

Bay Area Skeptics Information Sheet
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Editor: Kent Harker

HEALTHFUL `HEALTH FOODS'?

Most skeptics are a little wrangled when we see the abuse of the term "natural," and "health food" bandied about. Do the claims match up to the reality? This article first appeared in the July issue of "Diet Nutrition Newsletter" of Tufts University.

Health food stores rang up close to \$2 billion in sales last year, which is somewhat surprising considering that more and more busy families have come to depend on large supermarkets that stock everything from fresh baked items to paper goods, thereby allowing them to do all their shopping at once. Why is it that an increasing number of people appear to be going out of their way to patronize the health food market? Do they know something supermarket shoppers don't?

To find out, we walked up and down the aisles of three of the Boston area's most popular health food stores and compared the foods on their shelves with those in regular supermarkets. At first glance, some of the eye-catching claims on many of the health food store products -- "all natural," "no refined sugar," and "no preservatives," for instance -- made it appear as if those items are different if not better for you than similar items in more typical grocery stores.

But alas, the fine print revealed a different story.

PORING OVER PRODUCT CLAIMS

The label on a bottle of "natural catsup" in one health food emporium we visited, for example, boasts that the product contains "no preservatives or MSG," It sounded impressive enough, but a close look at the label on a bottle of Heinz ketchup revealed that it doesn't contain any preservatives or MSG either. In fact, the two products are made with the same ingredients: tomato paste, vinegar, salt, onion powder, spices, and natural flavoring.

The only difference is in the sweetener used. Heinz adds corn syrup, while the "natural" brand is sweetened with honey. Both honey and corn syrup are sugars, however, and the nutritional difference between them is too little to mention.

The big trade-off between the two is price. A 14-ounce bottle of

Heinz sold for 79 cents; the same size bottle of the brand in the health food store was going for \$2.29.

It was the same with cereals. One brand at the health food store had "no refined sugar" according to the label, just "the pure goodness of real honey." What the label neglected to point out is that honey is no better for you. When it is the second ingredient on the list, as happens with the cereal in question, there is a good chance plenty of it is in the product.

In the dairy section, the producers of a so-called natural yogurt (what's unnatural yogurt?) cite on the package label their "effort to provide the most healthful . . . product." But their product contains 10 grams of fat in an 8-ounce, 230-calorie serving, or almost 40 percent fat calories. That's more fat than you'll find in some of the supermarket yogurts that make no health claims whatever.

Baby foods aren't immune from questionable claims, either. One brand of baby food in a health food store touts a "nutritious difference your baby can taste and you can trust," but it doesn't disclose just what that difference is. Indeed, that product and a comparable one put out by Gerber are made from the same two ingredients: carrots and water. That the carrots in the "healthful" brand are "lab tested for purity" does not necessarily make them any better than Gerber's because Gerber's, too, tests its baby products for pureness according to that company's consumer information spokesperson. As to price, the 4.5 ounce jar of Gerber's costs less than half the amount of the same size jar of the brand in the health food store.

DOUBTS IN THE SNACK AISLE

Health food stores offer plenty of "goodies," including "natural" potato chips and "sugarless" candy bars. But upon close inspection, the potato chips are fried in fat and laden with salt, just like the brands sold in supermarkets. Granted, the potatoes in the "natural" brand may be fried in sunflower oil, a less-saturated and therefore potentially less artery-clogging fat than the partially hydrogenated oils most supermarket brands contain. But saturated or not, the one-ounce, 150-calorie bag of potato chips still contains 60 percent fat calories, which certainly doesn't qualify it as a "health food."

A high-fiber candy bar described on the packaging as a "low-fat, nutritious" snack is equally misleading. While the little bar does contain 5 grams of dietary fiber, fat makes up more than 35 percent of its calories.

Ounce for ounce, that's more fat than you'll find in a Milky Way bar.

Worse still, the candy's "nectar vanilla yogurt coating" is made with palm kernel oil, which is almost twice as saturated as lard.

The candy bar also contains less than 7 percent of the U.S. recommended daily allowances for all the vitamins and minerals listed on its label. Therefore, why the word nutritious appears on the package is anybody's guess.

