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May 1985 "BASIS", newsletter of the Bay Area Skeptics  
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Bay Area Skeptics Information Sheet

Vol. 4, No. 5

Co-editors: Ray Spangenburg and Diane Moser

Skeptical Opportunity

UFOLOGISTS TO MEET IN BAY AREA

by Robert Sheaffer

The National UFO Conference of 1985 will be held in the Bay Area, in Fremont [on May 25, see Calendar]. Some of the most dedicated UFO believers in the country will be there, most of them convinced that UFOs are interplanetary spacecraft, or even something more bizarre still. Skepticism will be rare as formal attire at a nudists' convention. Warning: some of these people don't take kindly to anyone who questions their cherished beliefs. You can practically start a fist fight merely by saying anything good about Phil Klass.

Among the speakers will be Bill Moore, coauthor with Charles Berlitz of two hilarious books: "The Roswell Incident", which claims that a flying saucer crashed in New Mexico in 1947, and that the Air Force confiscated it, including the bodies of dead aliens, now stored in government pickle jars; and "The Philadelphia Experiment", which claims that the U.S. Navy during World War II was able to teleport one of its ships, crew and all, from Philadelphia to Norfolk, and back again. Mr. Moore does not take kindly to skeptics.

Also speaking will be UFO wit James Moseley, who is on friendly terms with believer and skeptic alike (see the story about Moseley in the January issue of "OMNI" Magazine). Moseley reigns as Supreme Commander of this group, and while he has written and said a lot of silly things in his long UFO career, he actually went to the 1983 CSICOP Conference in Buffalo, and pronounced it to be a "cosmic event."

Another speaker will be the Bay Area sponsor for the conference, a young UFOlogist named Kal K. Korff, who has been active in pro-UFO organizations for some time. Korff has authored an expose of the notorious "UFO Contact from the Pleiades" hoax of Billy Meier, which some UFOlogists, including Marcel Vogel here in the Bay Area, have been promoting as real.

I hope to see a lot of Bay Area Skeptics at the UFO Conference. I would suggest that you read up on the skeptical UFO literature if you're planning to attend, especially if you're the kind who likes to challenge these claims. A good place to start is with "UFOs Explained" (Klass), "The UFO Verdict" (Sheaffer), "UFOs & Outer

"Space Mysteries" (Oberg), and "UFOs -- The Public Deceived" (Klass), as well as the UFO-related articles in the back issues of the "Skeptical Inquirer". If you're not familiar with the literature, you won't be able to make a fair evaluation of the statements made by UFOlogists, SOME of which are actually true! (Or at least half-true.) In fact, it's a good idea to brush up on the skeptical UFO literature even if you won't be going to Conference, so that you'll be better able to evaluate such claims wherever they arise.

More on Targ and Harary  
PSI AND NEWCOMB'S PARADOX  
by Mark Hodes

## I. THE PARADOX

Paradox has sometimes played a decisive role in the history of science and mathematics. A paradox is an argument whose conclusion is for some fundamental reason unacceptable, but whose premises apparently are true and whose reasoning apparently is valid. Examples are Russell's paradox, which caused mathematicians to discard naive set theory, earlier regarded as the foundation of mathematics; Stein's paradox in statistics, which argues that the mean of a random sample need not be an unbiased estimator of the mean of the population from which the sample is drawn; Arrow's paradox concerning anomalies in utility theory; the Einstein Podolsky Rosen paradox with which Einstein challenged the completeness of quantum theory; and the reversibility paradoxes in thermodynamics. Paradoxes are useful because they force critical examination of one's premises, one's modes of reasoning, and the sources of one's biases against peculiar conclusions. Also they are amusing.

Now for Newcomb's paradox. Suppose that a neurophysiologist cum computer scientist has developed a device which scans a person's brain and then predicts which decision the person will make given a well-defined binary choice, say whether or not to order anchovies on his pizza. Suppose the machine is reliable but not perfect, say 80% accurate. The machine does NOT read minds to reveal decisions which have already been reached but not reported. It predicts which decision will be made after the person has been given the choice, but before the decision is reached.

Imagine that you are a subject in an experiment using this machine. The experimenter presents you with two boxes, one transparent, one opaque. Ten thousand dollars is placed in the transparent box. The opaque box will contain either \$1,000,000 or nothing.

