



# ***Cincinnati Skeptic***

*Newsletter of The Association for Rational Thought*

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***Motto: I was gratified to be able to answer promptly. I said, I don't know.***

***-- Mark Twain***

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# **KASES**

**Kentucky Association of Science Educators & Sceptics**

**The Second Annual Sceptics Lecture**

**by Joe Nickell**

***Recent investigations at CSICOP***

## ***June Meeting***

### **How is Scientology Like Domestic Violence?**

Edna Rawlings, the speaker at the June A.R.T. meeting, is a professor of psychology at the University of Cincinnati. She became interested in Scientology in connection with her primary research interest, the psychological consequences of trauma. Research into the use of coercive control by perpetrators of domestic violence led her about ten years ago to explore the use of coercive control by members of religious cults, including Scientology. She has never been a scientologist, and has never known a member personally. Her information comes largely from investigative journalists and former members of the organization

Scientology has been in the news recently due to publicity spawned by its aggressively recruited celebrity members, including Tom Cruise and Mr. and Mrs. John Travolta. In addition, the organization is the object of many criminal and other charges, and has itself instigated many lawsuits, all of which produce media coverage, although not the sort the Scientologists are after when they lure movie stars into the organization.

According to the Church of Scientology, its ideology is based on the writings of its founder, L. Ron Hubbard, who described Scientology as an applied religious philosophy. Scientology emphasizes methods for relating the self to the universe, knowing how to know, rather than an assertive

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On the evening of Saturday, 27 June about 35 to 40 people assembled for the second annual KASES skeptics lecture. By eight o'clock we were well fortified with barbecued chicken, green beans, and other goodies provided by the Holiday Inn of Lexington.

Our speaker was Joe Nickell, senior research fellow and executive council member of CSICOP. More than that, Joe is CSICOP's most important investigator of paranormal cases, the author of sixteen books, and a funny and most insightful lecturer. One or the other book was mentioned in the talk, not only by way of promotion, but also because the cases and issues are described in detail in Joe's books.

At the start Joe described to us his recent severe accident in Spain, which resulted in a badly broken ankle followed by botched surgery there. The injury required extensive surgery to put the bones right, and follow up physical therapy later. He is well now, and stayed on his feet for the full three hours of the talk and questions.

Joe chose to lead us through some of his cases and experiences by showing us slides from inside his office in Buffalo. Here he has a small laboratory, and many artifacts, mementos, files, and histories of his own and other cases. Ghost pictures, for instance, he explained go back to the 1860<sup>ies</sup>, the days when photographs were taken on emulsion covered glass plates. These could be washed off when a negative was no longer wanted. If the washing should remain incomplete, one expert discovered, a ghostly image of the old picture would double expose on the new. *Voila*, thus was born the ghost picture. Joe showed a few of these historic images and also demonstrated a number of modern

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The By-Laws require that officers for the following year be elected annually at the May meeting. They begin their duties on following July 1.

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## From The Un-easy Chair



### Whose Creationism is it Anyway?

This summer, while in San Diego for other reasons, I took the opportunity to visit the Creation Science Museum in Santee. There is no "science" there; rather the museum displays pictures from standard research (ice ages, dinosaurs, etc.) and interprets these with quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament and with about forty leaflets from the Institute of Creation Research's *Impact* and *Acts & Facts* series. As skeptics we strongly resist any attempts to teach this religious interpretation in our schools. How much more would we object to an attempt to halt all research into pre-history on the grounds that "we already know our history" so further investigation is not needed.

Yet, that is exactly the attitude of some Indian spokespersons, NAGPRA, the *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* of 1990 (PL 101-601) gives them a handle to do just that. NAGPRA was passed by Congress to allow American Indians to obtain and rebury the remains of ancestors unearthed on public lands. It also permits Indians to reclaim sacred objects, bones, and other materials housed in historical and archaeological museums. The Act has been described as hopelessly vague, so that tribal activists have interpreted it to mean the return of all pre-historical remains wherever found, however ancient, for re-burial or other destruction. Recent finds in government construction projects have been claimed, taken over, and reburied by Indians without any scientific assessment. No archaeological or anthropological collection is safe.