None of this is to say that foods in supermarkets never contain less-than-helpful health claims, or that health food stores do not have some products that might be difficult to find in a large

grocery chain. To be sure, most health food emporia stock a wide variety of whole-grain breads and pastas that are sadly missing in many ordinary shopping marts as well as several different kinds of dried legumes. Still, the message is clear: Just because the sign over the door says "health food" is no assurance that the food is truly healthful. You still need to check labels -- and price stickers -- just as you would anywhere else.

CREATIONISM AND THE CURRICULUM

by David Spieker

Opponents of creationism rightly insist that our public schools be resolute in teaching true science. Creationists must not be allowed to force their doctrines into the curriculum. The treatment of biology and geology should reflect what those disciplines contain. To prepare our children well for our technology-dominated world it is vital that their education include a grounding in science. To represent beliefs like creationism as coequal to science would seriously weaken that grounding. Scientific instruction must be both vigorous and genuine if it is to be useful. Children must not simply learn the content of theories like evolution and plate tectonics, but also the process of questioning and experiment by which they were put together. We must not teach that science has no controversies or uncertainties; we should be as guilty of dogmatism as the creationists were we to take that tack. But we must never use open-mindedness as an excuse for not teaching our children the difference between a scientific theory and religious doctrine to which one clings regardless of the evidence.

As a teacher, these are more than just principles to me. They are guides as indispensable as compass and landmarks to an explorer. Our children will never truly understand science and the rational, inquisitive outlook on which it is based if creationism and similar beliefs, such as astrology, are permitted to compromise the scientific curriculum. I do not necessarily object to the teaching of creationism, astrology, etc.; I object only to teachers being required to teach them as SCIENCE. Moreover, by teaching children to distinguish between ideas based on evidence and those that are not we make it much less likely that any of them will succumb to a Von Daniken or

Velikovsky fantasy. To teach children science is, in effect, to inoculate them for life against the virus of pseudoscience. Science can have this value even for first grade and kindergarten-age children. Indeed, the earlier children are exposed to science, the more lasting will be the benefit. I am an excellent example of this: I came of age in the 1970s, when belief in such things as ancient astronauts, Bigfoot, the Bermuda Triangle and, above all, creationism, flourished with a hype seldom known before. Yet an early acquaintance with science saved me from one or another of these enthusiasms.

Although I read much creationist literature throughout the 1970s and 1980s and gave their ideas a fair chance, their whole approach to investigating the physical world seemed to me fundamentally unscientific. My early exposure to science had gotten through to me that the most truly scientific activity is the testing of explanations against data. No explanation should be retained if it has been so tested and been found wanting. All scientific theories have flaws; our job is to find the theories with the fewest flaws. Science can never give us absolute truth but only an approximation of it, just as the quotient of a number divided repeatedly by a larger and larger number (greater than 1) approaches zero. But the creationists do not conduct themselves in this way. On the contrary, they STARTED with their explanation set in stone and ignored or distorted the evidence that did not suit them. One has only to think of the "canopy" theory for explaining the origin of Noah's Flood to understand the creationists' willingness to swallow any absurdity necessary to retain their dogma.

I think it is a fair bet that most of the public that has not been taken in by creationism has had some rather early exposure to science. This is common sense; the more one knows of scientific ideas and methods, the less likely one is to confuse science with pseudoscience -- further reason to push for a forthright science curriculum in our schools.

Mr. Spieker is a graduate of Seattle U. He is teaching in Belmont and doing some free-lance writing (fiction and non-fiction) on the side.

[BAS welcomes John Lattanzio to the Board of Directors. Dr. Lattanzio is an astrophysicist working at Lawrence Berkeley, and he brings to us a wide range of experience -- we will be pleased to learn more of his background next month.]

"EXTRA SENSORY DECEPTION", BY HENRY GORDON
Reviewed by John Lattanzio

Reading this book brings back some fond memories. Henry Gordon and I served together on the Executive Committee of the Ontario Skeptics. One of the highlights of the committee meetings was

hearing Henry tell anecdotes from his colorful career as an arch-skeptic. This book consists of 118 short articles (most are under 2 pages) excerpted from Henry's writings for the "Toronto Star" newspaper in Toronto, Canada. The articles are written in Henry's conversational style, but are nevertheless very informative.

