
February 1991 "BASIS", newsletter of the Bay Area Skeptics

Bay Area Skeptics Information Sheet
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Editor: Yves Barbero

PSYCHICS' PREDICTIONS FIZZLE FOR 1990

by Robert Sheaffer

Jackie Onassis did not marry young rock star Jon Bon Jovi. A tidal wave did not flood Manhattan. A meteorite did not land in the White House Rose Garden, and a cure was not found for the common cold. These are just a few of the many predictions that had been made for 1990 by famous "psychics", but were dead wrong, as chronicled by the Bay Area Skeptics.

At the end of each year, many well-known "psychics" issue predictions for the coming year. Twelve months later, they issue another set of predictions, conveniently forgetting those they made the year before, which are always nearly 100% wrong. Each year, however, the Bay Area Skeptics dig up the predictions made the year before, to the embarrassment of those who made them.

Many of the "psychic" predictions made are so vague that it is impossible to say if they came true or not: For example, Jeane Dixon's prediction that "secrets will weigh heavily" on Vice-President Dan Quayle is not obviously true or false. Many other "predictions" involve things that happen every year, or else are not difficult to guess, such as hurricanes along the Gulf Coast, marital strife for Charles and Diana, or terrorist incidents. Many "predictions" simply state that ongoing events and trends will continue, such as economic uncertainty, or conflict in the Middle East.

Other supposed "predictions" are not really predictions at all, but are actually disclosures of little-known events that are already under way, such as movie productions, business ventures, or developing scandals. Because questionable claims of having made an amazing prediction frequently are made in the wake of major news stories, the Bay Area Skeptics only evaluates predictions that were widely known before the events they claimed to foretell. While some predictions did of course come true, especially those that were unspecific, or not at all difficult to guess, not one prediction that was both specific and surprising came true.

The famous Washington, D.C. "psychic" Jeane Dixon, who supposedly has a "gift of prophesy", predicted that George Bush's "greatest challenge" would come this summer when he would be forced to make "life-and-death decisions about troubles in Latin America and China". While those regions were relatively quiet this summer,

Dixon somehow failed to foresee Bush having any trouble with Iraq. "The worst stock market drop of the year will come in mid-April", she predicted; it actually occurred from August through mid-October. She also warned that the West Coast "will be shaken again by an October earthquake" which will "bring a volcano to life" ["The Star", Jan. 16, 1990].

St. Louis "psychic" Beverly Jaegers, who claims to be able to make accurate stock market predictions, predicted that defrocked evangelist Jimmy Bakker would become a "hunted fugitive" after an escape from prison, and that Madonna would get pregnant from an affair with Pee-Wee Herman ["National Enquirer", July 3, 1990].

In Chicago, "psychic" Irene Hughes predicted that Jacqueline Onassis would tie the knot with rock star Jon Bon Jovi, that Bryant Gumbel would be fired from the "Today" show after an ugly bar-room brawl, and that Chuck Norris would lead a group of mercenaries in a successful attack on a Colombian drug field ["National Enquirer", Jan. 2, 1990].

Los Angeles "psychic" Marie Graciette predicted that the largest earthquake ever recorded would strike the sea bed near New York City, sending in a tidal wave that would flood Manhattan ["National Enquirer", July 3, 1990]. A meteorite would land in the White House Rose Garden, endangering the First Family by the levels of radiation it emits. (Meteorites are primarily made of iron and nickel, which are not radioactive.) She also predicted that Japanese scientists would discover a cure for the common cold while investigating the ink spewed out by squid ["National Enquirer", Jan. 2, 1990].

Southern Californian Clarisa Bernhardt, who claims to make "incredibly accurate" earthquake predictions, foresaw that Barbra Streisand would go to Cuba and wind up in a "sizzling" romance with Fidel Castro [National Enquirer, July 3, 1990]. She also predicted that the Major Leagues would have their first female baseball player, whose skill would make her a superstar ["National Enquirer", Jan. 2, 1990].

