
July 1982 "BASIS", newsletter of the Bay Area Skeptics

Bay Area Skeptics Information Sheet

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Editor: Bob Steiner Publisher: Dan Byrd

Bay Area Skeptics is the first local chapter of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP)

REACTION

"Thank you for sending us the first issue of `BASIS'.
Congratulations." Paul Kurtz, Chairman, CSICOP.

"Got your `BASIS' today -- dee-lighted!" Michael McCarthy.

"I would be happy to belong to the new organization known as the
Bay Area Skeptics." Lawrence A. William, M.D.

"I'd be glad to be a Scientific Consultant to BAS." Andy Neher.

"I do think B.A.S. is an excellent idea...." Andrew Fraknoi.

"I would be delighted to be considered as a scientific consultant
to the Bay Area Skeptics." Richard L. Goode, M.D.

"I am looking forward to working with the Bay Area Skeptics." Ray
Hyman.

"I will be more than happy to contribute. I have some energy and
time to put into this area...." William A. McConnell.

These are just some of the examples of the reactions to the
founding of Bay Area Skeptics. If I were to simply list the
credentials of the above people, there would be little room for
anything else in this newsletter.

The reaction has been good, considerable, and is still expanding.

A "TRUE BELIEVER" SPEAKS

At a party recently, I gave a "demonstration of ESP." At the
conclusion, I told them that it was all in fun, and was all done
by trickery.

One woman DEMANDED: "How do you know you do it by trickery?"

BAS FOUNDING PARTY

by Robert Sheaffer

The first organizational meeting and social bash of the Bay Area Skeptics was held in Bob Steiner's home on the evening of June 26 (as announced in the first "BASIS"). Before the partying started, the Directors held a brief meeting. No permanent editor for "BASIS" stepped forward. Bob Steiner will continue to edit the newsletter on a temporary basis (pun intended). The Directors were also informed that \$135 had been contributed thus far. (The money will be used for stationery, copying, mailing, etc.) The Charter of BAS was discussed. After discussion, the Board voted to adopt the Charter as is. (Anyone wishing to receive a copy of the Charter, send a SASE to me.) The business meeting was then adjourned, and the partying started!

At the party was good food, good fun, and best of all, stimulating conversation of a very intelligent kind. Among those in attendance were Board members Jerome, Sampson, Sandbek, Sheaffer, and Steiner; psychologist Ray Hyman, one of the founding Fellows of CSICOP; Jack Patterson, Professor of Engineering at Iowa State University; inventor Ridgway Banks, authority on nitinol; chemist Kenneth Bomben; astronomer Donald Goldsmith; psychologist William McConnell; writer Michael McCarthy; magician Charles Nyquist; "Chronicle" reporter Michael Robertson; and many others too numerous to mention (or whose names disappeared into the Bermuda Triangle after the first few drinks). My apologies to anyone who might feel slighted.

Bob Steiner demonstrated his amazing psychic abilities to all assembled by doing such paranormal feats as psychically determining the identity of several freely-chosen cards, precognitively identifying a sentence from a newspaper article that had not yet been selected, and psychokinetically transporting a silk handkerchief into a parallel universe. The audience was vastly amused, but still not convinced that any of it was real. Then Terry Sandbek performed psychic feats, including telepathically discovering the identity of a card selected by Lawrence Jerome. My turn came, and I telepathically transmitted to my wife, who was in another room, the identity of a card known only to the people in this room. By this time, the audience was QUITE sure that it was all just a trick -- but what do you expect from a bunch of skeptics?

[Ed. note. The above was all in fun and was all tricks. No one has permission to quote any of the above without also quoting this Editor's note.

ARE YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TAX DEDUCTIBLE? (REVISITED)

The research is completed; the filing remains to be done.

Everything appears to be completely in order; it seems clear that, after we file a batch of papers with the IRS, we shall be approved as a recognized subordinate of CSICOP.

Stay tuned.

H.A.N.D.

THE SACRAMENTO SCENE

by Terence J. Sandbek, Ph.D.

Although Sacramento may not have the emotional appeal of San Francisco or Los Angeles in the minds of people when they think of California, it has symbolic significance by virtue of being the state capitol. Nevertheless, it shares with its bigger sisters the dubious distinction of being a hotbed of distorted thinking on paranormal events. This strange attraction to the irrational is best seen from the vantage of the city's talk shows. With two local radio stations competing for people's attention, audience response can vary from apathetic to frenetic. Many of the state's political leaders appear on the programs with interesting and timely topics. The hosts and hostesses of the talk shows also talk with famous people across the United States by way of radio conversations.

Yet, there is no greater response from the local populace than when a self-proclaimed psychic comes on. Generally, the switchboards light up as soon as their presence is announced. With this kind of response, is it any wonder that the media (need we be reminded that these stations are profit-making ventures?) so whole-heartedly promote their appearance before the public? The point here is not to attack the media, but to point out the tremendous acceptance of psychics and their ilk in this area.

In our next column, we will share with you an experience that Bob Steiner and I had posing as psychics on several of these Sacramento talk shows.

SCIENTIFIC CONSULTANTS

by Robert Sheaffer

The following people have joined BAS as scientific consultants thus far:

- Kenneth D. Bomben, Ph.D., chemist at U.C. Berkeley.
- William Cromack, M.D., San Mateo, psychiatrist.
- Donald Goldsmith, Ph.D., Berkeley, astronomer, textbook author.
- Ray Hyman, Ph.D., psychologist, Stanford University.

- Ronald Hipschmann, Ph.D., educator, The Exploratorium, San Francisco.
- Michael McCarthy, San Lorenzo, science writer.
- William McConnell, Ph.D., psychologist, Community Health Services, San Francisco.
- Andrew Neher, psychologist, Cabrillo College, Aptos.
- Lawrence A. William, M.D., Mountain View.

This list is by no means complete. There are some people who have been invited to join us, but haven't replied yet. (If that's you, let us hear from you soon!) There are also undoubtedly many fine scientific consultants out there whom we simply haven't met yet. If you think you might be one of those people, please get in touch with us.

"BASIS" MARCHES ON

Thank you, folks, for your support and contributions to "BASIS". You've made editing such a pleasure that my inclination to run away has gone away. Please keep sending things. (Mike, yours will be in the next issue.) (Ken, yours will be in the next issue.)

A special thank you to Dan Byrd, who is handling all aspects of publishing: printing, computer processing of the mailing list, labels, and mailing. Give him a cheer, and if you need such services, give him business.

Opinions expressed in "BASIS" are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of BAS, its board or its advisors.

The above are selected articles from the July, 1982 issue of "BASIS", the monthly publication of Bay Area Skeptics. You can obtain a free sample copy by sending your name and address to BAY AREA SKEPTICS, 4030 Moraga, San Francisco, CA 94122-3928 or by leaving a message on "The Skeptic's Board" BBS (415-648-8944) or on the 415-LA-TRUTH (voice) hotline.

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