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May 1991 "BASIS", newsletter of the Bay Area Skeptics  
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Bay Area Skeptics Information Sheet

Vol. 10, No. 5

Editor: Yves Barbero

JOHN R. LEE, M.D. -- REPORT CARD

by Bob Steiner

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[There was a considerable amount of debate surrounding Bay Area Skeptics' invitation to Dr. Lee to speak at our January meeting. This publication took criticism for printing Dr. Lee's words (see Dr. Thomas H. Jukes's letter, and letters in previous issues). But Bay Area Skeptics does its research, as exemplified by Bob Steiner's article.]

Notwithstanding excellent advance publicity, only 28 people turned out to our January 1991 meeting. That was an unexpectedly high turnout, considering the fact that most of America was home watching television on that exciting second night of the Persian Gulf War.

Readers of "BASIS" are aware of the controversy surrounding the talk of John R. Lee, M.D. He addressed our January meeting, taking a strong stand against fluoridation, claiming that it does not help the teeth and that it is harmful in many ways. Many professionals in the dental and health fields considered it to be a mistake for Bay Area Skeptics to host Dr. Lee's talk. Their reactions were strong: one expressed amazement that we would have Dr. Lee speak; another said that we were retrogressing, and called us naive.

Many of these critics of Bay Area Skeptics have lengthy credentials in the field of fluoridation: they have written and spoken on the topic, and some were in the forefront of the fight to get fluoride into our water. I respect them; some I know personally and consider them friends. Many expressed their willingness to address Bay Area Skeptics on the topic of fluoridation. But none would appear on the platform WITH Dr. Lee!

They took an interesting position: They warned us that we skeptics were unqualified and unprepared to evaluate the claims of Dr. Lee, and made dire predictions about how our naive group would be swallowed up by his presentation ... and yet they refused to appear to refute his claims. They urged us not to allow him to address Bay Area Skeptics.

Although we have hosted a wide variety of speakers, including self-proclaimed witches and psychics, many perceived this as being

different in some fundamental ways.

My background and training are as a CPA and a magician. Could that background possibly prepare me to evaluate the technical presentation about fluoridation of our water supply, to be delivered by John R. Lee, M.D? Strange to report, the answer to that question is "Yes."

Dr. John R. Lee is intelligent, articulate, charismatic, and entertaining. He held the audience virtually spellbound for almost three hours. The considerable amount of information and data he presented seemed, on the surface, to be quite believable. His appearance of sincerity and confidence went a long way toward selling the entire package he was presenting.

And yet, screaming out at me from just below the surface was the gnawing, persistent message that I was watching a theatrical presentation. It had many of the trappings of a magic show. Misdirection was used, probably more times than I was aware of, to divert the audience from an incisive line of questioning. I had the uncomfortable feeling that the manipulation of figures and the drawing of conclusions that opposed prevailing scientific wisdom were nothing more than an illusion. The underlying theme of the entire presentation had all the earmarks of deception. In defense of a magic show, I must point out a fundamental distinction in the analogy I have drawn: A properly presented magic show is harmless entertainment and a joy to behold; Dr. Lee's talk was not harmless -- it was dangerous.

As Dr. Lee spun his web, my mind was spinning, attempting to keep up. I am pretty good at numbers. However, fluoridation is not my field. Few in the world can make an instantaneous evaluation of complex statistics relating to a study unknown to them, in a field unfamiliar to them.

Procter & Gamble had done extensive testing of its addition of fluoride to Crest Toothpaste. They concluded that it was beneficial to the teeth of the users. The American Dental Association endorsed that conclusion. Dr. Lee took Procter & Gamble's figures, massaged them, put them on a slide, and ended up "proving" that they fail to demonstrate any beneficial effect.

Perhaps you may recall the Kingston-Newburgh study. Newburgh, N.Y., had fluoridated its water supply. The neighboring community of Kingston, N.Y. had water that was fluoride-deficient ("fluoride-deficient" is the term used in many studies and articles). It was quite a comprehensive study, evaluating the effect on subjects over the course of decades. It was the basis for further studies, as well as part of the foundation for fluoridating water throughout the world.

One study concluded: "The cost for corrective care for children with life-long exposure to fluoridated water is less than half of what it costs in a nonfluoridated area, and incremental care is just about half." (1) Similar studies elsewhere confirmed that

finding.