Here in Northern California, "Psychic Astrologer" Terrie Brill of Redwood City predicted five years ago [San Francisco Examiner, Dec. 16, 1985] that 1990 would absolutely be the year that a massive earthquake would reshape the California coastline. "If there was doubt [about this prediction], I'd say there was doubt", she reaffirmed to the reporter.

This past December, she predicted that Oprah Winfrey would marry, that Manuel Noriega (who was then holed up in the Vatican Embassy in Panama) would be released, but not to the United States, and would be killed by a Panamanian before six months had passed ["San Francisco Examiner", Dec. 28, 1990]. Brill charges her clients \$195 an hour for predictions such as these. Twelve months ago, Brill went on record predicting an earthquake that would make the Bay Area "fall into the ocean" during 1991 ["San Jose Mercury-News",

Jan. 1, 1990], but in view of her previous dismal track record, the Bay Area Skeptics see no cause for alarm.

Based on the continuing failure of the "psychics" to make accurate predictions over the years, the Bay Area Skeptics urge everyone -- including the press -- to exercise some healthy skepticism when "psychics" and other purveyors of the paranormal make extraordinary claims or predictions. Anyone who swallows the "psychics'" claims year after year, without checking the record, is setting a bad example for students and for the public.

It is important to note that no "psychic" succeeded in predicting the genuinely surprising news stories of 1990: the invasion and occupation of Kuwait by Iraq; Hussein's holding of thousands of foreign hostages as "human shields"; George Bush saying yes to "new taxes"; and the stunning electoral defeat of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. These major news stories were so unanticipated that someone would have had to be truly "psychic" to have predicted them. Given the number of so-called "psychics" out there, one would expect that at least a few of them would have correctly predicted these -- unless, of course, all such claims of "psychic powers" are without foundation.

The Bay Area Skeptics is a group of people from all walks of life who support the critical examination of paranormal claims, such as psychic powers, UFOs, astrology, Bigfoot, biorhythms, etc. Similar skeptics' organizations are active in many other areas of the country, including Southern California, New York, Colorado, Illinois, Arizona, Texas, and Ohio. The Committee for the Scientific Examination of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) is an international skeptics' organization, made up of many famous writers, scientists, and investigators, such as Martin Gardner, Stephen Jay Gould, James "The Amazing" Randi, Isaac Asimov, and many others. Similar skeptics' groups have also been formed in many foreign countries, including Australia, Canada, France, the United Kingdom, Mexico, and India. These groups cooperate in making their findings available to other researchers, and to the public.

[Robert Sheaffer is a technical writer and UFO expert. He is one of the founders of Bay Area Skeptics. Sheaffer has written a new book, tentatively titled "Christian Resentment." It should be released soon.]

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MORE ON THE FLUORIDATION FLAP

by Thomas H. Jukes, PH.D.

"BASIS", December 1990 and January 1991 gives a large amount of space to publicity about John R. Lee, also to his long article. Was this to drum up an audience for him? Bob Steiner (page seven, Jan. 1991) is amazed that there is so much distaste for Lee's output.

Ordinarily, most people yawn and leave when a flat-earther, or someone who says the world will end next week, mounts a soapbox. The difference here, Bob [Steiner], is that some of us are interested in helping children grow good teeth. We are in the field of public health; we are not magicians. We have been working for fluoridation for years. Lee's assertions are NOT harmless eccentricities.

In addition to protecting freedom of the press, an editor is supposed to "copy-edit" manuscripts. Why did Lee's monologue (Dec. 1990, page three) escape this? Plants and animals are of female and male SEXES, not GENDERS. And why was Lee given space to maander on and on about Rabelais, Galileo, Aristotle et al., quite irrelevant to his topic? Space is valuable.

