

The Association For Rational Thought News
Practicing The Art Of Clear Thinking In All Walks Of Life
Vol. 1, No. 7
April 1992

The Association for Rational Thought is a new organization committed to encouraging clear thinking in all walks of life. ART encourages the investigation of paranormal and pseudo-scientific claims from a responsible, scientific viewpoint and the distribution of the results of such investigations to the public. You are cordially invited to become a charter member of ART.

Come to the First Annual Meeting!
Saturday, April 25, Greenwich Tavern and Restaurant

Please Note: We are Meeting April 25, not April 18, as Earlier Announced

To avoid conflicting with the CSICOP Seminar, "Magic for Skeptics: Trickery and the Paranormal," Lexington, Ky., April 17-19 (see information on page 3), the ART Annual Meeting has been moved from April 18 to April 25. The First Annual Meeting of the Association for Rational Thought will be held on Saturday, April 25, at 10:00 AM at the Greenwich Tavern and Restaurant on Gilbert Avenue (Driving instructions elsewhere in this issue).

The program will include a brief business meeting to elect and install new officers for the coming year, an opportunity to learn about and volunteer for ART committees, and a presentation by Oran Dent, psychologist and stage magician, who will delight mind and eye with "Similarities Between Military Deception and Stage Magic." All members are encouraged to come, vote, and meet the new slate of officers. Any one who joins and pays dues through April 25 will be included in the roster of ART Charter Members and will be eligible to vote at the Annual Meeting.

Everyone is invited to join Oran Dent and the new officers for lunch at the Greenwich Tavern after the meeting. The officers will meet following lunch to begin planning for ART's second season of rational thinking. Peggy Borger will present the treasurer's report and a report on incorporating ART, and Virginia Jergens will report on plans for the newsletter.

March Meeting: Robert Baker, Ghostbuster and CSICOP Fellow: "Not All Kentucky Spirits are in Bottles"

ART met on Saturday, March 21, at the Greenwich Tavern to adopt by-laws and hear a lecture by Robert A. Baker, professor emeritus of psychology at the University of Kentucky, CSICOP Fellow, and author of several books, including *They Call It Hypnosis and Hidden Memories*, which examine the unintentional collusion of patient and therapist in producing nonfactual "memories." The ability of average human beings to deceive themselves because of a lack of information about how the normal brain functions is bottomless, according to Prof. Baker. Because of this ability, skeptics are surrounded by a sea of ignorance, superstition and credulity. Commercial media cash in on ignorance by pandering to audiences' fears, particularly fear of death, promoting superstitious belief while attracting large and profitable audiences. The delusion that interests Baker most now is the belief in ghosts, the belief in the ability of the dead to return to earth, appear before the living, and influence earthly affairs.

Baker thinks that people believe in ghosts because of an overwhelming desire to believe in life after death. The belief in life after death is accompanied by a strong expectation that events evidencing life after death will occur. Thus a believer is not at all surprised to find the ghost of a favorite aunt rocking in her favorite rocking chair--the believer expects such events, and therefore is more likely to think of ghosts than of drafts. Believers in ghosts also lack knowledge of normal brain function. The common delusion of the spectral figure at the foot of the bed upon waking or going to sleep is an effect produced by normal brain processes. A person who has not been introduced to these normal processes in a course in introductory psychology, however, may well believe the illusion is a ghost, because of expecting a ghost rather than a normal glitch in perception.

Belief in ghosts might be considered a harmless comfort and amusement, but a that is not always the case. Baker reported an incident in Ohio in which teenagers sighted a "ghost" in a graveyard. Repeated sightings resulted in the arrival of the police, who saw the apparition, hailed it, and upon receiving no answer, shot it, thus ending the life of a

early-rising, deaf baker on his way to work shortly before dawn.

Prof. Baker concluded his tales of Kentucky ghosts and ghostbusting by showing slides of well-known, alleged ghosts, accompanied by explanations of how the photographs had been faked. Altogether an entertaining and enlightening lecture for the skeptics gathered companionably in the dim reaches of the Greenwich Tavern.

Which Committee Would You Like to Serve On??

ART has an enormous job to do in the tri-state-- pseudoscience, gullibility, and ignorance permeate the media as well as the population at large. You can do something to promote scientific, rational thinking by volunteering to work on one of ART's committees. Many hands make light work! Join the committee of your choice at the annual meeting, or call Peggy Borger, 351-0921, and let her know what your preference is.