You may choose to take either (read carefully now!):

1. the contents of the opaque box, or
2. the contents of BOTH boxes.

The experimenter tells you truthfully that if the machine predicts

that you will decide to take the opaque only, then he will place \$1,000,000 in it. Otherwise the opaque box will remain empty. So the sequence of events is:

1. You are told the conditions of choice, including how the contents of the opaque box are determined and the machine's track record for reliability (80%).
2. The machine scans your brain.
3. The experimenter reads the machine and puts \$1,000,000 in the opaque box if and only if the machine predicts you will take the opaque only.
4. You reach a decision.
5. You report your decision and collect your payoff, if any.

Should you decide to take the contents of both boxes or of the opaque box only?

#### BIRD IN THE HAND (BITH):

The naive argument for taking both

If the experimenter has put \$1,000,000 in the opaque box, then it's already there, and will still be there if you choose to take both boxes. So take both, and you will at least get \$10,000 if the opaque box is empty.

#### A BUSINESS DECISION (ABD):

The naive argument for opaque only

By simple probabilities your expected payoff for taking both is

$$(\$10,000)(100\%) + (\$1,000,000)(20\%) = \$210,000.$$

and for taking the opaque only is

$$(\$10,000)(0\%) + (\$1,000,000)(80\%) = \$800,000.$$

So the rational choice is to take the opaque only. If the \$10,000 minimum payoff is too attractive to you, modify the amounts so that you would agree that the larger expectation value is more attractive. The argument still works. If you believe it is unrealistic to suppose such high machine accuracy, lower the machine's reliability and increase the disparity in money amounts. The argument still works.

What's wrong with the BIRD IN THE HAND? You are betting against the odds. The machine's track record makes it a sucker bet to take both boxes. If you, as any scientist must, provisionally accept the premise that nature is orderly, experiments are repeatable, and the machine's past performance is a rational basis for predicting its later performance *ceteris paribus*, then you should prefer to take the opaque only.

What's wrong with a BUSINESS DECISION? By choosing to take the opaque only you regard yourself as having the ability to influence the contents *post hoc*, i.e., after the experimenter has acted. Be sure you understand this point -- it is crucial to all that follows. Choosing the opaque only implies the very suspect belief

in backward causation. [The physicists in the audience are encouraged to assume that the space-time events of the experimenter's action and your deciding are space-like separated.] Both the BIRD IN THE HAND and A BUSINESS DECISION are apparently untenable!

What are we to make of this? I regard Newcomb's paradox as a *reductio ad absurdum* argument for the impossibility in principle of constructing such a machine. But why a machine? If a psychic were to claim the ability we've assigned to the machine, couldn't the same experiment be run?

## II. PSYCHICS AND DECISION MAKERS

For verisimilitude let us consider a psychic whose accuracy is some small increment above chance results. By biasing the payoffs sufficiently we can produce the same dilemma. Suppose that the psychic is right about your future binary decisions 51% of the time, that the transparent box holds \$10 and the opaque possibly \$1,000. Then the expected payoff for taking both is:

$$(\$10)(100\%) + (\$1,000)(49\%) = \$500$$

and for taking the opaque only is:

$$(\$10)(0\%) + (\$1,000)(51\%) = \$510.$$

As before, BITH says take both; ABD says take the opaque only. Now we can regard the paradox not as indicating the impossibility of constructing the machine, but the impossibility of possessing such a psychic ability.

Russell Targ and Keith Harary (see References), psi researchers, have claimed the ability to predict price fluctuations of precious metals. They base their predictions not on economic fundamentals such as factors affecting the supply of the commodity in question or the demand by industrial users. Nor do Targ and Harary base their predictions on technical factors such as trends in moving averages, the distribution of option contracts or of short positions. Instead they claim access by associative remote viewing (ARV) to future reports of the price changes.

But these short term fluctuations result from the decisions of individual investors. Therefore, Targ and Harary are claiming an ability similar to that of our hypothetical machine, but stronger. In effect they are predicting decisions without the benefit of our convenient fiction of a brain scan or other physical access to the decision makers.

Let us assume for the moment that Targ and Harary have the ability they claim and that they are 80% accurate. Then it would be possible for a decision maker to enter into a contract with Targ and Harary in which the decision maker's payoff would depend on the prediction itself.