Henry has been contributing to the "Toronto Star" since 1981, and for three years had a weekly column entitled "Debunking" in the Sunday edition. It was quite an achievement to get a regular skeptical column in a major newspaper. (If only all newspapers were so receptive to our message.) Over the years Henry has dealt with many topics, here arranged by broad subject: The Paranormal, Prophecy, Spirits, Superstition, Science, Higher Life, Healing, and Truth. Each collection has its own introduction. In the individual pieces he touches briefly, but authoritatively, on most topics familiar to skeptics. Some relate stories from TV appearances he has made, and these give information and insights not always available from simply watching the program. The section on Superstition is an unexpected treat. Here Henry provides a fascinating history of various beliefs, and explains where many have originated.

You will read about Henry's masquerade as the supposed psychic "Elchonen," and learn how to bend keys a la Uri Geller. You will learn how to improve your aura, and how to be born rich (in a future life, unfortunately). Henry discusses paramnesia, or *deja vu*, and even gives a personality evaluation of the reader! There is also an article on California, providing us with some local fare. As if all this weren't enough, Henry tells us how to beat a lie detector and explains how he discovered that spirits cannot see through brown wrapping paper.

Henry Gordon is well qualified to write on so many subjects. A respected professional magician, he has been involved in both investigating paranormal phenomena and public education for many years. As Randi is to the U.S., so Henry Gordon is to Canada (although both are Canadian-born). He is a Fellow of CSICOP, and recently joined in investigations of both Popoff and R. Roberts alleged healing abilities. This experience makes the section on faith healers in his book particularly interesting.

My criticisms of the book number only two, which is remarkable given the over 200 pages it contains. The main fault is the lack of an index. This is really inexcusable in a book dealing with so many subjects. I hope that future editions will correct this omission, because the utility of the book as a resource would be greatly enhanced. As it stands it can be quite tiresome searching through the book for a favorite article to share with someone (and you will do this, I guarantee!).

In the section dealing with the Nazca lines in Peru, Henry argues that they cannot be landing strips for spacecraft because advanced space vehicles would land vertically, as even our (less

advanced) technology has made possible. Well, this is not clear to me. One could argue that we have advanced from vertical descent to the Space Shuttle, and that this system allows for more controlled movement. But this is a very minor quibble.

In summary, this is a very entertaining book. The writing is informal and friendly; this book should be read slowly and savored little by little. And watch for Henry's next book, "Channelling into the New Age", due out in September.

RAMPARTS

(Ramparts is a regular feature of "BASIS", and your participation is urged. Clip, snip and tear bits of irrationality from your local scene and send them to the Editor. If you want to add some comment with the submission, please do so.)

Hang on to your portfolio, fire your investment broker, and check out Arch Crawford, a stock soothsayer who up until eleven years ago had his ticket with Merrill Lynch. Back then, Arch noticed the "correlation since 1897 of planetary movements and those of the Dow Jones industrials," according to the article in the "Buffalo News". Of course he discovered the 1:1 correlation and promptly started his own consulting firm, "Crawford Perspectives" -- better than "Planetary Perspectives" so as not to tip his hand to others who might want to muscle in on his information source. Consider if you will the number of combinations of "influences" produced by the position of the eight planets and the sun and moon in the twelve constellations. A little combinatorial arithmetic will show there are billions of possibilities, any number of which could be patched together ad hoc to produce almost any "pattern" one desires.

So what's the big deal about another newspaper article on another astrologer? Well, Arch got special notice when "he correctly called the bull market's August apogee and issued a post-crash buy signal in late November." Post-crash buy signal? One wonders what is so stunning about ANY broker's forecast that the market is at a particular high. Where is the forecast (well in advance of the event) of Black Monday?

Of course his overall track record is not listed for the gullible press corps.