Scientists generally accept that Indian ancestors migrated across the Bering land bridge from Asia and that Native Americans are related to Asian peoples. The date of this migration is under active scientific dispute, as is the question whether there were one or several migrations. Oldest firm artifacts are dated to about 11,000 BP, but 14, 20, and 40 thousand years BP are other contending dates. Research on skeletal remains, DNA studies, and carbon dating are important means for deciding these issues. Indian creation mythology in contrast insists the people were created right here where they now or recently lived out of the earth or by the Earth Goddess (religions differ among tribes.)

Tribal spokespersons have insisted they have their own way of life and that their religions must be respected. Some Indians see no need for scientific study: We already know our oral history of the ancestors. We were created here. We did not cross any land bridge. In consequence, some important skeletons have been lost to scientific study, some museum materials have been reburied, some finds have been turned over to Indian activists and refused scientific assessment by the Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, or other government organizations.

Apparently some Creation stories are more privileged than others. Source of much of this: *ACPAC Newsletter*, (*The American Committee for Preservation of Archaeological Collections*) for July 1998.



*Too Many Books....*

*Too Little Time....*

*American Militias:  
Rebellion, Racism, and Religion*  
by Richard Abanes

(Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996)

Compared to the sorts of ideas these folks peddle, our concern with the paranormal, assorted superstitions and even health frauds seems small potatoes. Some of these men go about with AK-14 assault rifles and similar high tech weaponry. Members of the militia persuasion have already committed murder, mayhem, and bank robbery. While the killers in the Oklahoma City explosion have not been shown to be members of a militia directly, they do share the beliefs of the people about whom this book is written.

Abanes writes about four loosely related groups, the patriot militias, the Identity Church, the sovereign citizen movement, and Aryan Nations. All of these agree the government in Washington is not their government, but that it has been taken over or become an evil conspiracy against the American people. More specifically, the government is under the thumb of — take your pick, — the Jews, the Illuminati, the United Nations, the mud people (non-whites), and soon there will be a war to the finish against this government. There is no single organization, rather some shared ideas which are promoted and propagated over the Internet, short wave radio, and by fax. No single person subscribes to all of these ideas, but Abanes lists six complexes which seem to fall under the patriot banner: (p. 9)

1. Militant right-wing gun-rights advocates, anti-tax protesters, survivalists, far right libertarians. Some expect a take-over by UN troops using black helicopters. Some think FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Administration, is the shadow government which will take over as a dictatorship when the New World Order arrives..
2. Pre-existing elements of racist, anti-Semitic or neo-Nazi movements. The Identity Church which claims Anglo-Saxons whites are the true ten lost tribes of Israel. Members of various KuKluxKlan groups.
3. Advocates of "sovereign" citizenship, who make convoluted constitutional arguments to claim only whites are "true" citizens and do not come under the authority of the government, the IRS, or the courts. They often get rid of their social security cards, drivers license and other documents.
4. The confrontational wing of the anti-abortion movement. Many, not all, of these groups are fundamentalist and creationist.

5. Apocalyptic millenialists, including zealous Christians, who believe we are in the "End Times" and facing the "Mark of the Beast," which may be supermarket bar codes, proposed paper currency designs or computer chips implantable in the body.
6. The most militant wing of the anti-environmental movement, including some of the "wise use" advocates.

Abanes quotes scholar and author Norman Cohn in a passage that seems to say it all and point to the long term danger, (p. 75).

There exists a subterranean world where pathological fantasies disguised as ideas are churned out by crooks and half-educated fanatics for the benefit of the ignorant and superstitious. There are times when this underworld emerges from the depths and suddenly fascinates, captures, and dominates multitudes of usually sane and responsible people, who thereupon take leave of sanity and responsibility. And it occasionally happens that this underworld becomes a political power and changes the course of history.