Suppose I hold listed call options, the contractual right to buy on a commodities exchange, 10,000 ounces of gold at \$300 per ounce on

or before May 1, 1985. I enter into the following agreement with Targ and Harary. On May 2, 1985, Targ will hand me an envelope (the opaque box). If today April 1 (no snickers, please) Harary ARV "sees" that on May 1 gold will close on or below \$250 per ounce, Targ will place \$1,000,000 in the envelope. Otherwise it will be empty. Let us further suppose that at midday May 1, the day my options will expire, gold is selling for \$310 per ounce. What action should I take?

If I exercise my options, buying at \$300, then immediately reselling at \$310, I will realize a cash profit of \$100,000 less commissions. This profit corresponds to the contents of the transparent box. The market price of gold may close on or below \$250 later in the day (a negligible probability) or Harary may have wrongly predicted it would close on or below \$250 (on hypothesis, a 20% chance). Therefore, my expected payoff, disregarding commissions, is given by

$$(\$100,000)(100\%) + (\$1,000,000)(20\%) = \$300,000$$

ABD: I can choose to exercise my options to purchase at \$300 and then near the close of market offer my gold for sale at \$250 per ounce! This will ensure that the closing price will be \$250 and I will be accepting a cash loss of \$500,000 plus commissions.

Now if Harary is correct (on hypothesis, an 80% chance), I will collect the \$1,000,000 from Targ. Therefore, my expected payoff, disregarding commissions, is given by

$$(-\$500,000)(100\%) + (\$1,000,000)(80\%) = \$300,000$$

With the numbers I've selected, the expectations match. So, if we let Targ offer a bit more than \$1,000,000, or if we let Harary be a bit more reliable, or if we raise the trigger price from \$250 to say \$260, then the paradox arises exactly as before.

At this point allow me to refresh your memory as to why the situation is paradoxical. Targ has acted as of April 1. My decision to accept a \$500,000 loss is based upon my belief that on May 1 I can influence Targ's action on April 1. On the other hand, if I grab my \$100,000 profit and run, I seem to be flying in the face of adverse odds.

If you feel I'm too generous in letting Harary be 80% accurate, remember that even if we assume Harary is only very slightly better than chance we can generate the paradox by increasing Targ's generosity or by decreasing my available bird in hand profit. If you feel the situation is unrealistic because Targ would never jeopardize \$1,000,000 as described, then suppose that I have prepaid a negotiated amount, say \$300,000, to Targ for the opportunity to play the game.

In conclusion, one can deduce the possibility of creating Newcomb's paradox in the real world if Targ and Harary have the ability they claim. Therefore, by the reductio ad absurdum cited in Section I, they cannot have that ability.

## REFERENCES

=> Brier, Bob and Schmidt-Raghavan, Maithili "Precognition and the Paradoxes of Causality" in "Philosophy of Science and the Occult", Patrick Grim (ed.), State University of New York Press, Albany, 1982. This article presents the view opposing mine: "We believe that it is possible for causes to come after their effects and that this backward causation may help explain how precognition works." (pg. 208)

=> Hodes, Mark "A Conversation with Russell Targ" in "BASIS" Vol. 4, No. 3, March 1985.

=> Hyman, Ray "Outracing the Evidence: The Muddled `Mind Race'" in "The Skeptical Inquirer" Vol. IX, No. 2, Winter 1984-85.

=> Marks, David and Kammann, Richard "The Psychology of the Psychic", Prometheus Books, Buffalo, 1980.

=> Targ, Russell, and Harary, Keith "The Mind Race", Villard Books, New York, 1984.

## TARG REPLIES

Russell Targ replied in a conversation with Mark Hodes that the paradox described in the article is certainly weaker than an outright contradiction. The three irreconcilable elements are:

1. Bayesian analysis (the usual interpretation and use of probabilities),
2. the impossibility of backward causation, and precognition.

The irreconcilability of the three may be only apparent, he says, due to our currently limited understanding. Targ asserts that the extremely robust phenomenology of precognition strongly suggests that precognition should not be the element discarded to resolve the paradox.

["As ye seek, so shall ye find." -- Eds.]