Dr. Lee claims: "When ALL the children (rather than a small subset) are examined in the two communities, it is obvious that Newburgh shows no advantage over Kingston."

The literature of dentistry, medicine, and science have ongoing glowing reports about the wonderful benefits of fluoridation of water. One example states: "The literature demonstrating the beneficial effects of water fluoridation on dental health is voluminous. For example, studies have shown decreases in the incidence of caries ranging from 35% to 80%. The prevalence of both periodontal disease in young adults and malocclusion in children has been found to be lower in fluoridated areas.

Englander has demonstrated that these beneficial effects of fluoridation continue into early adulthood. In another study in which populations at ages 18 to 59 were compared, Englander and Wallace showed that these effects persist at least to the age of 60. These investigators found that the prevalence of dental caries, evaluated by teeth and surfaces, was roughly 40 to 50 percent higher among 896 native white residents of fluoride-deficient Rockford, Ill, than in optimally fluoridated Aurora, Ill." (2)

Dr. Lee claims that "All studies of the past two decades find that fluoridation provides no discernible dental benefit."

Some of our readers who have a tad of gray mixed in with their colored hair may remember the day when there were strong battles about the fluoridation of water. As more and more studies proclaimed the enormous benefits of fluoridation of water, the battles substantially subsided. The benefits were accepted as proven. Nonetheless, the studies continue ... and so do conclusions of positive results.

Dr. Lee authoritatively told us that dentists are not allowed to speak out against fluoridation of water. If they do, according to Dr. Lee, they will be expelled from the dental society. When some of the attending skeptics questioned this, Dr. Lee assured us that it was in the bylaws of the American Dental Association, as well as in the bylaws of the local dental societies.

Dr. Lee further told us that if a member of the dental society speaks out against fluoridation of water, that member will lose his or her pension.

The above alleged pressure brought by the dental societies on their members was central to Dr. Lee's presentation.

All right, fellow skeptics, are you ready to evaluate all of this?

Are we to accept as truth that the American Dental Association and all of its subsidiaries routinely violate the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States by prohibiting the free speech of members? Are we to believe that part of the punishment

for exercising the right to free speech is expulsion from the Association and all subsidiary dental societies?

And must we further believe that the American Dental Association and its subsidiaries will, as additional punishment, commit an act of outright theft by denying vested retirement benefits to the members? Do you believe that all of this is in the bylaws of the American Dental Association, as well as in the bylaws of all of the state and local dental associations and societies?

Are we to swallow, on the spot, uncritically, that the studies on Crest Toothpaste, which were subsequently endorsed by the American Dental Association, are completely invalid, as Dr. Lee states?

Many scientists evaluated the Kingston-Newburgh study over several decades. With extraordinarily few exceptions, all who evaluated the study hailed it as a significant breakthrough for improved health. Were all of those scientists wrong? And, in the past 20 years, has there not been even one single study supporting the advisability of fluoridation of our water supply, as Dr. Lee claims?

Dr. Lee glibly told us of one study evaluating the effects of fluoridation of water on children up to age five. Kim Cooper, a dental hygienist in the audience, exclaimed, "Those are baby teeth!" While I do not pretend to be able to evaluate the technical exchange that followed, I can comment on the personal exchange. Dr. Lee requested that Cooper explain, which she did. Lee immediately dropped all discussion of that study, changed the subject, and went on to wow us with a report on another study. Since no one was familiar with the latter study or the data contained therein, Lee proceeded with his assertions. Among magicians, that tactic is called MISDIRECTION.

I obtained and read every single word in the Bylaws of the American Dental Association, the California Dental Association, the Contra Costa Dental Society, and the San Diego County Dental Society. In addition, I read every word of the "American Dental Association Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct".

There was not one single word about expulsion for speaking out against fluoride. There was not word one about loss of retirement benefits because a dentist exercised the right to free speech. There was not a hint of any pressure put on anti-fluoride dentists. Ready for the grabber? The words "fluoride" and "fluoridation" do not even appear in the pages and pages and pages of bylaws and codes that I combed.

How about Dr. Lee's glib use of statistics, confidently employing them to dismiss the conclusions of thousands of scientists in many fields over half a century?