Take a standard substance, dissolve it, remove one drop, put that drop in ten gallons of distilled water and swish it around. Extract one drop of this solution and put it in another ten gallons of water and what do you have? Homeopathy. Ten gallons of it. Take a drop of this last solution and put it in the ocean and what do you have? Better homeopathy. Less is better.

This foolishness may have arisen from medieval times when the cure was more dangerous than the affliction: blood-letting, scourging, leeching, and prescribing arsenic.

Popular actress Lindsay Wagner is a strong supporter of homeopathy -- she joins hands with millions who claim to have found relief from chronic conditions with the miracles of vanishingly-small dosages.

The fundamental premise of homeopathy is "like cures like," i.e., the use of extracts of substances which, in higher dosages to otherwise healthy people, would induce symptoms similar to those of the illness being treated. The miniscule dose is supposed to stimulate the body's natural defense mechanisms to fight whatever is causing the symptoms -- a sort of vaccine.

Perhaps the most telling feature of the practice of homeopathy is the diagnostic routine. It revolves around the patient's "perceptions, dreams, recurring thoughts, childhood experiences, habits, aversions, and obsessions." This sounds as much like psychiatric medicine as anything.

What about a mechanism for homeopathy? The practitioners say their remedies work by effecting the "energy" that animates and integrates the body, mind and soul.

While the AMA has been officially silent with regard to homeopathy, CSICOP advisor, Dr. William Jarvis, head of the National Council Against Health Fraud in Loma Linda, makes no bones about it: "Homeopathy is quackery," he said in a press release in the "Buffalo News."

The response of homeopathic physician Dr. Ron Davey: "At least I'm not harming anyone."

The great harm done by omission is as weighty as that done by commission, and the timidity evinced by Dr. Davey's statement is perhaps the reason that many "regular" physicians turn to the practice of homeopathy: their lack of self confidence to prescribe powerful, often invasive procedures in an aggressive campaign against a medical condition. If we come to do battle armed with marshmallows we may feel a sense of security that no one is going to be harmed, but this overlooks the reality that the other side may be packing an Uzi.

The drought is major headlines. And with it comes those intrepid folkloreists, the dowsers and their magic wands in the form of crystal shards dangling from gold chains, plastic "Y" rods, "L" rods, sticks, and "darned near anything else," reports the "San Jose Mercury". The annual dowsing course, taught on the grounds of UC Santa Cruz, revealed the New Age influence on the dowsers:

increased use of crystals and "harmonically-tuned" metals.

Many in the assembly expressed the notion that dowsing "is just an extension of intuition." There is talk of "alpha states" and "altered consciousness." This contrasts sharply with the old age conjecture that the water "vein" gave off some sort of energy that moves the dowser's implements. (Recent "BASIS" articles have reported some water witchers specifically asserting that the "force" has nothing to do with the dowser.)

The venue of the dowsing domain has shown an extension of its borders. There's a lot of money to be made in the health care area, and there seems to be an increase in the hostility toward the medical profession. For example, J. Blassingame, of San Jose area, dowses "to see what vitamins [he] needs to take." He holds his dowsing pendulum over various vitamin bottles and waits for the device to guide his nutritional supplement choice for the day.

Blassingame assures us that, "if they would only turn dowser loose they could show farmers where to drill. There is plenty of water down there. There's no need for drought."

CSICOP ON THE MOVE

CSICOP has just announced the formation of a Legal and Consumer Protection Sub-committee, an all-volunteer group of concerned attorneys throughout the country.

The significance of this group cannot be overestimated for the recognition it will afford the skeptical community. There are, to be sure, many consumer advocacy organizations, but this will be the first under the aegis of rationality.

As our confrontation with paranormal pandering sharpens, legal issues are becoming increasingly important. Indeed, it may be argued that taking a legal direction is far and away the most effective method for change. We can rail through the media, but precious little changes unless the bankroll may be threatened through litigation. When a local group challenges a promoter of the paranormal to put up, scoffing is usually all we hear. Threats of litigation for false and/or misleading claims surely will make some hair stand on end.