## EDITOR'S CORNER

by Ray Spangenburg

It happened in the late 50s. I was a young writer and journalist in Buffalo, N.Y, looking for a good light-weight story. It showed up in my mailbox one day, an invitation to a lecture on UFOs sponsored by a group called UNDERSTANDING INC., an organization promoting "understanding of the UFO phenomenon."

For a young cynical writer it was a natural, a circus, every young

writer's favorite target, a chance to poke fun at all the nonsense the human mind is capable of deceiving itself with. It was a time of high profile for that sort of thing -- paranoia, sociologists tell us, was in the air in those early Cold War days, and bomb shelters were being dug and skies were being watched. Ken Tobey and his group of dedicated flyboys were in Alaska, fighting off the rampaging bad temper of James Arness doing his bit as "THE THING," and giant ants were invading the Los Angeles drainage system. That was the kind of time it was.

It was mid-winter, not a good time for a crowd, but a good crowd showed up. The faces in the audience were mostly middle-aged, middle-class, and anxious. Luke Skywalker hadn't arrived on the scene yet, and there were few young people present. Youthful rebellion and devotion to alternate life-styles was pretty much confined in those days to the coffee house beat and bongo of the Kerouac generation. That night the worried and restless audience had left warm neat homes, and the next morning they would return to solid, respectable jobs. In short they were the everyday people who kept the wheels moving in the 50s, nodding polite hellos and goodbyes, and were as solidly in the mainstream of American tradition as the proverbial Mom's apple pie.

But that night they were serious and they were uneasy. They came because they were afraid that there was something going on that they should know about, something they were told that the government was keeping from them, something that maybe scientists were involved in, and maybe Russia knew about. Because they felt there was something cold creeping around the edges of their lives, something real or unreal, but something they wanted to understand.

Needless to say, there was very little "understanding" to be offered that night. After a spiel by a less-than-convincing saucer abductee, who claimed to have been picked up at the White Sands proving grounds and whisked off for an interplanetary joy-ride, came a question-and-answer session carefully controlled by a couple of obvious stooges in the audience, followed by a plea for money to be put into a "scientific fund" that would continue the crusading work of UNDERSTANDING, INC., in getting to the bottom of the UFO mystery and making contact with whoever was out there.

It was a sad little affair. An obvious cheap con that started losing its audience half way through the proceedings, and probably took in less cash than was put out for the rental of the hall. But the circus never materialized. Maybe it was bad orchestration, the too bored attitudes of the speakers or the listless presentation of the alleged victim and his obviously too well rehearsed speech.

After about 20 minutes, the first signs of restlessness began to show, a few of the women in the audience began to cough uncomfortably, and some of the men began to look around as if they were suddenly afraid to be caught in attendance. The seats began to empty.

Strangely though, there was little anger or disappointment in those faces as one by one they began to drift away quietly out the doors. Only a kind of half-hearted acceptance. Faces that said, all right the guy was a con, that was obvious. But he didn't have to be. It might have been legit. It might have been someone who knew maybe a little more about what was going on. Maybe just someone who might have made a little sense of the whole thing. Someone who could have understood, who could have given some kind of answer about those things up there. Who could have explained something. Or tried to. Anything.

By the end of the presentation only about a third of the audience was left.

I wrote my first by-lined news piece about that night.

I have been ashamed of it ever since.

It was clever, and it was scathing. I tore into the con and I tore into the mark. The bright young journalist laughing up my sleeve at the absurdities that could be swallowed whole by the gullible and less sophisticated. H.L Mencken and P.T Barnum had taught me all that I needed to know about human nature. There was a sucker born every minute all right, and three con men to take him. The world was full of wolves and sheep. And floating above it all, winking and dropping an occasional all knowing smirk, secure in superiority, guess who.

Maybe I can excuse it now because I was young. But it never really registered on me that night, watching those faces change from hope to disbelief and finally to resignation that the sheep were human. The true believers would come later, the totally bewildered, desperately grasping whatever answers might be thrown to them, but that night, in that crowd, there were no true believers no gullible dupes, foaming fanatics, or empty headed "booboisie," as Mencken called them, just human beings -- frightened, uneasy, looking for answers. Maybe they were looking in the wrong places and maybe they were hoping for it all to be a little too easy, a little too undemanding, a little simpler than the real world actually was. But looking, needing, hoping for a little "understanding."

