The Association for Rational Thought News
Vol. 3, No. 4.
The Voice of Cincinnati's Skeptics
April, 1994

A.R.T. is an organization committed to encouraging rational, well-informed evaluation of fringe-science, pseudoscience, and paranormal claims. A.R.T. encourages the investigation of paranormal and pseudoscientific 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 member of A.R.T. Membership information is included in this newsletter.

Joe Gastright and the History of Nonsense

A.R.T. will hold its third annual meeting Saturday, April 9, 10:00 A.M., 1994, at the Bethesda Blue Ash Medical Building, Cooper Road and Reed Hartman Highway (directions on the back page of this newsletter).

Investigations Officer Joe Gastright will trace families of well-known and little-known pseudo- sciences from the 1790's to the present, documenting not only the descendants of nonsense but also its friends and fellow travelers.

Annual Election of Officers

Officers to serve for the coming year will be elected. Plan to join A.R.T. members for lunch after the meeting at the James Tavern across the street from the Bethesda Blue Ash Medical Building. Lively conversation guaranteed. The public is invited. -Ed.

Newsletter Staff Expands

As of this issue, your A.R.T. News is brought to you by a huge volunteer staff of four: Virginia Jergens, Editor, who writes, begs or borrows the articles included; Peter Jergens, Layout Editor, who assembles the material into newsletter format; Roy Auerbach, who maintains the mailing lists for the newsletter and prints mailing labels for each issue; and Brad Bonham, Production Editor, responsible for printing, assembling, and mailing the issue. In addition, Ruthann West, Dick Shepherd, and Cathy Russell spend hours folding, sealing, addressing, and sorting the piles of newsletters sent out with each issue. -Ed.

WANTED: Articles for A.R.T. News

Are you fascinated by crop circles, Bigfoot sightings, near-death experiences or other pseudoscientific or paranormal phenomena? Other skeptics would love to know what you know about your favorite pseudo-science or paranormal phenomenon. Research it, write it up, and submit it to the newsletter. Here's how:

Check the Calendar included in each issue of the newsletter for the deadline for upcoming issues. Choose a topic of interest to skeptics and write an article about it. Maximum length is 1000 words (4 double-spaced standard type-written pages). Avoid opinion and speculation in favor of solid, informative material. Include a list of suggestions for further readings.

If your topic is a controversial one, be sure to include your position on the issue, and evidence supporting your position. In addition, state the position of those who disagree with you, and provide evidence indicating why you believe they are wrong.

Further good advice for authors of articles in skeptical newsletters comes from Science & Superstition, v. 1, no. 1, Jan. 1994, p. 8. The editor suggests that a skeptical newsletter "critically examines claims of paranormal, fringe-science, and pseudoscientific phenomena from a responsible, scientific point of view and provides a forum for informed discussion of all relevant issues. It encourages science and scientific inquiry, critical thinking, and the use of reason and the methods of science in examining important issues...Write clearly, interestingly and simply. Avoid unnecessary technical jargon..."

"Direct critiques toward ideas and issues, not individuals. Authors should be prepared to provide documentation of all factual assertions. A useful set of guidelines for those who seek to evaluate paranormal claims [is] 'Proper Criticism,'

written by Professor Ray Hyman." -Ed.

Roy Auerbach Goes International

In January, Andrew Jergens, son of A.R.T. Newsletter Editor Virginia Jergens, reached into his graduate student mail box in the Mathematics Department at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and pulled out the first issue of Science & Superstition, "An international information resource on the investigation of paranormal claims."

On the front page of this new publication he found "The Five Laws of Quack Science," by A.R.T. membership chair Roy Auerbach, a summary of the talk Roy gave to the A.R.T. Membership and which had been included in The Association for Rational Thought News. The news arrived in Cincinnati via e-mail a few hours later.

Science & Superstition is the creation of Philip Marmaros, editor, and also founder of the Israel Skeptics Society. Like A.R.T., the Israel Skeptics Society works in concert with the aims of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Paranormal Claims. The premier issue is a thoughtful presentation of the skeptic's role in a credulous culture.