The reports on the details and statistics for most of the studies tend to be a tad more voluminous and complex than we can analyze here. However, I believe it would be instructive to analyze in

depth a relatively simple presentation made by Dr. Lee.  
Following is a "Comparison of Dental Costs" that was submitted by Dr. Lee.

Although it will take a bit of concentration on your part to follow this analysis, I promise you that your patience will be rewarded.

Each of the figures will be analyzed, starting with the figures in the "Fluoridated" column.

The word "Average", as used in this context, generally refers to the arithmetic mean. "Average Net Income" would be arrived at by totaling the Net Income of all dentists in the population studied, and dividing that figure by the number of dentists in that population.

"Net Income" is the bottom line. You start with Gross Revenue; then you subtract all Costs, Expenses, and Losses. Net Income is what is left after deducting such things as Depreciation, Telephone, and Auto Expense. To use that Net Income figure as a measure of Dental Costs makes no sense. How can your dental costs be computed by taking into account the depreciation on the car that your dentist happens to drive?

The Average Net Income was then multiplied by the Number of Dentists, resulting in a figure called "Dental Costs". We are back at the total Net Income for all Dentists in the population studied, but that is NOT "Dental Costs."

Next, the Dental Costs figure was divided by the Population Served, in order to arrive at a figure called "Cost/Person". Cost per person indeed! Do you really believe that the Average Dental Costs Per Person for an entire year was only \$13.01? Were it not for the fact that Dr. Lee presented this in a serious manner, we could dismiss it as an attempt at humor.

Please follow me down the "Non-Fluoridated" column.

If you take the \$17,000 "Average Net Income of Dentists" and multiply it by the "Number of Dentists" (156), you arrive at \$2,652,000

The figure presented as "Dental Costs" is \$2,262,000

There is an error in multiplication in the amount of \$390,000

That is a 15 percent error!

Using Average Net Income figures, the assertion was made that Dentists' Fees are 16.9 percent higher in Fluoridated Communities. I am at a loss to understand how anyone can believe that ANY conclusion can be made about comparative Dental Fees when the only figures known are the Average Net Income of Dentists.

The concluding statistic on this page indicates that the "Dental Cost Per Person" is higher in the Fluoridated Communities by 19.8 percent After adjusting for the \$390,000 error in the computation, we learn that the so-called Dental Cost Per Person is merely 2.1 percent higher. The difference of 17.7 percent represents an 843 percent error in the computation and in the conclusion. Please bear in mind that, in addition to an 843 percent error in computation, the figures would be meaningless even if they were correctly computed.

As I mused about the figures, it occurred to me that maybe ... just maybe ... the American Dental Association might not have published such an unkempt presentation of data in its professional journal.

We will now compare Dr. Lee's data with the actual data in the source he cited (Yes, I tracked it down).

In the article cited by Dr. Lee (2), Table 1 gives the population data for "Fluoridated" and "Fluoride-deficient" communities for Calendar Year \_1967\_. ("Fluoride-deficient" is the term used in the article.)

Several pages later, and not directly related to Table 1, Table 8 gives the "Median Net Income" of dentists in the communities for Calendar Year \_1965\_. "Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary" defines "median" as "a value in an ordered set of values below and above which there is an equal number of values." To multiply the "Median Net Income" by the total population is enough to make a person who has lived with numbers all his or her life scream.

Let us conclude by reviewing our evaluation of the reliability of data on which Dr. Lee based his conclusions.

He took the "Median Net Income" (after Depreciation, Telephone, Auto Expense, and all other Costs, Expenses, and Losses) of 96 Dentists in Fluoride-deficient Communities, for Calendar Year \_1965\_, and renamed it "Average Net Income". He multiplied that figure by 156, which was the number of dentists in active practice in those communities for Calendar Year \_1967\_, to arrive at a figure he called Dental Costs. In addition to ONE, making a meaningless computation, TWO, renaming "Median" as "Average", and THREE, crossing a time zone of two years, he made a mathematical error of \$390,000. In presenting his data, he deleted all reference to years. Following through, the \$390,000 error resulted in an 843 percent error in the concluding figure in the presentation. Then Dr. Lee cited an article in the "Journal of the American Dental Association" as if it were the source of his data.