Some of the sub-areas under study are: A. Consumer Protection (Civil Redress, Protection Laws, Trade Practice Laws); B. Prosecution (Criminal law, Common law); C. Government legislative initiatives; D. Defense; E. Use of libel law to silence critics; F. Paranormal involvement in legal system (psychics used as expert witnesses and as aids in finding victims/perpetrators, creation science); G. Patent law (e.g., perpetual motion machines).

If you are in the legal professions, CSICOP would like to have your help. Of course they want our ideas regardless of profession.

CHANNELING - BELIEVE IT OR NOT

by Hans Sebald, Ph.D.

How does a skeptic probe the verity, hoax or self-deception of a channeler? With this question in mind I attended an interview with the medium Jeannine Caloni who visited the [Phoenix] Valley in Nov. 1987 to star in a psychic jamboree. This still is the question after I listened and observed for nearly two hours. Perhaps it is impossible to test a medium, real, pretended, or honestly-imagined channeling.

Anyway, with skepticism about a "skeptic" success at achieving a definite answer, I joined Kieran Richardson, reporting for the "Arizona Republic," to interview Jeannine Caloni from St. Louis, Missouri. Kieran did most of the talking and questioning. I mostly listened.

Mrs. Caloni is channeling two spirits, St. Thomas, the skeptical Apostle, and Ezekiel. The medium mentioned that there is a virtual waiting line of additional spirits who would like to use her body as a channel. Caloni, however, decided to surrender her body to only the above-named spirits. While her body is temporarily transmuted into a reincarnation of the spirits, her own spirit leaves her body and, as she puts it, "stands beside her body looking on." This means, while the spirit is occupying her, she experiences an out-of-body existence. Apparently two spirits are too big a crowd for one body.

Caloni is a new arrival on the channeling market. She discovered her gift when another medium she had called to her Missouri home to help exorcize spirits haunting the house (all the houses she has ever lived in have been haunted) recognized a most elaborate crown halo around Caloni's head -- a sign of extraordinary psychic abilities. I am not certain whether the bothersome poltergeists were ever banned, but in any case Caloni's career as a medium soared henceforth. Ultimately she "went public," i.e., entered the business of psychic readings, made her name in the psychic circles, and apparently acquired a wide clientele who are mostly interested in getting in touch with deceased relatives. To establish the spirit connection, Caloni has to call the name of the deceased long enough for the spirit to hear and respond. Before the spirit is accepted as the right one, "confirmation" is needed, i.e., Caloni asks the client about various and sundry characteristics of the deceased so that she can "verify" the identity of the responding spirit. This, she feels, is necessary, because sometimes a prankster spirit will respond to try to confuse the medium. Moreover, it is possible

that many spirits lived under the same name -- think, for example, so she reminded us, of the many Smiths that have lived and are living. Sometimes she has to go through a dozen or more spirits to arrive at the correct one. Names like Smith and Jones can be very confusing to the spirit world. Once the confirmation is completed and the client has described the deceased sufficiently, Caloni begins to surrender her faculties to the spirit. She reports that dramatic scenes often develop: the client more often than not will break out in tears of joy (or sorrow) when conversing with a dear departed.

Kieran and I tried to be tactful about the issue of remuneration for the readings. In response to our timid inquiry in that direction, we were told that monies earned from psychic activity are given away to needy people, must be given away lest the spirits abandon the medium. Jeannine and husband Frank (who was present throughout the interview) assured me of their magnanimity by once in a while giving two or five dollars to "starving bums on the street."

I was just about to ask about her family background and how her (very Catholic) family accepted her psychic activities, when Frank warned me that Jeannine was momentarily going into a trance. Ezekiel was announcing himself. (Incidentally, this Ezekiel was not the prophet of the Old Testament, but a nomadic shepherd who lived 2,000 years ago in the Sinai desert.)