The book cites a lot of detail on relatively obscure groups with members who "are not particularly astute when it comes to critical thinking." (p. 109) One example involves a map dividing the country into New World Order regions after UN troops conquer the land. It originated in a colorful chart on the back of a cereal box (p. 109). He profiles a number of the widely known publicists of the groups, including Mark Koernke, Linda D. Thompson, John Trochman, and Don McAlvany.

Richard Abanes, the author, is himself an evangelical and committed Christian. He is at great pains to show that these believers have bent Christian doctrine and the words of the Bible into pretzels, and that they can not be accepted as fellow faithful in any way. His chief exhibit in this case is Pat Robertson, whose 1991 book *The New World Order* he examines in some detail. He also comments on some of its sources. Robertson's book has become a major source for the militia movements "because it synthesizes all the standard conspiracy texts into an easily understandable and repeatable mantra for those in the movement: The New World Order will destroy America." (p. 195). Not since the thirties has any so prominent an American, with access to the communications media, peddled anti-semitic attitudes and conspiracy theories.

— Wolf Roder

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*Whores of the Court: The Fraud of Psychiatric  
Testimony and the Rape of American Justice*  
by Margaret A. Hagen  
(New York: Regan Books, 1997)

Let me start by saying something about the nature of social science, the knowledge of human activities and behavior. We study human beings very much like any other

animal, and we want to draw generalizations about what they do. If our generalizations are accurate, we can talk about what human being may do in general and in the aggregate, we can not forecast what an individual person will do. We can conclude, for instance, that on average Americans have 1.7 children, but we can not forecast whether Mary and John will have children. Margaret Hagen is an experimental psychologist who studies human activities. She is very much aware how little we know or can predict about human behavior, and that we know virtually nothing about how the brain works in everyday life. Clinical psychologists, the people who decide about mental illness, treatment, prison confinement, and guilt and innocence in court do not draw on this meager knowledge. Rather, clinical psychology depends on speculations about human behavior going back to Sigmund Freud, and on the intuition of the psychotherapist. In other words, clinical psychology is neither science, nor does it rely on firm knowledge.

Hagen calls clinical psychology a fraud, repeatedly, and she does not mince words. She refers to therapy and assessment as a scam, as out-and-out fraud (p. 167), as ineffective, a waste of time, diagnoses are fictions. Therapy is romanticized and politicized nonsense, creative fiction, psychopolitical mythology, tea leaf reading, not worth a hill of beans, the very idea of tests for diagnosis is absurd (p. 217). "The supposedly objective recommendations offered to the court by forensic evaluators are no more than personal opinions arrived at through clinical intuition and the inevitable biases of the evaluator and then couched in a barrage of jargon and professional rhetoric..." (p. 219). Any thoughtful layman can do as well.

Hagen's point is rather simple. We, the public, the courts, various welfare and other institutions, desperately need to assess and to know what to do with persons, including children, who are emotionally damaged, who commit criminal acts, or are just generally behaving weirdly. Society has empowered the clinical psychologist to make these determinations, to say who is sick, who is guilty, who needs treatment, and how to dispose of the case. The clinical psychologist has no, absolutely no, no kind, of science to base his or her judgement on. We simply do not know how people will behave in future, nor do we understand the working of the brain. "I have said it before, and I will say it again, there are no reliable valid, mental or 'behavioral' tests for suspected child abuse worth a damn." (p. 214)

The author makes the point that clinical psychology is to science and knowledge as astrology is to astronomy, "... a terrifying retreat into mysticism and romanticism, a massive suspension of disbelief propelled by powerful propaganda." (p. 4) For all its modern disguises clinical intuition is based on Freudian theories and speculations, in which sex is a major causative agent, and childhood experiences are formative. In this mythology, the individual is an impotent pawn of his environment and upbringing, and the family is more likely pathological, dysfunctional, and damaging. In contrast, "the ideas of free will and moral choice have vanished from the landscape." (p. 306) Clinical psychologists confidently assert that memories of trauma may be repressed, and will cheerfully help a client or witness in a criminal case excavate these repressed memories. This, despite that fact there is no evidence of repression anywhere in the large experimental literature on the subject. People can forget, they can avoid thinking of the unpleasant past, they may scramble memory, but they will not repress it. In clinical psychology children are fragile and have to be protected from the court, from their parents, and from unhappy experiences lest they be damaged forever. Yet, what we know about the brain, is that children heal more, better, and faster than adults, are more resilient, and can cope with adversity better than adults.