Lee says fluoride used in fluoridation is a "toxic waste product of industry." This is nonsense. Fluorine is a chemical element. Sea-water contains 1.4 parts per million of fluoride -- more than the 1.0 ppm recommended for drinking water. Lee quotes National Institute of Dental Health data, and then alleges, without any authority, that the data are wrong.

He says, "when skepticism is silenced, science (and our health in this case) suffers." Health suffers when anti-fluoridationists get their way. Lee has never been silenced, even though he is dangerous to our children's health. He has been reciting unsubstantiated propaganda for years. No one has tried to shut him up. As Bob Steiner found out, no "pro-fluoridation health professional" would share the platform with Lee.

OPEN-MINDEDNESS, AGAIN

by Rick Moen

Bay Area Skeptics Secretary

Dr. John R. Lee's topic (fluoridation) is a bit far afield for a skeptics' group, but when magician Bob Steiner asked my opinion on hosting him, my sole question was "Will he be interesting?" Answer: "Absolutely." For me, that was the end of the matter, as with almost all the BAS activists Steiner consulted.

Thus, I'm surprised at the controversy. Some people feel we should refuse Lee a forum, or impose conditions never applied to other speakers. Why? Apparently, some think BAS exists to promote the received wisdom of science, shutting out unconventional viewpoints, which should be dismissed unheard.

This attitude quite simply runs counter to the principles and purpose of the skeptics' movement. It would make a mockery of our intent to consider claims FAIRLY AND IMPARTIALLY, albeit critically. It would reduce us to closed-minded, ideological cheerleaders of the science establishment. Worse, it would make us DULL -- preachers to the converted. Worse still, it might even make

us DEAD WRONG: Some mavericks just might be correct. We prefer to help people to JUDGE FOR THEMSELVES, airing both sides.

BAS has in the past had, as speakers and authors, UFOlogists, parapsychologists, creationists, and proponents of various unusual claims. They have always been treated with friendliness, respect, and appreciation. If I have my way, they always will. The suppression of unconventional views, and advocates of that suppression, have NO PLACE in the skeptics' movement. The rest of us will benefit from being stimulated, entertained, and perhaps enlightened by exposure to a wide range of views.

P.S.: In a related matter, parapsychologist Loyd Auerbach has always been a good friend of Bay Area Skeptics, a friendship we especially appreciate because of its rarity.

I interpreted the editor's small piece "Auerbach in Business" (12/90 "BASIS") as a perhaps overly rowdy jibe between friends. I hope Auerbach will consider it as such, and regret any offense we have given him.

THERE'S THE CART; BUT WHERE IS THE HORSE?

by Bob Steiner

Loyd Auerbach, a parapsychologist, has long worked with BAS. He has been an avid supporter and activist, and has willingly and freely donated his time and expertise to give presentations at our meetings.

Bay Area Skeptics has a long history of fairness in its investigations. It does not publicize results before there are results to publicize.

Bay Area Skeptics and Loyd Auerbach have a history of many years of friendship, and of exchange of ideas and information.

It was therefore surprising and embarrassing to read the editorial in the December 1990 "BASIS" entitled "Auerbach in Business." It took a considerable slam at Loyd Auerbach and his new business. It was, according to the editorial itself, based upon an article our editor read in the "San Francisco Chronicle". No investigation had been made. No communication with Loyd had taken place.

Additionally, the editorial mentioned the master's degree in parapsychology that Loyd earned from John F. Kennedy University, and then appended the footnote: "The Catholic Church has long opposed traffic in the Paranormal. It must be a wonderful irony that a school named after one of their most prominent members issues such degrees." That was uncalled for. Furthermore, since when has Bay Area Skeptics held the Catholic Church up as the benchmark for our scientific investigations of the paranormal?

It may indeed be proper for Bay Area Skeptics to take a look at Loyd's new business. However, until that look has taken place, and until there is some communication with Loyd -- and he has never ducked communication with BAS -- it is out of place to try him in the press.

Loyd Auerbach deserves better treatment than that ... and so does Bay Area Skeptics.