Program Committee

plans and arranges membership meetings, prepares calendar of membership meetings. Needs help in finding a better place for us to meet. Needs people to help plan programs, sharing sessions, get-togethers. Get your favorite scam on the list for a program next year--volunteer for this committee!

Publicity Committee

maintains a mailing list, notifies members of meetings, provides publicity to media. Needs someone with a computer to maintain mailing lists, someone to check out meeting announcement possibilities with the local papers and radio stations, and a great deal of creativity in getting the word out to the public.

Scientific and Technical Consulting Committee

organizes and maintains a pool of scientists and technicians to implement ART's educational and scientific purposes. Needs people with contacts in business, industry, academia, and the professions to find experts on everything from astrology to UFO's and to link the experts to those in the media, law enforcement, and elsewhere who need expert information. If you are a doctor, nurse, lawyer, professor, engineer or scientist or know such experts, we need you and your network.

Investigations Committee

supervises investigations conducted by ART. Needs people to visit the scenes of allegedly paranormal events, interview witnesses, law enforcement officers, and experts, and convey to the media and the public a scientific view of the event. All Sherlock Holmes and James "The Amazing" Randi wannabees should sign up for this committee.

Membership Committee

works toward maintaining and increasing ART's membership. Needs friendly, community- oriented people to find imaginative ways to get the word out to interested people in the tri-state area and help build a network of supportive rational thinkers. Telephone Tree Committee--These people are the main branches of our communication network for rapid distribution of information in the event of a paranormal emergency requiring prompt damage control. Join the tree, promote clear thinking!

Newsletter Committee

Read and review fascinating books exploring paranormal stuff! See your opinion in print! Spend happy hours folding, labeling, and stamping newsletters while arguing the finer points of skepticism with like- minded friends! All the while leaving the finer points of comma placement to the editor. Sign up for the newsletter committee.

Calendar

April 25, Saturday, 10:00 AM. First Annual Meeting: Election and installation of officers for 1992-93. Oran Dent, stage magician and ART charter member, will present "Similarities Between Military Deception and Stage Magic," illustrated with magic tricks. Greenwich Tavern and Restaurant, 2440 Gilbert Ave., Cincinnati. Executive Council Meeting following lunch.

May 16. Saturday, 10:00 AM. Keith Brabender on "Art's Perception of Science: An Analysis of Artistic and Scientific Knowledge from the Artist's Viewpoint." Greenwich Tavern and Restaurant, 2440 Gilbert Ave., Cincinnati. Executive Council Meeting following lunch.

October 17. Saturday, 10:00 AM Topic and place to be announced in the next issue of the ART News, which will appear in your mailbox about October 1.

Current Officers (Term of Office Ends April, 1992)

President: Joe Gastright

Secretary : Mary Pacinda

Treasurer: Peggy Borger

Program Committee Chair: Joe Gastright

Newsletter Editor: Virginia Jergens

Publicity Committee Chair: Porter Henry

Telephone Tree Committee Chair: Peggy Borger (Members: Chuck Rodway, Virginia Jergens, Carolyn Hunt, Bill Giles) Membership Telephone Project Chair: Peggy Borger (Project volunteers: Porter Henry, Virginia Jergens, John Hubbard, Richard A. Bozian, Judy Findsen, John Fischer, Richard Hildebrand, John Kennedy, Mary Pacinda, and Ruthann West)

By-Laws Committee Chair: Mary Pacinda (Members: Holly Norton, Chuck Rodway, Virginia Jergens)

Media Resources Chair: Richard A. Bozian (Members: Chuck Rodway, Carl Bunde)

CSICOP Seminar: Magic for Skeptics--Trickery and the Paranormal

Lexington, Kentucky, Friday-Sunday, April 17-19, 1992.

Joe Nickell and Robert A. Baker, Lecturers.

Learn about the history of magic and its association with the paranormal, magic tricks and perception, mentalism and the tricks of psychics. Joe Nickell, former stage magician and private investigator, now teaches technical writing at the University of Kentucky. Robert A. Baker, professor emeritus of psychology at UK, is the author of several books and a well-known ghostbuster. For information, contact Barry Karr, CSICOP 716-636-1425. ART members Joe Gastright (581- 7315) and Porter Henry (221-5106) are going--call if you want to go with them. [an error occurred while processing this directive]