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TABLE 1:
COMPARISON OF DENTAL COSTS
FLUORIDATED AND
NON-FLUORIDATED

## COMMUNITIES

	FLUORIDATED	NON-FLUORIDATED
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Average Net Income of Dentists	\$19,875	\$17,000
Number of Dentists	162	156
Dental Costs	\$3,219,750	\$2,262,000
Population Served	247,000	208,000
Cost/Person	\$13.01	\$10.86
In Fluoridated Communities:		
Dentists' fees	16.9% higher	
Cost/Person	19.8% higher	
Source: Douglas, et al., "Impact of water fluoridation on dental practices and dental manpower"; "JADA", Vol. 84, Feb.72		

(1) Ast, C.B., and others. "Time and cost factors to provide regular, periodic dental care for children in a fluoridated and nonfluoridated area: final report." "JADA" ("Journal of the American Dental Association"), 80:770, April 1970.

(2) Douglas, Bruce L., and others. "Impact of water fluoridation on dental practice and dental manpower." "JADA", Vol. 84, February 1972. (Citations for all studies cited in the quoted portions are available upon request.)

[Bob Steiner is a founder of Bay Area Skeptics.]

## BAY AREA SKEPTICS ON CALL

by Kent Harker

In the first week of March, the Bay Area Skeptics's 24 hour hot line, (415) La-Truth, received a call from the Harvard Club (Palo Alto chapter.) We were invited to supply a speaker on their Wednesday, March 20 meeting and I was assigned to address the group. The Harvard Club is an association of Harvard alums who meet monthly for intellectual discussion. The March topic was extraterrestrial intelligence.

There were four invited speakers: an engineer from the SETI project, a clinical psychologist, a physicist, and me. The format was a dinner-table discussion. Each speaker had twenty minutes at a table of about ten diners. After twenty minutes each speaker moved to another table.

The engineer talked about the need for funding the SETI project. The psychologist related that increasing numbers of her patients had experienced UFO abductions, all of which had persuaded her to consider "alternate realities." (She had learned about her patient's travails by regressing them hypnotically.) The physicist had been studying "quantum interconnectedness" and how our minds

determine reality. He mixed his discourse with biblical numerology, which, he said, had great significance for what the ancients knew. I focused on the March 1970 "Cradle Hill UFO incident" that happened in Westminster, England.

What I said is not the significance of this note in "BASIS" about the event. What is significant is that the Harvard Club had some organization -- Bay Area Skeptics -- to contact for a view of "the other side." And those in attendance expressed near unanimity in that sentiment. Most had not heard pointed counters to some of the drivel we hear and read in the media and they are too busy to have to search for it. Several people told me that they were just grateful that we (BAS) are "out there" to do what we do, and they thought it wonderful that we have an \$11,000 offer for a successful demonstration of paranormal ability under controlled conditions.

The real significance is that Bay Area Skeptics is widely enough known that citizens' groups and various agencies of the media know that they can quickly reach a responsible counter to the nonsense in which society swims. This fact is not lost on the various organizations that purvey psychic phenomena as reality, either.

This is the raison d'etre for Bay Area Skeptics.

[Kent Harker is the former editor of "BASIS" and is currently typesetting books for the skeptical and humanist communities. He has been silent for too long.]

Letters to the Editor  
CODESH -- CSICOP  
by Michael Roesch

Although the two essays concerning organized skepticism in the March issue of "BASIS" [Moen, Barbero] were insightful, the concern over the juxtaposition of CODESH and CSICOP seems overstated. First, the organizations have long been connected geographically, administratively, and philosophically -- there is little justification to now expect harmful inbreeding. Second, placing both under the "Center for Inquiry" banner should actually help to promote efficiency and intellectual honesty. I do not mean that all secular humanist and skeptic groups walk the same road -- but they should at least admit to be heading in the same general direction.

Environmental groups have achieved success, not by denying their basic common philosophy, but by creating organizations that achieve that philosophy by different paths (Audubon, Sierra Club, Nature Conservancy). CODESH and CSICOP, though originating at a common source, maintain adequate distance in publications and perspectives. In fact, the point where the groups connect presents more of an intellectual vista than a program. It is only a problem for humanists and skeptics who have set limits on their own area of inquiry.

You [the editor] state skepticism "is a methodology with no fixed parameters." I agree. A skeptic's intellectual explorations should not be limited by tradition or dogma. It is this commitment to skepticism that has caused many skeptics to accept a few of the basic principles of secular humanism.