"AUERBACH IN BUSINESS" FLAP
by Loyd Auerbach

I read the short piece in the December "BASIS" about my business, and I have to say I'm quite disappointed in "BASIS". As you know, I've lectured to the Bay Area Skeptics more than a couple of times over the past several years, and have had a high regard for your group. In discussions with others in parapsychology (and in the media, in fact) I have defended Bay Area Skeptics as a group tending to be more skeptical than dogmatic, unlike other such groups around the country. After reading "Auerbach in Business" I may have to rethink my position.

First of all, let me say that the Office of Paranormal Investigations as an organization has been operating for over a year. I, of course, have been conducting such investigations for ten years now. None of the members of my group think of or refer to ourselves as "New Age." What we do has nothing to do with the mysticism and spiritual mind-set of New Age folk. While our mailing address is Orinda, I will repeat to you what I have said to every reporter who has interviewed me: We have no physical offices in Orinda or anywhere else. Cost of renting office space what it is today, we'd have to have investigations going all the time to afford office leasing. There are not enough reported cases (or unreported cases, more than likely) in the Bay Area or anywhere else to support office space at what we charge.

We charge for our time, not for a guarantee of removing "any loose poltergeists from the premises." Our case typically cost clients \$50 (exceptions being cases outside of the immediate Bay Area; \$100 for a case in the central valley as one example). Cases typically involve two or more investigators, and have included a clinical psychologist on more than one occasion.

Clients get several things out of our investigations, not the least of which is someone willing to listen to them. In addition, what they get includes: 1) an investigation of a situation which others may dismiss as "crazy" without looking into it; 2) an investigation in which the primary causes looked for and examined are "normal" ones rather than paranormal; 3) referrals to counselors or psychologists who can help further, and 4) effectively, a "mini-course" on parapsychology and on how easy it is to misinterpret ordinary occurrences as paranormal ones.

"Don't forget to ask about the warranty should you make use of their services." To quote our brochure: "O.P.I. does provide a thorough investigation in such cases and an understanding of what is most likely happening, but NO one can GUARANTEE the removal of such phenomena. Our first obligation is to help the clients through such situations, and to provide advice or referrals based on research and investigative findings."

So far, O.P.I. is not anywhere near a profit-making venture, with any monies taken in used to support our answering services (live people to talk to, not a tape) and printing. We do not take every call that comes in and rush out and investigate, turning down potential cases because the situations don't warrant an investigation (perhaps an explanation or referral over the phone). In some of the reports there's an easy normal explanation, in others, the experience happened too long ago, and in still other calls there is the need simply for referral to a clinician who can help. We turn many of those down, even though the people are willing to pay for us to come out anyway.

Our investigations are part data-gathering, part explanation, and mostly education. If O.P.I. is ever to be a true profit-making venture, it will be because of our consultations with the media, as well as through seminars and workshops we will be offering in the future. We are not really "GHOSTBUSTERS" any more than the Bay Area (or any other part of the country) is "spook central, as New York was in that film.

I hope this clears up a few things. Next time, perhaps you'll [The Editor] think to check before alienating someone who has never been an "enemy of the Bay Area Skeptics".

[To ask for an attractive brochure listing their services, contact the Office of Paranormal Investigations at their "mail drop": P.O. Box 875, Orinda, CA 94563-0875. Phone: 415-553-2588.]

MORE ON FLUORIDATION FLAP (2)

by Ernest Newbrun, D.M.D., PH.D.
Professor of Oral Biology and Periodontology
School of Dentistry
University of California, San Francisco

I am amazed that an organization such as Bay Area Skeptics chooses to provide a platform for John Lee's paranoid conspiracy theory concerning water fluoridation as a "toxic waste product" of industry in collusion with "the medical and dental bureaucracies" and the U.S. Public Health Service. He has used "BASIS" as a platform for his distorted view of this one public health measure which has done more than any other in preventing the pain and discomfort of tooth decay.