It was an understanding that a young hot-shot writer wasn't ready to give. Forgetting that thin line between skepticism and cynicism I too had opted for the easy way, the quick put-down, the condescending superiority of the "insider." The rabble were illiterate dupes, not privy to the tricks of the trade, bereft of all that superior knowledge shared in common by wolves and enlightened shepherds, they were ripe for the picking, and how we picked them. The masters of the con took their money with lies and I took their self respect with ridicule. The old double play. It was the usual order of things. No one really expected the meek to inherit the earth.

Except for one small matter.

They didn't buy it that night. It was cheap, but it wasn't any good. The circus turned out to be a shoddy carnival and "UNDERSTANDING, INC." didn't make any converts.

My piece didn't either.

Maybe somebody else did.

## BAS SUPPORTER SCOLDS STANFORD DAILY

[On March 15th the "Stanford Daily" published an article by staff writer Niko Schiff on the most recent "work" of Russell Targ and Keith Harary of Delphi Associates, "a private research group based in San Mateo" and involved in "investigating the group of phenomena such as clairvoyance, precognition and telepathy that falls into the category of anomalous phenomena." In response to this article, Jean-Luc Bonnetain, of Stanford, sent the following letter to the "Daily". We think it bears repeating here:]

The article entitled "Research supports psychic phenomena," published in your March 13 issue under the heading "Science," would probably have benefitted from a more critical attitude from its author. Such claims as those made by Mr. Targ and Mr. Harary are, to say the least, in contradiction with the current status of the science of physics; given the stakes, a responsible attitude would be to listen to the various groups of people who have studied those claims and so far have concluded that the evidence presented was questionable. Mustering all my psychic powers, I still cannot find any hint in the article that Niko Schiff has tried to get a balancing opinion from someone skeptical about the claims reported in the article. I would suggest that Niko Schiff call a group named "The Bay Area Skeptics," which is a local chapter of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP).

Incidentally, CSICOP had a conference on the Stanford campus in November 1984, and I clearly remember several "Daily" articles about the conference and related matters (which means that some people at the "Stanford Daily" knew about CSICOP and the Bay Area Skeptics; did Niko Schiff talk to them?). One article was about Mr. Robert Steiner who, in his own way, had tried to convey to a group of Stanford students the message that "if you can't imagine how it works, it still does not mean it has to be psychic powers." Mr. Steiner is the Chairman of the Bay Area Skeptics, a certified public accountant as well as a professional magician.

One can reach the group by writing to the Bay Area Skeptics, Box 2384, Martinez, CA 94553, or call a phone number which seems hard to find but easy to remember, namely LA TRUTH (415/528-7884). Another good idea would be to read the "Skeptical Inquirer", published quarterly by CSICOP. I join a recent article by Pr. Ray

Hyman on the book "The Mind Race" by Mr. Targ and Mr. Harary. Needless to say, Pr. Hyman does not agree with the claims made in the book.

The only way I can reconcile this article with the responsible attitude I would like to find in the Stanford Daily is to think that you have predicted -- by means unknown to me yet, but unlikely to be psychic -- the arrival of April Fools' Day, and wanted to beat the competition by publishing your results first. Then, good job; but make sure that your jest is recognized as such.

Until the whole matter is made clear, I cannot even remotely view what kind of service the "Daily" is doing to the Stanford community by publishing such articles without warning the readers of the highly controversial aspect of the claims reported.

Clipped from the "Sunol Enterprise"

THE ENTERPRISE

Wednesday, December 19, 1984, p. 3

SELF-PROFESSED HEALER SAYS QUARTZ CRYSTALS HAVE HEALING POWER

by Lisa Kaufman, staff writer

SUNOL -- Plagued by bad luck, migraine headaches, or an empty wallet?

Sunol resident Dale Walker, a self-professed healer and researcher, claims to have crystallized a solution.

Walker, who last year published his theories and techniques in "The Crystal Book", says the answer to many of life's problems is as near as the neighborhood gem shop.

Four miles down winding Kilkare Road, Walker's 1929 cabin is a virtual rock palace.

Everywhere the glint of quartz crystals meets the eye -- from the hundreds of splintered pieces in boxes, print cases, and large clusters, to the finely crafted silver that hangs around Walker's neck, to the small chunks of clear stone lurking at the bottom of his cat's water dish.