A hundred years ago Robert Ingersoll commented: "If the people were a little more ignorant, astrology would flourish -- if a little more enlightened, religion would perish." A skeptic with no 'fixed parameters' may eventually even tug at the threads of scientific ignorance that weave the New Ager and Christian fundamentalist together. All untested claims to knowledge, whether from scripture, s<130>ance or science, should be equal in the eyes of a skeptic. The "Center for Inquiry" project needs our support, and it certainly does not deserve our censure.

[Michael Roesch is co-editor of the Siskiyou Humanists' newsletter, an entertaining and informative publication. For a sample copy, write P.O. BOX 223, Weed, CA 96094]

## POLITICS?

by Poul Anderson

The recent introduction of political advocacy into "BASIS" is disturbing. It has destroyed quite a few worthwhile organizations in the past. The reason is that where politics is concerned, emotions are apt to run high, while at the same time there is little or no possibility of applying scientific method. For example, many a person who is perfectly sound where it comes to evaluating claims about ESP or UFOs still retains faith in the wisdom and beneficence of government -- and would regard my skepticism about this as unfounded. Many who revere the Constitution of the United States think that it has been undermined by the Supreme Court rather than, say, the Reagan administration -- and yet agree that Velikovsky promulgated nonsense. Et cetera, et cetera. Let CSICOP concentrate on pseudoscience and its kin.

SOME political and historical objectivity is possible, and shows the danger of dogmatism in this area. For example, your [the editor] assertion that no democracy has ever declared war on another is simply false. Consider the Boar War. True, the Blacks in South Africa were disenfranchised and oppressed, but so were most of the Irish, not to mention other subjects of the British Empire. As far as their electorates were concerned, both the English and the Boars were pretty free people. Then there was the United States, overrunning Indian tribes, most of which were run on democratic lines, and suppressing a Philippines independence movement that had at least the potential of establishing a real republic. Ancient Greece provides several more examples.

If collisions between democracies have been rare, it seems likely

that this is just because they themselves are rare and usually short-lived.

## DOWN SYNDROME

by Thomas H. Jukes, Ph.D.

Apparently you [The Editor] have decided that it is your responsibility to edit my text and you are apologizing for your oversight in not doing so ("BASIS", March). Many thanks, but I assure you that I accept responsibility as an author.

There is another question: Why do you not perform the same editorial pruning for others whose writings appear in "BASIS"? For example, some editing (see my comment on this point, "BASIS", page three, Feb.) was needed on the piece by John R. Lee in the Dec. issue? And why did you feel (as you told me) that you "couldn't change a word" in the letter by Molleen Matsumura when her last sentence asked a question that I had already answered? She asks that if I have "evidence that water fluoridation does not affect the incidence of birth defects, "BASIS" readers should certainly hear about it". I had said ("BASIS" page five, Feb.) that there was no evidence for any such effect, and I repeat this. The rest of her letter is excellent, except that it was my antifuoridationist source, not I, who "picked on Down Syndrome" -- see my letter in March "BASIS".

## THE SKEPTIC'S ELECTRONIC BULLETIN BOARD

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## FLYING SAUCERS

by Yves Barbero

Some time back, I filled in for Robert Sheaffer at the last minute on a radio talk show. I had no better credentials than the fact that I was geographically close. The show originated from the planetarium of the California Academy of Sciences and I was employed on the second floor of CAS.

I was, frankly, unprepared. With a week's notice, I considered reading up on the matter but that would have meant an expenditure of time on what I considered a fairly worn-out topic. "How do you explain that?" I would have been asked by the proponent of UFOs and I would have given the standard answers. No one would have been convinced one way or the other. Anyway, how could I possibly get the knowledge in just a week that Sheaffer had accumulated over the years? If the proponent were half-way knowledgeable, he could

easily trip me up.

I hit on a novel solution. Having a decent background in the field of science fiction (1) since I've read it all my life, I decided to put myself in the place of an alien visitor and describe how I'd approach the exploration of Earth.

First of all, if my goal were study, I'd hardly waste my time kidnapping specimens when all I had to do was disguise myself as a human being, join academia, and grab as much information as I could (I might even be able to do it remotely by tapping into computer networks). Being from a civilization which invests considerable time and treasure to traverse between stars, I would undoubtedly be prepared for all sorts of contingencies. These would include faking identities and gaining access to morgues and laboratories of all sorts. After all, these activities can be done with contemporary techniques by Earthlings. And if I did grab some allegedly intelligent specimens, I would certainly have the tools to completely wipe their memories clean if I bothered to return them at all.