In citing the Rand Corporation analysis of the National Preventive Dentistry Demonstration Program (NPDDP), he totally misrepresents their findings which were summarized as follows: "Children's teeth found to be healthier than expected. Most preventive measures proved to be more expensive -- and less effective. The value of water fluoridation underscored."

John Lee deliberately omitted the conclusion of the Rand analysis of the NPDDP that water fluoridation was a "best buy" in terms of cost/benefit of caries preventive measures. A review of the efficacy of communal water fluoridation in reducing dental caries based on surveys conducted in the last decades of caries prevalence in fluoridated and nonfluoridated communities in the United States, as well as in Australia, Britain, Canada, Ireland and New Zealand shows that not only for children and adolescents, but also for adults and seniors, there is a consistently and substantially lower caries prevalence in fluoridated communities.

Concerning the safety of water fluoridation, it is well to keep in mind the admonition of Paracelsus, "All substances are poisons, there is none which is not a poison. The right dose differentiates a poison and a remedy." Certainly, fluoride in high dosage is toxic. However, at one part per million the safety of communal fluoridation has been well documented.

STATEMENT ON WATER FLUORIDATION

by Thomas H. Jukes, Ph.D.

(Professor of Biophysics and Medical Physics,
University of California, Berkeley)

Fluoridation of drinking water is generally regarded by scientists as one of the major achievements in public health nutrition. Perhaps the closest analogues are iodized salt to prevent goiter and vitamin D in milk to prevent rickets.

In January 1985, the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology noted that fluoridation at one part per million reduces the incidence of dental caries by about 60 percent. Fluoridation is recommended by the World Health Organization and the United States National Academy of Sciences. It was included in the recent recommendations for Dietary Goals for England. Nevertheless, 110 million Americans receive a water supply that is deficient in fluoride. If each person in this population gets only two extra cavities, the cost of not fluoridating the water is estimated to be \$3 billion for tooth fillings alone.

Fortunately, San Francisco is not in this category. However, if fluoride is removed from San Francisco drinking water, the cost to consumers would be in the millions, not counting pain and discomfort to disadvantaged children.

In the United States, studies began in 1945 with one ppm of

fluoride being added to the public water systems.

In the past 35 years, findings from subsequent studies on water fluoridation have all verified its action in preventing tooth decay. Most important, the method was devoid of harmful effects. Despite organized opposition, over 80 million of the United States' population are now drinking artificially fluoridated water, while another eight million drink natural fluoride water. Six states have mandatory water fluoridation laws.

According to Joseph Volker, DDS, Ph.D. --

"Water fluoridation is superior to other methods of fluoride treatment since no trained personnel are required to give the treatment, nor is any extra effort required by those benefitted. The time required of the dentist for corrective care and the cost per child is half of that necessary in nonfluoride areas. For the 88 million with communal fluoride water supplies the reduction in suffering and the financial savings are too vast to estimate accurately.

"Premature loss of primary (baby) teeth resulting from dental decay is one of the major causes of crooked teeth in children. Children drinking fluoridated water have only half as many tooth extractions as those in nonfluoridated communities. Consequently, there are less malocclusions and less need for preventive and corrective orthodontics."

Through water fluoridation, the maturing of the teeth, during and after the cutting state is hastened markedly. Fluoride once built into the teeth is retained through the entire lifetime of the individual. The cost of fluoridation is about 25 cents per person per year. The lifetime cost for a person living for 70 years will be about \$17 to reduce dental bills by about 60 percent.

Opposition to fluoridation is based on scare tactics and misrepresentation of science. Fluorides are represented as "toxic and corrosive." This is not true at one part per million. For that matter, sodium and chlorine, which combine to form table salt, are both toxic and corrosive in the elemental state.