This is a very interesting book, and, I think, essentially true as well.

— Wolf Roder

## Scientologists (from pg 1)

body of knowledge. Its goal is to help each person find truth for himself. The Scientologists claim that Scientology is not something to believe, but something to do. Scientology, according to its web site, aims to produce a civilization without insanity, criminals, or war, where the able can prosper, where man can rise to greater heights.

Its founder, L. Ron Hubbard wrote what he called *space operas*, what we would call science fiction. Scientologists claim that his novels are genuine history, not fiction. Hubbard also wrote Dianetics, a how-to book aimed at reducing physical and mental stress. Dianetics has been a best seller for many years, and many have read it as an introduction to Scientology.

The history of Hubbard's life has been a matter of contention. The church has produced a grandiose official biography, Unofficial biographies contradict the official biography in major ways. When Hubbard and Scientology sued the author of one unofficial biography, the judge pronounced Hubbard a liar and threw the case out.

One source of information about Hubbard has been his son, who was second in command of Scientology when Hubbard was in charge, but who later defected. After defecting he gave an affidavit in order, he said, to try to clear up lies about his father. The affidavit says that the senior Hubbard never obtained any academic degrees, never served in combat, was relieved of military duty three times as unfit for duty, and spent time in a psychiatric hospital. The younger Hubbard stated that his father was a fraud and always had been, that he retained control of Scientology by getting signed releases from board members which permitted him to do as he pleased, and that he controlled bank accounts by emptying them whenever they were threatened.

Hubbard claimed that his work was a science of the mind based on his knowledge of nuclear physics, but he knew little of science, having flunked nearly all of the science courses he took in college. His books are not the product of research, but were written off the top of his head. He invented a crude lie detector, called an E-meter, which he used to *audit* members of the church. He claimed that Scientology was based on science, not faith, and that the religious front was created only for protection from fraud and tax claims.

In the lingo of Scientology, a *suppressive person* is someone who criticizes Scientology. The official stance of the church toward suppressive persons is the *fair game doctrine*, which encourages members to take any action at all, fair or unfair, legal or illegal, that they want to against any *suppressive person*. Any suppressive person especially journalists, may be injured, tricked, sued, lied to, or destroyed by any Scientologists at any time.

In one instance of the use of the fair game policy, a journalist who exposed Scientology was targeted. She was declared a suppressive person, and *Operation Freakout* was instituted to get her into jail or into a mental institution. Members acquired her letterhead stationery with her finger prints and were able to have her sent to prison on a trumped-up charges of having threatened to detonate a bomb. The FBI later uncovered internal memos about the operation and she was eventually released from prison.

While individuals outside the church may be controlled by any means possible, members of the church are controlled by *audits*, counseling sessions in which members are encouraged to reveal all their problems. Records of the sessions are kept and used to blackmail members who look as though they might stray from official doctrine. This repressive technique helps keep members from criticizing official positions.

As a result of these policies, the church has over the years been taken to court on many very serious matters. L. Ron Hubbard's wife and eleven other members have been sent to prison on a variety of charges including breaking into government agencies. The church has publicly agreed to eliminate the fair game doctrine, but according to an internal memo, the policy is

still in effect, but will not be mentioned publicly.