Science & Superstition benefited from the international electronic data highway via skeptics' user groups on Internet, where A.R.T. News is now regularly posted by A.R.T. Media Resources Coordinator Lance Moody.—Ed.

Naturopathy, Briefly

The basic belief of naturopathy is that all disease is caused by the build up of toxins in the body. Naturopaths use natural methods to rid the body of these poisons. You will find little agreement among naturopaths about the nature of the toxins and their source. They also disagree on just what kinds of treatment deserve the tag "natural."

Naturopaths are licensed as primary care physicians in a few states. The movement was founded by a turn of the century homeopathic practitioner by the name of John H. Steele. Early on the movement practiced hydrotherapy (bathing in and drinking of mineral water), herbal medication, and manipulation. Naturopaths run medical schools in the states of Washington and Oregon.

In practice naturopaths are highly eclectic and tend to practice all of the popular quack methods of diagnosis and treatment. Naturally methods which "clean out the system" such as fasting, enemas, and even laxatives have been staple treatments. In some western states and Hawaii naturopaths fill the same niche filled by chiropractors in the rest of the country. To date there has been no research supporting the theory on which naturopathy is based.— Joe Gastright, Investigations officer, in a communication to the Skeptics forum on Productivity Online.

NCAHF Report:
The Latest in Health Fraud

The National Council Against Health Fraud, Inc., is an all volunteer, non-profit, tax-exempt organization dedicated to providing reliable information about health care.

A recent issue of the NCAHF newsletter includes articles on political pressures brought to bear on the National Institutes of Health to found its new Office of Alternative Medicine, warnings on the dangers of endocarditis resulting from acupuncture for those with prosthetic heart valves, a review of a new book on how to avoid quackery in medicine, and a discussion of Senator Orrin Hatch's career as hero to the health food, food supplement, and herbal industries.

The NCAHF publishes the NCAHF Newsletter bimonthly. An individual subscription is $15.00 a year, NCAHF, Box 1276, Loma Linda CA 92354.— Ed., with help from Joe Gastright, Investigations officer.

Knell Brings UFO Show to Tri-State

Mary Pacinda, A.R.T. Secretary, recently attended a presentation by Bill Knell on Unidentified Flying Objects. Here is her report:

Recently Bill Knell, a flying saucer investigator from New York, toured our area giving presentations on his proof of the existence of extraterrestrial flying saucers and government cover-up of evidence of alien activity. I took advantage of the opportunity and went to hear him speak. While he put on an entertaining show, I found myself wondering how much

of his story Bill himself really believed.

When we first went into the presentation room, a video was being shown featuring Bob Lazar, a man who claims to have seen a flying saucer that has been kept in a secret Nevada location and is being studied by the U.S. Government. Lazar was referred to this secret base, known as S-4, by none other than Edward Teller, father of the A-bomb, in order to work on a "new propulsion system," i.e., a flying saucer. Lazar claims to have had secret clearance that was "38 levels above a Q-clearance."

Wait a minute. Thirty-eight levels?

A "Q-clearance" is a standard clearance issued by the Department of Energy (DOE) for those who will be working with nuclear bomb secrets. While there are a handful of Q-clearance types, there is no such thing as a clearance 38 levels above a Q-Clearance. I suspected as much, but now I know, because I checked it out by asking two classification officers who work for a DOE contractor. But why pick over such petty mistakes?

Another interesting tidbit was Knell's claim that human body parts have been found on flying saucers. (I had no idea we had so much access to these craft that we could make such a claim.) But don't be alarmed. These body parts are from cadavers, not living humans. That's a relief, I thought to myself. But then I wondered, how do they really know? After all, once severed from its arm, a hand from a cadaver looks pretty much the same as one from a living person. Knell also told us that cadavers are routinely found missing from upstate New York mortuaries and uses this as further proof that aliens aboard flying saucers are stealing them. For what purpose? He didn't say.