Caloni's face hardened into a masculine visage and her voice sounded guttural as Ezekiel began to speak out of her body. His first utterance was, "Where am I?" Frank's information that he was being channeled in Arizona seemed perfectly plausible to the spirit. I wondered how a 2,000-year-old nomad from the Middle East could make sense of that information, since at that time New World geography was unknown to his people. After making small talk with Kieran, Ezekiel turned to me and volunteered a formidable prophecy. Apparently this is the type of service that spirits think people expect of them. He predicted that during the next two to three months I would make a trip to the east and in the process forget a certain item, unless I would first go to a store and purchase it. No specification was made about the distance of the trip, hence it could include a hike into the Superstition Mountains on the east side of my house. The more baffling aspect, however, was that the forecast is unfalsifiable, since I might forget something or buy the would-be-forgotten article. Then Ezekiel waxed clairvoyant and asked about the welfare of my toe. After my puzzled assurance that all were in good health, he dropped the subject. I couldn't help thinking that someone must have observed my limping walk earlier when I entered the room. I had strained my knee a few days earlier. Ezekiel continued to ruminate and remarked that he finds me exceptionally quiet, but that he "knows" that underneath there is an active, actually overactive, mind. This seemed to worry him, because he suggested that I go on a regimen of Vitamin B12 to calm down. Again I found it astounding that an illiterate

nomad of 2,000 years ago would know about vitamins, a recent bio-chemical discovery. What astounded me most, however, was that the old nomad spoke modern American English perfectly -- if we charitably disregard grammatical quirks and dictional limitations, which smacked of Missouri countryside.

Finally, Ezekiel announced his departure and Jeannine's spirit reentered her vacated body. She relaxed, regained her normal voice, continued to chain-smoke (something Ezekiel abhors), and amiably expected us to be impressed. Also, had we any further questions? Not really. By then I fully understood the difficulty of determining verity, hoax, or innocuous self-deception of a medium. It becomes an issue of believing or disbelieving. To some of us it may also become an issue of absurdity.

In any case, I shall make a careful shopping list before going on a trip in an easterly direction.

(Dr. Sebald, Professor of Sociology at ASU first wrote this article for the Phoenix Skeptics, whom we thank for reprint permission.)

1988 CSICOP CONFERENCE PLAN FOR NOVEMBER!

If you are thinking about a vacation in the East, postpone your plans and make them for early November. The formal agenda has been released for the 1988 CSICOP conference to take place in Chicago on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, November 4 - 6 at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare. The annual event is co-sponsored this year by the Department of Behavioral Sciences, University of Chicago.

The theme is very germane: The New Age. Channeling, crystal healing, graphology, and the latest rage, UFO abductions, will fill the menu for the most part. The keynote address will be by Dr. Douglas Hofstadter, Professor of Psychology at the University of Michigan, entitled "Musings on the Elusive Nature of Common Sense and Evidence."

Important names in the scientific and academic community will be among the speakers: Paul Kurtz (CSICOP Chairman), James Alcock, Ray Hyman, Maureen O'Hara, to name a few.

The CSICOP team that did the investigations in China will report their experiences with talks and slides.

Skeptics are not all serious, so of course James Randi will do some of what he does best in the Saturday night awards banquet. His stage will be shared with other performers in a presentation called "Skeptical Magicians from Around the World." Since Randi is Canadian-born, guess who will be representing the USA? Our own Bob Steiner!

The annual conference is a significant event whose importance is growing as it includes more and more professionals and laypersons banded together in an attempt to increase rationality in this world. The growth of CSICOP is something of a phenomenon; but in a real sense it had to come. One of the recurring comments made by those who come to BAS meetings or subscribe to "BASIS" is, "It just feels so wonderful to know that I am not alone in thinking the world is off balance with some of the crazy nonsense there is around me."

Take "BASIS" to your copy machine, copy the registration form on page 4, and reserve your place for this exciting meeting.

SCOTT VS. GISH

by John Taube

By invitation, anthropologist and BAS advisor Dr. Eugenie Scott faced Dr. Duane Gish, the foremost creationist debater from the Institute for Creation Research, in a debate on Jan Black's KCBS radio show. The topic: Should creationism be taught in the public schools?

Gish, a polished debater of literally hundreds of encounters, immediately went off the subject of the debate and launched into the gaps in the fossil record and asserted that thermodynamics precludes evolution. His tactic is standard fare -- attack evolution and don't talk about creationism. The debate, not the scientific evidence, is what counts.