I certainly wouldn't have to hide out near a convenience store and suddenly shine bright lights at motorists to the accompaniment of weird electronic music.

This solution seemed to delight the small live audience. Even the proponent, who seemed a decent and civilized man, began asking me questions rather than challenging me. He concluded that he believed and I said, "show me!"

This difference of opinion, I am assured, is a matter of individual wiring since it's all speculation. Even my scenario, despite its entertainment value, is flawed. It assumes a shared desire on the part of a completely different species to satisfy curiosity. Carl Sagan delights in pointing out that we have more in common with a petunia, genetically, than we could ever have with any alien. So why should we assume that they'd share anything human with us?

Now I personally think, given the untold number of stars and galaxies, that the odds favor life existing on millions -- if not billions -- of other planets. But (assuming they exist at the same time we are existing) ...

- => Are they close enough to make it here?
- => Are they motivated to come here?
- => Do they have the technology?
- => Why would they want to keep their visit secret?

These questions raise plenty of problems. Still, it must be acknowledged that just because we haven't seen any credible evidence does not mean that they didn't come in the past. They could certainly have been smart enough not to leave any beer cans or other alien litter. And it's also true that their peculiar psychology might lend itself to their examining half-literate, sexually frustrated couples on back country roads while these

unfortunates returned from the local road house. Maybe the country music blaring from old Ford pickups attracts them. There's no reason to assume that an alien culture must resemble that of the middle-income technocrat who mistakes his cultural bias for rational thinking.

My limited cultural bias only permits me to look at problems within the narrow parameters of late twentieth-century ideas. It's good to remember that the best thinkers in other ages looked at things differently. Could we have convinced a Revolutionary American that his novel idea of the mass manufacture of the flintlock, using like-parts for easy repairs in the field, to fight the British, would lead to the demise of his agrarian economy. Unidentified flying objects in biblical times were undoubtedly interpreted as spiritual manifestations. Being of a technical bent, we've interpreted UFOs as craft from other worlds or dimensions. Even skeptics look for mechanical counter-arguments first. If those fail, they fall back on psychological arguments, since psychology is the catch-all we fish with when clear answers aren't immediately apparent.

It could be that our current state of learning simply cannot supply an answer. That's happened in past ages. Why not now?

The same common-sense speculative filter which allows me to conclude that there's probably life aplenty in the universe leads me to conclude that we probably have not been visited. But I think I'd have a good laugh at myself if we were suddenly to find a flying saucer in the middle of the White House Rose Garden and see little green men in a photo-opportunity with the President.

(1) I even had a science-fiction novel published, "The CTZ Paradigm" (Doubleday, 1975) under the pen-name Yves Regis Francois.

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#### Book Review

#### SCIENTOLOGY'S ROOTS

"Bare-Faced Messiah, The True Story of L. Ron Hubbard", by Russell Miller, Penguin Books Ltd., 1987.

by Charles Shapiro, Secretary, Georgia Skeptics

L. Ron Hubbard achieved fame and wealth as the founder of two large pseudoscientific movements: Dianetics and Scientology. He and his

followers have written much about his life, little of which is true. This "unauthorized biography" tells the real story, which, as Russell Miller says in his introduction, "is much more bizarre, much more improbable, than any of the lies."

Miller is well qualified to write about Hubbard. He started reporting at twenty-one, and has been doing it for more than 30 years. Miller's other books include a biography of Hugh Hefner and a book about the millionaire J. Paul Getty. The book was written in spite of threats of libel suits and defamatory letters to his publisher from the Church of Scientology.

Much of "Bare-Faced Messiah" was gathered from face-to-face interviews, and the eye-witness accounts make the book exciting reading. Quotes are footnoted, and the book also has a full bibliography and index. This care is needed, since Miller has a definite thesis -- that L. Ron Hubbard was "one of the most successful and colourful confidence tricksters of the twentieth century."

Miller's book chronicles Hubbard's life from his "Navy Brat" childhood, through his undistinguished Navy career, his three wives and five children, and his pulp writing and messianic periods. It is truly an amazing story. One fascinating sidelight was the prodigious amount of work Hubbard invested in telling lies. Hubbard didn't just lie -- he lied a lot, and all the time.