The crystal "healer" is a local product, an alumnus of Fifth Street Elementary School and 1952 graduate of Livermore High School.

His stories include the miraculous-sounding recovery of a Syracuse man in a coma for five months, and dissolving a Rochester woman's diagnosed kidney stone without a trace.

He can't clinically verify the medical results, but Walker says he is willing to work with any scientific or medical group with the funding and equipment "to either prove or disprove what I say".

In the last decade, he says, more than 8,000 students in five states have paid hard cash to learn Walker's crystal techniques. A large, stocky man with a casual and sincere style, Walker, 49, supports himself equally by lecturing and selling crystal jewelry with the promise of sparkling results.

"I don't ask anybody to believe anything that I do. I ask people to be honest skeptics, to say `prove it to me,'" Walker said.

For the hard-headed cynic, here's a test that Walker claims is effective in 9 out of 10 unbiased trials:

"Get a quartz crystal from any rock shop, hold it in your left hand, and place your right hand on any ache or pain. Sit for one-half hour and see for yourself whether you experience any change in the pain," Walker said.

Walker is hesitant to say why crystals work as he claims.

"Whys aren't really necessary," he said. "They satisfy the logical brain."

**GOOD LUCK IN YOUR MOVE, RANDI!**

by Bob Steiner

Good luck in your move, Randi. Hope you'll be happy there. I am sure you will be effective in your spreading of common sense and rationality, as you will be where'er you are.

All the best.

**SAVE THOSE MOLECULES!**

From the "New York Times" 23 Sept. 84

Clipped by Mark McDermid, Tamal

Doctor's License is Revoked for Diagnosis of Evil Spirits  
INDIANAPOLIS, Sept. 22 (UPI) -- A physician has been stripped of her license for diagnosing patients as possessed by "demons and evil spirits" and treating them with excessive amounts of controlled drugs.

The Indiana Medical Licensing Board on Thursday revoked the license of Dr. Ruth Bailey, 36 years old, of Pendleton, after hearing evidence that while practicing in Lapel, Ind., she diagnosed a demonic possession and prescribed an addictive painkiller.

"Her diagnosis was that I was possessed by many demons, including one like an octopus with long tentacles that went into my body's molecular structure", Lucia Lively, a former patient, testified.

She said Dr. Bailey treated her by smearing oil in the shape of crosses on the office doors and windows, then grasping her chin and staring at her while praying for two hours.

### GET RID OF THOSE NASTY MOLECULES!

From Brochure on "E.T.M. Training Magnets"  
Submitted by Molly Bishop, Duncan Mills

For a quarter of a century, the Japanese have realised that wearing magnets has made them feel better. Today, over twenty million Japanese wear magnets. For years, the Russians used magnets as a training aid for their athletes. Swedish and German scientists have also discovered the value of magnetism in physical training.

In the 1960s, Professor Ivan Troeng, of Sweden, began his research into magnetism. He has developed magnets for many different purposes. A set of training magnets (a pendant, two wrist discs, and two ankle discs) has been proven to increase the oxygen intake up to 38 percent while lowering the working pulse up to 15 percent.

"All matter in our world, including the human body, is made up of atoms which group together in molecules or lumps, thus diminishing the capacity of the circulatory system to perform at its best.... When the bloodstream passes A MAGNETIC FIELD OF A SPECIAL STRENGTH, it breaks the chains or groupings apart. This allows more oxygen and cell-building nutrients to be brought into the system, and more carbon dioxide and waste matter to be carried away from the body tissue."

Professor Ivan Troeng  
Biomagnetic Research Center  
Sweden

"Soothsayers make a better living than truthsayers."

-- Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (submitted by Greg Morris)

### COINCIDENCE??

Photo by Mark Plummer (Chairman, Australian Skeptics), taken between Santa Cruz and Santa Barbara

[Note for the electronic edition: The snapshot in question shows a foreign auto repair shop called "Hummbug". Behind is an adjoining establishment's sign: "Palmist".]

### FROM THE CHAIR

by Bob Steiner

Where do I begin? It feels like New Year's Eve -- looking back with a tinge of sadness at the joys and events of the past, and looking forward with excitement to the prospects of the future.

THANK YOU MICHAEL McCARTHY!