Fluorine as fluoride is a nutritionally essential trace element, like iron zinc or iodine. Fluoridation of drinking water has no positive or negative effect on incidence of mortality rates due to cancer, heart disease, intracranial lesions, nephritis, cirrhosis, mongoloid births, or from all causes together. The Director General of the World Health Organization stated in 1975: "Fluoridation of communal water supplies should be the cornerstone of any national program of dental caries prevention." WHO also pointed out that preliminary studies indicated that increased fluoride intake after permanent tooth eruption may improve the strength of bones in older people.

The status of fluoridation was appraised by Dr. Virginia L. Richmond in "Thirty years of fluoridation: A Review," in the "American Journal of Clinical Nutrition", January 1985, vol. 41, pp. 129-138, with 80 references. I strongly recommend this as a reference work.

[Thomas H. Jukes, Ph.D., is a long time advisor to Bay Area Skeptics.]

WHAT CULTS ARE REALLY LIKE -- WITH MARGARET THALER SINGER by Carol Baumgartner

Are You Cult Material? You very well may be, if you are mild or moderately mannered, if you are a depressed type of personality, if you suffer from guilt feelings, feelings of inadequacy, or if you are the gullible type of person, according to Margaret Thaler Singer, Ph.D., who spoke to a meeting of Bay Area Skeptics in November.

These are just a few of the types of people who can be easily manipulated and recruited into a cult through thought reform programs. Everyone, at some time in their life can be susceptible to being drawn into a cult. No one is totally immune.

The process is basically to recruit, indoctrinate, then totally control members and to maintain that control to promote their ideology. Cults maintain control and manipulate with rewards and punishments. Deceptive methods are used to recruit people, then their guilt is used against them to manipulate them. Persons are told that the "Secrets of Life" will be revealed to them and that all non-members are lesser beings and when they come into the group they will learn the secrets.

Many people drop out of school, give up their careers and friends. Engagements, marriages, and families are broken up. Prospective cult members are taken away from their support system and told that their past life is "No good." They are made to feel guilty over their past. Cult members lives are ultimately under the total control of the leaders of the cult. There is control of all communication with former friends, family members, and even with other cult members. Cult members are made to feel powerless. They are manipulated and made to feel guilty whenever possible.

While attending San Diego State University, Robin Kliger was introduced to the Shri Chinmoy Cult. She dropped out of school after undergoing several months of indoctrination. She was a member of Shri Chinmoy for over eight and a half years and became their Chief of Public Relations. She expressed to her parents that she had desires to leave this cult but felt that she could not break away because of feeling psychologically paralyzed. She was moved underground by the cult, so her parents could not find her and then

moved to another country. She was eventually kidnapped by her parents through de-programming. Robin gave us valuable insight into what motivates people to join cults and how very hard it is for those same people to break away from the psychological terrorism of cult life.

There are over 5,000 cults in the United States, some are religious, some are health related, and some are the UFO cults to name a few. Many of these cults, are multi-million dollar organizations which operate under tax exempt non-profit 501-C-3 status.

STEINER PUZZLE FLAP

by Fred Convers

In regard to "Answer to Puzzle Number One" (Nov. 1990):

Bob Steiner is probably just trying to show how easily we can be taken if we don't bother to do probability arithmetic.

First, assume a large population with the usual 1:1 sex ratio. The order is of no significance, as is more easily seen with three children. The known girl has a 1.00 probability of being a girl; the others 0.50. Thus, there is a $1.00 \times 0.50 \times 0.50 = 0.25$ probability they are three girls. It matters not where the 1.00 is placed.

In the two child problem, consider all cases:

The first may be assumed the girl and the second unknown: then the probability is $1.00 \times 0.50 = 0.50$:

The second may be assumed the girl and the first unknown: then the probability is $0.50 \times 1.00 = 0.50$.

Or $1.00 \times 0.50 = 0.50 \times 1.00 = 0.50$ (one in two).