In another anecdote, Knell tells about a missionary doctor who traveled to South Africa to help stem a smallpox epidemic in 1989. As a token of appreciation the natives gave him a trinket made from metal they took from a craft that had fallen from the sky. This metal matched exactly a sample that had been taken from a crashed saucer found in South Africa earlier that year. (Wow, I had no idea these things fell from the sky with such frequency.) But wait a minute. A smallpox epidemic in 1989? According to my dictionary smallpox has been eradicated the world over. And my dictionary was printed in 1987. Hmmm. You don't suppose he might be wrong about the metal, too?

Then Knell spoke about "secrets" at Wright Patterson Air Force Base where saucer parts are allegedly stored. As part of the story he told about the "underground tunnels" at Wright-Patterson. Whoa—hold on there. I invite anyone to take a drive up Route 4 north of Dayton. This road runs parallel with the Mad River, which runs parallel with the Air Force Base. You will see large lakes, the result of many years of gravel quarrying, next to the road. In this area, when you poke a hole in the ground, it fills with water. The water table is so high, in fact, that when Charles Huber built Huber Heights, a nearby suburb of Dayton, he opted not to put in basements—they would flood. I would assume that tunnels would do the same. Maybe Knell is talking about another Air Force Base?

Maybe he's talking about the other Wright Patterson. The one that Knell claims sent up the F-14's (he showed us the photographs) to chase the flying saucers that were spotted over Cincinnati two years ago. Had to be, because the Wright Patterson that I know about has F-16's, not F-14's.

There were other outlandish claims, as well. For example, Knell claimed that President Bush sealed Bill Clinton's file containing his application for a visa to the USSR back in the 60's. Why? Because Clinton answered yes to Question 8. What is Question 8, did you say? Question 8 asks you if you have ever seen a flying saucer. If that alone is not too hard to believe, try this: Bush would certainly go to any lengths to maintain his Democratic opponent's credibility, wouldn't he? Certainly he wouldn't have wanted Bill be embarrassed by the release of such information, would he?

And why, asks Bill Knell, when Neil Armstrong landed on the moon, was the camera focused on the lander's ladder for five hours before Neil stepped off the lander? Because if it had panned around, it would have seen all those flying saucers that were parked out there on the lunar horizon. That's why.

And how about that recent failed mission to Mars where the craft's radio suddenly went dead? Aliens? Nope. Not that easy. That was a ruse perpetrated by our government to make us believe that the mission failed. At this very moment, even as you are reading this, our government is studying the pictures being sent back by the quite functional Mars

orbiter. And what are these pictures of? Why, they are close-ups of the face on Mars and the pyramids there, as well as other man-made (or Martian-made) landmarks. We common citizens would not be able to handle seeing such things, of course, lest we go mad or begin to riot in the streets.

Then Knell turned to his real story, spending the bulk of his time on the Philadelphia Experiment. This is a standard flying saucer story claiming that the Navy did an experiment in 1942 that made a ship disappear. Supposedly they were successful, enabling a ship to vanish for three hours. When it reappeared, they found men embedded in the decks and "walls" (real Navy men would have said "bulkheads," but that's being picky) and wandering about insane.

Knell showed us many photographs that were supposed to convince us that this technology is being used by the military today. Perhaps the most convincing evidence was his report on the secret military base he found at Montauk Point, Long Island. Montauk is all the way out on the eastern-most tip of Long Island. It is a state park with many signs, as Knell showed us, indicating areas where you are not supposed to walk for fear of damaging the fragile ecosystem. So Knell decided the military was covering something up. And sure enough, after walking ten miles into the park he came to a secret installation whose guards happened to be missing that day because it was St. Patrick's Day, and everyone in New York goes to the parade on Saint Patrick's Day. (I have to wonder if he tells this same story everywhere, or does he only tell it in Ohio?) If that isn't too hard to believe, look at Bill Knell and tell me that this man could walk ten miles of paved trail, much less through ten miles of wilderness. The man is obese. But, how silly of me. He probably used the antigrativational properties of the area to assist him in his trek.

Well, perhaps I've been too hard on Bill Knell. I still think he put on an entertaining show. And from the occasional tittering sound that came from the audience, I can only believe that he wasn't taken altogether too seriously.— Mary Pacinda, Secretary.