Michael McCarthy has been a super editor of BASIS for these past years. He stepped in for the last issue in 1982, and has been turning out masterpieces every month since.

Knowledgeable about the issues, an expert at computers, and awesome in his ability to zero right in on the key issues of any topic under discussion, his skill has been observable from his pen, uh, computer, as well as in his oral presentations.

Mike McCarthy has had people throughout the world aware of Bay Area Skeptics, and looking forward to each issue. Something new, something different, something exciting in every issue, and always thoughtful.

Now Mike has decided to turn over the editing to another.

Mike will continue to be active in BAS, will continue to write for BASIS, and will remain as an active member of the Board.

Mike's contribution to BAS has been enormous, and the results have been beneficial to our organization, and to orderly thinking in general.

THANK YOU MICHAEL McCARTHY!

THANK YOU WAYNE HOWARD!

Wayne has been our volunteer computer typesetter for about a year. Skilled in his craft his insight into the issues we address has been quite helpful, and well beyond the call of duty for a professional typesetter -- most especially for a volunteer professional typesetter.

Thank you so much for your help, Wayne. We all wish you the best of health in your pursuits from here on.

Do please stay in touch.

THANK YOU WAYNE HOWARD!

THANK YOU TO SOME SPECIAL PEOPLE WHO VOLUNTEERED!

It was gratifying, and to my mind an indication of the strength of Bay Area Skeptics that Mike McCarthy's call for a new editor did not go unanswered. As a matter of fact, we had multiple answers.

Yes, several people volunteered to step in -- offers varying from accepting the position to working to fill the gap until we found an editor.

Everybody who volunteered is eminently qualified, and I am sure would have done a fine job. What I feared would be a chasm left by the fact that Mike was moving turned into what I call "a good problem." We had to choose from among several extraordinarily qualified people.

Let me tell you, folks -- and Mike will vouch for this -- it was no easy job to choose from those who volunteered. Why, we barely had time to push the panic button after Mike's call for a replacement.

Please, you folks, do not disappear. Remain active, and please support the new editors with articles. Your writing skills are considerable. Please sprinkle a bit of them into BASIS.

THANK YOU, YOU SPECIAL PEOPLE WHO VOLUNTEERED!

WELCOME RAYMOND SPANGENBURG AND DIANE MOSER!

A hearty welcome to the new editors of "BASIS": Ray Spangenburg and Diane Moser.

Long-time supporters of The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) and Bay Area Skeptics, Ray and Diane have been a team in writing for some time. Skilled professional writers in science and technology, they have special warm feeling for the views of skeptics.

Would you like to hear about their several computer books? About their published work explaining the nonsense of the Bermuda Triangle? About their upcoming article to be published in The Skeptical Inquirer? Are you interested in their views on the various areas we address? Well, read on, friends. We are indeed fortunate to have Ray and Diane stepping into the position of Editor of "BASIS".

Please support them with your thoughts, including letters to the editor, articles, and (forgive me) good vibes.

WELCOME, RAY AND DIANE!

THANK YOU FOR ACCEPTING THE POSITION. AND MUCH LUCK TO YOU.

We survived it, folks. The show will go on. Be sure to let Mike, Wayne, Ray, and Diane know that you appreciate what they did are doing, and will do.

Onward!

AND ABRA-CADABRA IT'S SET!

Like magic, yet another volunteer has stepped into the picture since Bob Steiner wrote "From the Chair," elsewhere in this issue. Computer typesetting professional Dave Kilbridge of Abra Type in Palo Alto gallantly answered our call for help and volunteered to typeset "BASIS" at a rate far below the going price.

THANK YOU DAVE KILBRIDGE!

## MEETING IN THE WOODS COLD WINDS FAIL TO SUBDUE SKEPTICS

So OK, it was cold and damp. Did you really expect that to stop the intrepid group of skeptics and supporters huddled around the campfire at Tilden Park from having fun?

Food, drink, and excellent conversation warmed our hearts and a spirited game of Simon Says warmed our toes. Simon Says?! Yep, and who else but Robert Steiner could get so many cantankerously individual people hopping up and down in unison? Try that one, Uri!

Let's try it again next year, gang.