The table is (perhaps deliberately) misleading. On first glance, one assumes that probabilities are to be equal for each possible number. In fact:

Possibility Number Probability

1	0.50
2	0.25
3	0.25
4	0.00

Total	1.00

Second, consider a small population:

Two girls and two boys are in a room. Two of them are mine, one a girl. What are the odds that both of mine are girls?

"What would life be like without arithmetic but a scene of horrors?" -- Sydney Smith 1835

[Other readers of "BASIS" and the BBS have also commented on the math of BOB STEINER's puzzle.]

1991 European Skeptical Congress
CALL FOR PAPERS

Place: Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Time: Friday 4th and Saturday 5th October 1991
Language of Discourse: English
Level: Scientifically interested laymen
Presentation period: About 35 minutes, followed by 10 minutes of discussion

Potential speakers are invited to submit abstracts before April 15th, 1991. Full-length papers should be submitted before October 1st, 1991. It is expected that the talk will comprise a compressed version of this paper.

Papers should preferably deal with RECENT INVESTIGATIONS, or discuss EMPIRICAL DATA that fellow skeptics will consider worth knowing.

No unifying topic is required, but the following deserve particular attention in view of the forthcoming European integration:

Policies of governmental and societal groups (e.g. insurance companies) about pseudoscience and the paranormal. Under "government" should be considered the legislative, executive and judicial branches.

Subtopics could be:

=> policies in the field of health

=> policies in the field of education, e.g. school projects in teaching and critical thinking

=> funding of research into the paranormal (e.g. earth rays, alternative medicine)

=> taxation policies (deductibility of services like dowsing, astrological consulting, clairvoyance, etc.)

Abstracts, full length papers and inquiries should be directed to

Dr. J. W. NIENHUYS
Dommelseweg 1A
5581 VA Waalre
The NETHERLANDS

"BAD CHEMICALS"

by Wallace I. Sampson, M.D.
Clinical Professor of Medicine
Stanford University

[This letter was sent to KQED by long time Bay Area Skeptics advisor Dr. Sampson. It has been edited and considerably shortened.]

A long time member of KQED, I am more than disappointed, (frankly, just short of enraged) to have seen KQED sponsor fiction as news -- the program "Bad Chemicals" shown December 30th. The entire production staff should be embarrassed by this piece of just plain bad reporting. It is non-factual, and prejudiced. Apparently the staff has been duped into believing and supporting a phenomenon of imagined wrongs, conversion reactions, fakery, misdiagnosis, and pseudoscience, all supported by a social system that reinforces beliefs that are so stupid, they strain belief.

First, commercially used chemicals account for only two percent of all cancers. "Natural" chemicals in food probably account for over 30 percent, and most of those have not been tested. Second, reactions to chemicals are well known and described in scientific medical literature. The people shown in the program do not have chemical sensitivities or toxicities.

I am asked to believe that a woman troubled by headaches and nausea who disappears from her husband and children, and isolates herself in a Berkeley apartment for ten years is a victim of chemical sensitivities, and not of her own personality disorder.

The narrator claims that "sick building syndrome" costs one hundred billion dollars a year. That is one fourth of the annual medical costs in the US. I am expected to believe it?

Inter-spaced are segments showing physicians and psychologists explaining the symptoms and disabilities. What would they be doing without these patients? Are they good enough to practice medicine without reinforcing delusion? Are they just telling these patients what they want to hear?

We are then treated to the interview of an entrepreneur who sells products to the afflicted. Including those phased to the lunar cycle! There's talent for marketing that should be rewarded. There are more than two ways to make a buck here.

For entertainment, we see Ms. Saltzman, who sacrificed herself to

the media by not sniffing the film crew beforehand so that she could demonstrate her muscle dysfunction. I've seen better acts in emergency rooms by addicts demanding drugs, and by poor actors who want attention. Well, she got her fifteen minutes of fame. But she forgot to alter her speech to be consistent with the contortions of her arms and legs. This was not an effect of chemicals. It was fakery or delusion.