The story also illustrates the down side of this lifestyle: Hubbard was desperately unhappy for much of his time as the guru of Scientology, convinced that a myriad of people and organizations were conspiring to kill him and take his power. He also apparently started to believe some of the things he said, with predictably disastrous results. The stories of the presentation of the first person to be made a superman by Dianetics, and of untrained landsmen trying to pilot a seagoing trawler in the Mediterranean are by turns harrowing and hilarious.

"Bare-Faced Messiah" has some weaknesses. Miller accepts at face value a story about a "cruel, post-hypnotic trick" which Hubbard was said to have played early in his career. The trick, which involved hypnotizing someone to believe that he was unable to let go of a red-hot railing, "only later came to light..." in a session with a "professional hypnotist". Given the extreme suggestibility of hypnotizing people, the entire incident may well have been fabricated under hypnosis. This is an interesting lapse, because a hypnotic process called "auditing" lies at the heart of much of Scientology's doctrine. I would also have liked to hear more about the neologisms and ideas that Scientologists use, which seem to have grown up in response to the extremely confused and improbable doctrine expounded by Hubbard.

"Bare-Faced Messiah" is an entertaining and frightening tale. The book makes a good gift to anyone who has contact with Scientology.

-THE GEORGIA SKEPTIC (4:1)

## VOLUNTEERS FOR 1991 CSICOP CONFERENCE IN BERKELEY

The following have kindly volunteered their services to help make the conference a success. In alphabetical order, they are ...

- => Yves Barbero
- => Lucinda Ben-David
- => Ralph Carmichael
- => Judy Daar
- => Keith Dabney
- => Don Henvick
- => Dan Dugan - Sound and Audio
- => Stan Isaacs - VIP Limousine Services
- => Rick Moen - Chair, Steering Committee and Volunteer Committee
- => Kathy Pinna - Usher Supervisor
- => Francis Rigney
- => Wilma Russell
- => Jerry Schwartz
- => Gil Shapiro - Vice-Chair, Steering Committee
- => Terry Simmon
- => Kate Talbot
- => Laurel Tuck
- => Quentin Tuck
- => Ray Westergard - VIP Limousine Services
- => Tom Woosnam

## LASER PRINTER?

Does anyone have a working laser printer he'd like to donate to "BASIS"?

We've always been fortunate in having first-rate computing equipment available to us for final drafts from our dedicated subscribers. But it'd be really nice to have even a basic machine available at the editor's office to view working drafts without traveling across town.

Contact Yves Barbero at 415-285-4358.

Make plans now to join us at the  
1991 CSICOP CONFERENCE  
Hosted by the Bay Area Skeptics, and co-sponsored by CSICOP  
and the University of California at Berkeley Physics Department  
CLAREMONT RESORT HOTEL  
Berkeley/Oakland Hills, California  
Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, May 3-5, 1991

Keynote Address: "In Search of Our Origins", by Donald C. Johanson, President, Institute of Human Origins, Berkeley

(See the Spring 1991 issue of the "Skeptical Inquirer" for details and registration information. Volunteers are still needed. Time is short. Call Rick Moen, the head of the volunteer committee, by dialing LOGICAL, or drop by the registration table. It's never too late.)

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Richard J. Ofshe, Ph.D., U. C. Berkeley  
Bernard Oliver, Ph.D., NASA Ames Research Center  
Kevin Padian, Ph.D., U. C. Berkeley  
James Randi, Magician, Author, Lecturer  
Francis Rigney, M.D., Pacific Presbyterian Med. Center  
Wallace I. Sampson, M.D., Stanford University  
Eugenie C. Scott, Ph.D., Anthropologist  
Robert Sheaffer, Technical Writer, UFO expert  
Robert A. Steiner, CPA, Magician, Lecturer, Writer

Ray Spangenburg, Science writer  
Jill C. Tarter, Ph.D., U. C. Berkeley

## CALENDAR

May meeting...

### 1991 CSICOP CONFERENCE

DONALD C. JOHANSON

President, Institute of Human Origins, Berkeley

Keynote Speaker

Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, May 3-5, 1991

Claremont Resort Hotel

Berkeley/Oakland Hills

Directions: Ashby Avenue Exit, Highway 80, west until you see a huge white Art-Deco building to your left.

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.

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