## Contest WHY DID YOU BECOME SKEPTICAL?

By now you've no doubt caught on to the fact that "BASIS" has a couple of new editors. To spice things up a bit and keeping with the best (or worst) journalistic tradition, let us announce a contest! For the best articles (250 words or less) with the theme "why I became a skeptic" we will award by-lined publication in BASIS. Come on, that's reward enough! What do you want James Randi's autograph? Let's get those letters and postcards coming in folks. What made you, you?!

"Doubt is the beginning of wisdom." -- Clarence Darrow

## LETTERS TO BAS Klass Praise

Dear Robert (Bob) Steiner & Robert Sheaffer:

It is past midnight, and I don't have time to read "Aviation Week", but I have just finished reading "BASIS" and must write.

I continue to be mightily impressed with the fine job that the Bay

Area Skeptics are doing -- the fine quality of your publication (with the most interesting article by Mark Hodes) and with your public lectures, which sound fascinating.

And what pride you must, justifiably, feel as you see the spread of your idea to other cities and areas -- providing a true, and effective, "grass-roots" skeptics movement.

Just as I never dreamed in my fondest hopes that CSICOP would achieve the stature it has in less than a decade, I never imagined the seed that you planted in BAS would mushroom as rapidly as it has.

I am sure that BAS has been a devouring drain on your personal time.

But when the final story on the Skeptics Movement is written -- decades or perhaps a century hence, your own role will surely rate equal credit with those of the original founders of CSICOP.

Keep up the fine work.

Cordially, Phil Klass

[Phil Klass is a Fellow of CSICOP, the author of several books on UFOs, and Senior Editor Avionics of "Aviation Week".]

"BASIS"

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Circulation: Paul Giles  
Distribution: Yves Barbero

BAS CALENDAR: MAY

=> MAY 23, THURSDAY, UFO Believers Speak to BAS. We are honored that two of the key participants in the National UFO Conference (see next item) have agreed to speak to us. James Moseley, who has been active in UFOlogy for over 30 years, and was the subject of the "UFO Update" story in the January issue of OMNI Magazine, has known all of the classic "contactees" such as George Adamski, George Van Tassel, Howard Menger, and many others who "went" to Venus, Mars, the moon, etc.

Moseley, who confesses he is now "teetering on the very edge of the dreadful abyss of skepticism," will tell us chapters of UFO history which have never appeared in print. Kal Korff, a young Bay Area UFOlogist who stands farther from the Abyss than Moseley, will tell

us about some of the most significant cases he has researched. At 7:30 pm at the Campbell Public Library, 70 N. Central Ave., Campbell, CA. Free.

=> MAY 25, SATURDAY, THE 1985 NATIONAL UFO CONFERENCE will be held in Fremont, California, this year, a believers event skeptics may enjoy attending. Among the speakers will be Moseley and Korff (see above and "UFOlogists to Meet in Bay Area"), and Bill Moore, coauthor of "The Roswell Incident", who claims that dead space aliens are hidden in Air Force pickle jars (see also "UFOlogists..."). At the John F. Kennedy High School, Fremont, cost is \$4.00.

=> JUNE 12, WEDNESDAY, PANEL DISCUSSION ON MEDICAL FRAUD. Have questions about how to distinguish between medical sense and nonsense? About nutritional fads like megavitamins, vitamin C? About holistic medicine, acupuncture? About the whole range of medical quackery? Panelists Wallace Sampson, M.D.; Phyllis Ullman, nutritionist; Charles Finney, from San Mateo County D.A.'s Fraud Unit; and Robert Steiner will discuss the gamut of medical fraud issues at the June BAS meeting. Steiner will also demonstrate the illusion of psychic surgery. Mark Hodes moderating. 7:30 pm, at Lucille M. Nixon Elementary School Auditorium, 1711 Stanford Avenue, Palo Alto.

COMING: Watch for coming events in the "BASIS" CALENDAR! Or call LA TRUTH for up-to-the-minute details on meetings, events, etc.

DEADLINE for the June issue is May 15; send all materials for publication to THE EDITOR and all other business to BAY AREA SKEPTICS, both at Box 2384, Martinez, CA 94553.

WARNING: We STRONGLY RECOMMEND that you check our LA TRUTH skeptics' hotline (415-528-7884) shortly before attending any Calendar activity to see if there have been any changes since this Calendar went to press. Thanks!

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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 May, 1985 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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