A dentist insists that his symptoms are due to chemicals, yet he admits he had the equivalent of a nervous breakdown in his office at the time.

The attempt to show Drs. Terr and Brodsky were apparently for balance. These two respected authorities in the field were portrayed as unfair, lackies of chemical companies, and uncaring for patients. Although they were given thirty seconds for fairness to explain their points of views, the editorializing for the other side was unmistakable.

The program was inaccurate, naive, prejudiced, and completely missed the point of the phenomenon of EI. The people with the symptoms do have somatization. It is usually a reaction to depression and intolerance to stressful situations. It was described by FREUD in his famous case histories. It is characteristic of patients to lack insight into their problems, they are often not good candidates for direct psychotherapy, and are very difficult to handle because of their paranoia. The clinical ecology doctors who support them are not only wrong, they reinforce their patients' delusions instead of helping them to gain insight.

THE SKEPTIC'S ELECTRONIC BULLETIN BOARD

=> 2400 Baud, 415-648-8944

=> 24 hours, 7 days a week

=> Rick Moen, Sysop

STANFORD COURSE IN MEDICAL FRAUDS

Wallace Sampson, M.D., a founder and longtime advisor to BAY AREA SKEPTICS, has announced additional lectures of the annual course in medical fads.

=> Feb. 5: The Cult Experience -- Margaret Thaler Singer,
Ph.D., U.C. Berkeley

=> Feb. 12: Effects of Radiation and Electromagnetic Fields --
Leonard Sagan, M.D., Electric Power Research Institute, Palo
Alto

=> Feb. 12: Holistic Medicine, Charlatan Therapy, Homeopathy --
Wallace Sampson, M.D., Stanford

=> Feb. 19: Effects of Herbicides and Pesticides -- J. Gordon

Edwards, Ph.D. -- Dept. of Biological Sciences, San Jose State
=> Feb. 26: Mentalism, Magic, Psychic Surgery, Con Games --
Robert Steiner, Esq.
=> Mar. 5: Holism, Quantum Mechanics, and Extrasensory Perception
-- A Panel of Physicists to be announced.
=> Mar. 12: "Dead Week" optional lecture by student vote.

For information regarding the exact location and possible course changes, call Dr. Sampson at 415-961-5548, or The Skeptic's Board BBS at 415-648-8944. Future classes will be announced in these pages.

PRIZE FOR BEST ANSWER

How many psychics does it take to screw in a light bulb? (Blank pages don't count!)

| This box has been turned over |
| to the skeptical astrologer, |
| who has been promised complete |
| editorial freedom. |

FOOD FRAUD

The flim-flam, double talk of food labeling and commercials is unbelievable. It misleads people into thinking certain foods are healthy when they are not! People can be tricked and end up being candidates for heart attacks, cancer, obesity and/or diabetes.

Ann del Tredici, a nutritionist and registered dietician, will demonstrate how deceptive labeling "dopes" the public into thinking that they are using healthy foods.

The president-elect of the American Heart Association, Marin Chapter, will also offer easy to remember guidelines will be offered for safe and healthy food choices when shopping.

Learn, once and for all, how to read a label properly without going to law school!

CALENDAR

February meeting . . .

TRICKS AND DECEPTIONS OF FOOD LABELING

by: Ann del Tredici, R.N.

Wednesday, February 20th, 7:30 pm

El Cerrito Library

The El Cerrito Public Library is at 6510 Stockton Ave. From Route 80, take the Central Ave. exit (the third exit north of University Ave.). Go east about three blocks and turn left on San Pablo Ave., continue three blocks and turn right on Stockton. The library is on the right in the third block.

Watch for coming events in the BAS CALENDAR, or call 415-LA TRUTH for up-to-the-minute details on events. If you have ideas about topics or speakers leave a message on the hotline.

WARNING: We **STRONGLY URGE** that you call the hotline shortly before attending any Calendar activity to see if there have been any changes.

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