Tunguska Meteorite Produced An Explosion of Hypotheses

The December 1993 issue of Astronomy included an article about the Tunguska meteorite, interesting because the lack of a crater at the site provoked a wide variety of unscientific explanations of this event. The article,which provides a scientific explanation of what happened, is summarized here.

In 1908 a massive explosion caused by extraterrestrial means occurred in Siberia. The explosion caused trees to be knocked down over an irregular area with a diameter of over 25 miles. The blast shock wave was recorded traveling around the earth twice. The curious aspect of this explosion is that there is no evidence of impact or of any large meteoric body at the site. This has led to some fanciful speculation about the cause of the explosion, with explanations ranging from comets through micro black holes and anti-matter to alien UFO's.

The scientific explanation is much less fanciful. The explosion was probably caused by a stony meteorite. The size and the height of the explosion can be estimated from the level of devastation and from the seismic evidence. The calculations are akin to those worked out for atomic bomb explosions. Based on the pattern of downed trees at the site and the seismic data recorded at the time of the explosion, the Tunguska meteorite's explosion is estimated to have been about 20 megatons in size, and to have occurred about five miles above ground level. The mass and hence size of the object can be estimated from the energy released in the explosion, as recorded in downed trees at the site and in seismic data.

The object that most closely fits the object predicted from the seismic data and from observations made at the site is a stony meteorite. Calculations show that a stony meteorite has the kind of composition that could smash into the atmosphere before explosively disintegrating at the height suggested by the data. A carbonaceous meteorite or comet would have exploded at a greater height and would not have leveled trees the way the Tunguska meteorite did. An iron meteorite would have hit the ground and left a crater, which is not present at the Tunguska site. A stony meteorite can be predicted, according to calculations described in the article, to produce an explosion of the size and height suggested by the observed data.

The point of this is that no exotic explanation is needed for this event. The remains of the meteorite in the case of an above-ground explosion like the Tunguska event are spread quite far and the pieces are mostly fine granules or dust. There is no crater because the meteor exploded into dustlike fragments well above the ground. The lack of a crater at the

site does not need to be explained away through reference to theories based on comets, anti-matter, black holes, or UFO's.— Roy Auerbach, Membership Chair.

Letters to the Editor

Global Warming: Fact or Myth?

To the Editor:

In keeping with A.R.T.'s mission of investigating paranormal and pseudoscientific claims, it might be in order to find important news items that don't make the newspapers, and ask why.

Sound and Fury, the Science and Politics of Global Warming, by Professor Patrick J. Michaels, investigates many weather records to attempt to find out what is happening, if anything.

Lots of measurements are questionable due to "urbanizing." Concrete and asphalt create warm spots. Can we find a place that has a 100-year record that has not been urbanized?

One of the best maintained weather stations over the past 100 years is the Pic du Midi observatory in the Pyrenees Mountains of southern Europe. At elevation 9400 feet, it cannot be affected by urbanization because the mountain is so steep. It is above the tree line, so vegetation is not likely to affect its thermometer.

The result? Temperatures have changed. Winter days have grown slightly cooler, about 1.5 degrees F. Winter nights have grown slightly warmer, about 2 degrees. Summer days are cooler by about 3.5 degrees, and summer night are warmer by about 2.5 degrees.

Lots of other records are described. Many of them indicate similar results. An interesting fact is that computer models do not come up with answers that agree with what the real world is doing, yet these computer models are accepted as valid.

The popular way to handle this problem is to ignore it. Global warming is "policy," meaning "don't bother me with facts, my mind is made up."

When science accepts computer models that do not agree with reality, it must be called quack science. When scientists who disagree with "policy" cannot get published, lose their funding, and are fired from their jobs, it must be called a conspiracy.

It's happening. The only literature I can find that disagrees with "policy" is by libertarian types. Call them heretics if you will.

I have other books that deal with ozone, asbestos, acid rain, and other "disasters." The sad fact is that none of the information in them ever hits the newspapers or the TV news.— Everett DeJager, Cincinnati, Ohio.