The current leader of the church is David Miscavige. According to a 1987 article in Time magazine, Scientology included at that time 700 centers in 65 countries and had \$503 million in the bank, Time estimated that they had 50,000 - 100,000 members, not the 1 million claimed. The official position is that the centers are educational institutions, but they actually operate as franchises, promoting the official Scientology philosophy and returning 10% of their income to headquarters. Ministers receive a two-week training course before they are sent out to work as counselors in a center. Counseling is also done by untrained ministers and volunteers. Some members are part of an elite paramilitary organization in which they sign up for 1 billion years, work 18 hours a day, and live communally.

Other members belong to the Rehabilitation Project Forces, or thought police. Any member who is believed to be *out of ethic*, or have the official line wrong, may be assigned to the Rehabilitation Project Forces. These members are deprived of sleep, forced to wear dirty clothes, and endure other dehumanizing practices for up to four years. Some members have actually been sent to labor camps where they are imprisoned. Other members have been thrown overboard at sea, and may or may not have been rescued.

In addition to suffering many indignities, members who are believed to be out of line are forced to pay \$200 an hour for *corrective counseling* to make sure they adhere to church doctrine.

Scientologists commonly use lies, deceit, private detectives, and lawsuits to silence their critics. In addition deceit is used to promote Scientology's philosophy through the use of front organizations which claim to be independent of Scientology. One such organization is Applied Scholastics, which tried to get a curriculum on Scientology as morality into public schools, especially those serving minority children. Applied Scholastics has also produced programs for children which have been aired on PBS.

The Sterling Management Course was a front which used deceptive and coercive practices to separate people from their money while claiming to increase their income. The Scientologists also run a drug and alcohol treatment program which operates in the prisons under the name Crimanon. When this program was investigated in Oklahoma, investigators found the program harmful and potentially lethal.

Another front organization, Bridge Publications, sends members out to buy books published by Scientology by the hundreds from books stores to build the illusion that the books were best sellers.

The Citizens Commission on Human Rights is a Scientologist front organization which attacks psychiatrists. This organization instituted a highly successful campaign against the anti-depressant Prozac, falsely claiming that the drug caused patients to become violent and commit suicide or murder. The campaign was able to shape public opinion through skillful use of the media. The manufacturer, Eli Lilly, has tried to sue Scientology without success.

A number of unethical and illegal stock market schemes, comparable to insider trading, have also been uncovered.

Scientologists have also tried to control what information about them appears on the Internet. Sites that reveal information about or parody Scientology are sued and shut down. Some have reappeared. One web site, the Cult Awareness Network, aimed at providing information about religious cults, lost its name when the Scientologists acquired rights to it and developed a site of the same name promoting Scientology. The original Cult Awareness Network has reappeared under a new name as FAC Net.

What does an individual who joins Scientology experience? Scientologists approach people in public. A favorite spot at UC is the bridge to Tangeman Center with a *personality test*. The personality test, offered to reveal all of an inquirer's problems

and how to solve them, is the American Personality Test, an old test which never had any scientific validity. In addition Scientologists untrained in personality and psychological testing have updated the test, making it even less valid. The personality test is a major recruiting tool offered to potential recruits with the appeal: "Are you curious about yourself? Would you like to find out how your personality determines your ability to do whatever you want?" Many people, especially young people, are attracted by an appeal of this kind.

Another method of recruiting members is to attack and destroy the potential recruit's self-esteem, in the hope the person will turn to Scientology. Dr. Rawlings' college age daughter, an intelligent, well-adjusted young woman, inadvertently answered the phone one day, was subjected to this approach, and was reduced to tears and serious self-doubt within minutes.

Once a recruit takes the test, a *counselor* with at most two weeks training interprets the results to the recruit, looking for questions indicating the person might have a problem, and then tries to convince the person that Scientology can cure the alleged problems. Recruits who resist persuasion or seem skeptical are screened out, because the organization wants only permanent members, not defectors. Counselors are paid a commission for each person successfully recruited.

A recruit who indicates a willingness to join is required to sign a statement stating that she or he forfeits the right to sue Scientology under any circumstances. Then the recruit is encouraged to be *audited* to solve all personality problems. The auditing is expensive counseling for which the new member must pay for up front. The goal of auditing is to destroy *engrams*, which are said to be accurate recordings in your mind of past trauma that occurred to you before birth, even before conception.

