans] were extremely deferential and friendly, much more than the Americans.”

So where does that leave him?

“I am very confused. Am I American? Breton?” said Sauvage. “Who are my friends.”