[Do you agree with Everett DeJager that there is no scientific evidence for global warming, that belief in global warming as a verified fact is foisted on the public by government conspiracy, and that contrary evidence is suppressed by this conspiracy? Write a letter to the editor to air your views. — Ed.]

To the Editor:

Is the world a hotter place now than it was a hundred years ago? Possibly. Is it cooler? Also possible, depending on where the measurements are made. One theory states that the first evidence of a shift in global temperatures is an increase in violent weather. Casual observation of the winter of 1993-1994 could easily lead to the conclusion that global warming or cooling is indeed taking place. It could also be a result of El Nino and have absolutely no relation to global warming or cooling.

The simplest refutation of government conspiracy is that the government collects data, studies it, and distributes it. Whether that data is accurate or not is irrelevant. Research is a cycle of observations of the real world and refining of models to describe the observations. The name "Global Warming" is just that: a name applied to a model that

conveniently happens to fit the observed facts.—Peter H. Jergens, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Historical "Evidence"

To the Editor:

One of the benefits of reading skeptical literature and practicing rational thinking may be the ability to respond reasonably to news about fields one is not expert in. From time to time we hear about things that are not our specialty, but which we make judgments about. Developing good judgmental skills to be able to react intelligently to unfamiliar things may be one of the aims of A.R.T., which says on its masthead "practicing the art of rational thinking in everyday life."

I had an exercise in this recently. A friend of mine, Richard, is a physicist, who recently shared with me information about work he is doing tracking the amount of volcanic dust in the air. He included an article from the Boston Globe about a Chinese scientist correlating past records of bad harvests and other phenomena with volcanic eruptions. I wrote back, expressing interest in the work but also warning of errors in that sort of correlating that have happened before, particularly in the case of Immanual Velikovsky.— Andrew O. Lutes, Mansfield, Ohio.

Andrew Lutes' letter to his physicist friend:

Dear Richard:
Thank you for your recent letter, and your willingness to share information with an interested layperson.

Being a librarian at heart, I am interested in all things, yet the article you sent relates to a particular interest of mine: epistemology, the study of how we know what we think we know and why do we think we know it. To develop my skills in using epistemological principles to evaluate claims, I've been reading the Skeptical Inquirer for some 14 years. There may be general principles of knowledge and investigation applicable to all things, so that one can make at least a preliminary judgment about something that one hears, even if it is about a subject in which one is not expert.

As soon as I read about Pang and his work, bells began to go off inside my head— where had I read about the relating of the occurrence of natural disasters to cultural records? Why of course, Immanual Velicovsky, the Jewish psychiatrist who related the supposed passage of a planetary comet past the earth with records of natural disasters in ancient times, to give a natural science confirmation to the Bible legends of his Hebrew background. Is Pang trying to validate his Chinese heritage?

Now Pang is not acting as the rabid Velikovsky did, and mainstream scientists are not asking publishers to drop Pang's work. Certainly, Pang's contentions deserve due consideration and further investigation. But I wonder? Did Pang make a spurious correlation? Were there also Chinese accounts like this in years when there were no major volcanic eruptions? And could the bad crops in years with major volcanic eruptions have been due to other causes? Or could there have been years with major volcanic eruptions with no bad crops? Haraldur Sigurdsson is right in being skeptical and reserving judgment, and I don't mean as being a dogmatic naysayer, but waiting to see if further research confirms or denies it. I'll be waiting. Every month or so Science News or the Wall Street Journal has an article mentioning Mt. Penatubo and global weather. -- Andrew O. Lutes, Mansfield, Ohio.

Included with the letters was a clipping recounting Pang's work. According to the Boston Globe (David L. Chandler, "After 541 Years, the Story of a Colossal Eruption Unfolds," Jan. 10, 1994, p. 39), Kevin Pang calculates orbits for the Jet Propulsion Laboratory of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Pang is also interested in relating new information about historical astronomical events to contemporary records. He heard about a devastating volcanic eruption which split an island in the Pacific into two present day islands, Tongoa and Epi, from geologists working on the islands. The geologists found the islands to be volcanic in nature and separated by a submerged, eight-mile wide crater.