Many from academia have fallen into and badly lost debates because they have approached the confrontation from a scientific basis. They swamp the audience in the technical matters of the latest research that unfortunately is over the heads of most. All who consent to debates with creationists must keep in mind that debates are only about winning and losing, turning on forensic skill, not scientific matters.

Eugenie finally interrupted to remind Gish that the topic was if creationism should be taught in the public school. She told the audience that the Supreme Court had overturned the ruling in the Louisiana case which mandated the teaching of creationism. Gish became rattled when Scott kept insisting on (1) a definition of creationism and (2) an explanation of creationist's preposterous positions on the 6,000-year-old universe and a global flood.

The strongest creationist appeal is the democratic one: "The people WANT both taught. (Over 80% of the respondents to surveys think creation should be taught.) Why can't our students hear this evidence for creation? Why deny our children the evidence that changed Sir Fred Hoyle's mind? What are evolutionists afraid of?" Gish challenged.

The most important point to be learned from this Gish-Scott debate is that what is said is of almost no importance. It is how one comes across to the public that matters. Most of the listeners will not remember the technical points, but will remember the general tenor of the debate and what personality seemed more genuine. From this perspective, Eugenie came out on top. She was so smooth, that her calm insistence that Gish answer questions about his side rattled him as he has seldom been rattled before.

PAT ROBERTSON UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Gerard Straub, author of "Salvation for Sale: An Insider's View of Pat Robertson" (Prometheus Books) will speak on "Religion and Politics" with an update on the significance of Robertson's presidential campaign.

Straub, former producer of Robertson's "700 Club," reveals in his book previously unpublished evidence that Pat Robertson believes he is in direct contact with God and that he has been personally appointed by the Almighty to be the chief usher at Jesus' imminent Second Coming.

Straub's conversion to fundamentalism and his media credentials brought him to the "700 Club" where he worked closely with Robertson until his disillusionment with fundamentalism.

This important address will take place in Oakland at the Montclair Woman's Club, corner of Thornhill and Mountain Blvd. on Sunday, October 16 at 1 p.m. Suggested donation is \$4 prepaid, or \$5 at the door; reservations are strongly suggested. The event is sponsored by the Secular Humanists of the East Bay, to whom you should make your checks payable. Mail reservations to SHEB, Box 5313, Berkeley, CA 94705 before October 8.

Directions: Take Highway 13 east to Montclair exit. Take the Thornhill off ramp, go two blocks to Mountain Blvd. Montclair Woman's Club is on the corner. There is off-street parking behind the building (entrance from Mountain Blvd.).

*** RETRACTION ***

In the August issue of "BASIS" we announced the meeting for the month, giving it the title "The Mars Hoax." This was an irresponsible choice, and I, as editor, accept responsibility for publishing it.

While one may think that Mr. Hewitt, speaker at the August meeting, presents a good case for rejecting some conclusions of

the Mars Project, this could hardly lead us to believe that Richard Hoagland or any of the staff at the Project "perpetrated a hoax," unless one could believe they faked the photographs or went to the Red Planet to construct what some have called the face on Mars. Of course, no rational person seriously entertains either notion.

There are very serious people at the Project: Dr. R. Pozos (anthropology), Dr. M. Vousden (physics), and Dr. B. O'Leary (planetary sciences) to name a few. I regret this mistake and apologize to the members and the Board of The Mars Project.

THE FACE ON MARS

Is the now famous "face on Mars" a natural land formation, or an artifact? NASA and the astronomical establishment answered that question twelve years ago by dismissing it as "a trick of heightened shadows," a position they still hold.

Not everyone is so sure. Using state-of-the-art enhancement techniques -- and methods of analyses unknown until 1976 -- the Mars Project has made the limited original data yield new information . . . information which, while not conclusive, is intriguing enough that it cries out for further research, including a return mission to Mars. This, at least, is the position of the Mars Project.

In response to John Hewitt's pre-sentation at our August meeting, The Mars Project (a non-profit research and educational organization comprised of scientists and laypersons interested in the "face" and other Martian anomalies) will be represented at our September meeting by Roger Keeling, a member of its Board of Directors. His talk will include photographic enlargements and handouts. This controversial subject is sure to arouse your interest.

BASIS

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