Geologists had earlier dated the eruption of this crater, Kuwae, using the oral traditions of the island inhabitants and radio carbon dating of trees believed to have been charred on the island at the time of the eruption. They believed Kuwae erupted sometime between 1420 and 1475.

Pang has found historical evidence which he believes shows the eruption occurred in 1453 and affected weather around the world.

It is this evidence that Andrew Lutes views skeptically. To encourage you to judge for yourself whether Andrew Lutes' analysis is correct, here are examples of the kinds of evidence Pang used to support his claim. Read on, exercise your skeptical wits, and see what conclusions you come to:

Tree ring data, China, show very narrow growth rings indicative of cold weather for 1453.

Provincial weather records, China, record extremely cold weather in 1453, including cold-devastated wheat crops and reports that the Yellow Sea froze 12 miles out from shore, an extremely unusual event. Snow fell for 40 days in 1454 south of the Yangtze River, where it is so warm that the buildings are not heated.

Records of Swedish corn tithes, a measure of the size of the harvest, show that tithes decreased sharply, almost to zero, in 1454.

Tree ring data for California, Scandinavia, France and Britain also show extremely cold weather for 1454.<

Ice core data, Antarctica and Greenland, show unusual amounts of sulfuric acid for 1454. The sulfuric acid, Pang claims, was formed when sulfur dioxide from Kuwae combined with water vapor.

Descriptions of the "burning" of the Hagia Sophia, a large church in Constantinople. Constantinople was under siege at the time of the alleged eruption. On May 22, 1453, according to contemporaryrecords, citizens saw the full moon rise completely dark (according to Pang because of dust in the air caused by the eruption of Kuwae). On May 26, the records report that Constantinople was surrounded by an extremely dense, unusual fog. As the fog lifted citizens saw what they believed to be flames surrounding the polished copper dome of the great church. The phenomenon occurred for several nights, but the church never burned. Pang claims that the effect was caused by unusually red sunsets caused by Kuwae, supporting his argument by recalling that after the eruption of Krakatoa in 1883, many false fire alarms were turned in by New Yorkers who were misled by fiery red sunsets into believing that Staten Island was on fire. Fire companies were sent to the island, but no fires were found.—Ed.

Executive Council Meeting, Jan. 22, 1994

The Executive Council met at 10:00 A.M., at the Bethesda Blue Ash Medical Building. President Keith Brabender, Vice-President Dick McGrath, Treasurer Peggy Borger, Investigations Officer Joe Gastright, Secretary Mary Pacinda, Media Resources Chair Lance Moody, and Newsletter Editor Virginia Jergens were present. President Keith Brabender opened the meeting by listing the problems to be dealt with: topics for the April, May, and June membership meetings, finding a new meeting place, and setting standards for including articles in the newsletter.

The Executive Council agreed that the ideal way to handle the selection of articles for the newsletter would be to have an editorial committee review and select articles. For the time being, however, the Executive Council directed the editor to review articles, and if she feels an alternative point of view would be desirable, to find someone to write such an article. Articles dealing with controversial subjects, that is, subjects on which the membership of A.R.T. has not found consensus, must meet a set of criteria, and these criteria shall be published in the newsletter. [See "Editorial Policy" elsewhere in this issue.]

The Executive Council also discussed the likelihood that we will need a new meeting place after the February meeting. The room in which we meet now, generously given to us at no cost by the Crescent Women's Medical Group, may be removed from the practice's area in a rearrangement of their lease. The lease may be changed as soon as February. The Executive Council decided to continue to meet at the Blue Ash site until it becomes unavailable.

The Council also worked on meeting topics for the rest of the year. In February, members will view the second half of the Skeptics Society tape of a lecture by Michael Schermer on altered states of consciousness. Nominations for officers will be made at the March meeting. The annual election of officers will be held at the April meeting. Joe Gastright will make a presentation at the April meeting. No topic has been selected for the May meeting.

March Membership Meeting:
Hallucinations Caused by Sleep Deprivation

A.R.T. members met at the Bethesda Blue Ash Medical Building Saturday, March 2. Virginia Jergens, newsletter editor,

announced that she would officiate in the absence of Acting President Dick McGrath, who was unable to attend. She also announced that Dick McGrath, formerly Vice President, had generously taken over as Acting President and Acting Treasurer due to the resignations of Keith Brabender, formerly President, and Peggy Borger, formerly Treasurer. Dick will fill both roles until elections are held in April.

Members heard reports from members of the Executive Council, shared news items of interest to skeptics, discussed what jobs need to be done to keep A.R.T. in business, and made recommendations to the Executive Council. Members also discussed ways to encourage members to volunteer to work for A.R.T.

Then members watched the second half of the videotape of the Michael Shermer lecture begun at the January meeting. In the segment viewed at this meeting, Shermer showed clips of TV coverage of a cross-country bike race from California to New York to show how stress and fatigue cause the physical and thus the mental systems of the body to deteriorate. He included stunning interviews with sleep-deprived cyclists peddling along in the middle of the night reporting their hallucinations and vivid, although illusory, ideas about what they thought was going on.

Shermer also reported an incident in which a false memory was experimentally induced. A hypnotist suggested to a subject that the subject had seen a fictitious bank robbery. The hypnotist also described the alleged burglar. Later the subject "remembered" the robbery, described it in detail, and picked the alleged burglar out of a police lineup photograph.

Shermer also described "confabulation," a process in which a person combines real and imagined ideas and then remembers the combination as "real." His example was an experiment he often does with undergraduate students. He shows a group of students a picture, hides it, and asks them to describe it. Then he asks the students where the cat was in the picture. More than half of the students "remember" seeing the cat by the hearth or in the window or whatever and also "remember" what color it was. Then he reveals the picture, in which there is no cat. His conclusion: memory is a great deal more fluid and changeable than we imagine.

After the videotape, the membership adjourned to James Tavern for lunch.—Ed.

Editorial Policy

The Association for Rational Thought News welcomes letters and articles from readers. Please limit your letters to 250 words or less. Please include your name, complete address and phone number with all submissions. Those selected for publication may be shortened for space reasons.

At its January 22 meeting, the Executive Council adopted a set of standards for articles submitted to The Association for Rational Thought News. Articles accepted for publication shall meet the following standards:

The article shall be of interest to skeptics.
The article shall be signed.
A reading list shall be submitted with the article.
Each article shall include (not necessarily in this order): an introduction, a presentation of the author's own view of the topic and evidence supporting the author's position, a presentation of other points of view and evidence supporting the author's contention that these views are in error, a summary.
All articles shall be subject to comment by other writers.
No article shall be assumed to represent an official position of A.R.T.

If the article is submitted by mail, then double-spaced, typed articles are preferred but not necessary. 3 1/2" floppy disks are also acceptable in either Macintosh or DOS formats. Articles on Macintosh disks may be in any reasonably common format; articles on Windows or DOS disks should be saved as ASCII (text) or RTF.

The Association for Rational Thought is an independent, nonprofit, scientific and educational organization. We share the philosophy of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, an international organization which investigates allegedly paranormal events, sponsors workshops, and publishes Skeptical Inquirer, a journal of investigations of paranormal claims. A.R.T. meets regularly on the second Saturday of each month October

through May and publishes The Association for Rational Thought News quarterly. A.R.T. sponsors public lectures, and maintains a panel of experts for news media to consult and to investigate local paranormal claims. Annual dues are $15.00 (Full-time students $10.00) and include a subscription to The Association for Rational Thought News.

Executive Committee, 1993-94: Richard McGrath, Acting President and Acting Treasurer. Joe Gastright, Investigations Officer. Mary Pacinda, Corresponding Secretary and Publicity Coordinator. Roy Auerbach, Membership Secretary. Virginia Jergens, Newsletter Editor. Lance Moody, Media Resources Coordinator.
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