The counselor uses an E-meter, an elaborate device that is essentially two soup cans hooked to wires that are hooked to a galvanometer. These E-meters, crude devices that you could rig up yourself with parts from Radio Shack, are sold for \$3000. The procedure through which this device is used allegedly to relieve past trauma is in fact itself a very brutal approach in which people become quite vulnerable, may go into a hypnotic trance or even dissociate. It can create false memories of traumatic events that never happened and in addition, ferrets out every shameful secret, especially matters related to sex or crime. This material is recorded and kept permanently to be used later for black mail.

In addition to the E-meter, members are required to undergo training routines which heighten feelings of euphoria and obedience. Routines require the member to stand up and sit down repeatedly over and over again for hours at a time, or make other movements repeated for hours. Members are also required to stare into their counselors' eyes for hours without blinking. Methods of this sort are likely to induce trance states in which obedience is easy to obtain. In training, members are never allowed to ask questions or doubt their counselors or any doctrine of Scientology.

There are many levels of training. At the lower levels, members deal with objective skills and solving emotional problems. Members have paid as much as \$1000 for lower level auditing. As the member advances through the process, the fees charged are gradually increased. The approach is to begin with a problem allegedly revealed on the personality test, find the engram of the alleged trauma, and work toward becoming *clear*, that is, free of all engrams. Of course, this process can take years, and many hours of *counseling*, all of which the member pays for. It may cost \$12,000 to become a *clear*, eligible to participate in secret doctrine of the church. Members are encouraged to impoverish their families, take second jobs, cash in their mortgages and their children's trust funds to pay for the counseling, books and tapes needed to become *clear*.

Those who have become clears are challenged to reach further heights by learning about doctrine knowledge of which is alleged to be fatal to those who are not clear. This will allow them

to tap into their soul or spirit, called their *thetan*, operate outside their physical bodies, perform telekinesis, and make astral trips to learn the secrets of the universe.

Scientologists believe that thetans are predecessors of human beings. All human beings are amalgams of several thetans. All the implanted engrams of all the thetans making up an individual must be removed as the member moves up through the advanced levels. Arriving at the highest level costs a member something on the order of \$300,000.

A cult is generally defined as an organization with an authoritarian structure in which a single leader maintains control over all members, settling all grievances and determining all policy, taking control of members lives and property. Scientology meets all of these criteria. Leaders have control over what members are permitted to think, say, or do. In addition, a cult claims to have a special mission. Scientology's special mission is to create a new civilization one recruit at a time. Cults also promise their members special privileges. Scientology guarantees members survival in the case of nuclear war.

Scientology, like many cults, maintains a double standard of ethics. Members must be wholly honest inside the group, including answering all questions are in periodic, required interrogations. But members are encouraged to treat outsiders as bad, evil, and unworthy of ethical or legal treatment. Members are encouraged to lie, deceive, and manipulate and even destroy outsiders. The organization has two purposes, to recruit members and raise funds, unlike non-cults, which typically have more purposes. The major tactic is gradually escalating coercive persuasion. So how is Scientology like domestic violence? In both cases, gradually escalating coercive control is a key technique of intimidation and repression.

-- Reported by Virginia Jergens

**Web Sites:** < [www.scientology.org](http://www.scientology.org) > is the official website of the organization, < [www.tiac.net/users/modemac/cos.html](http://www.tiac.net/users/modemac/cos.html) > is a site critical of Scientology with links to related sites.



"Skeptics are people with a devoted but touchingly inaccurate faith in doubt."

— bio-astrologer Esmeralda von Löwenzahn-Dentdelion

### KASES - Joe Nickel (from pg 1)

ghost pictures, sometimes merely the camera strap hanging into the picture like a giant snake or worm.

Joe followed with slides of Brookdale Lodge near Santa Cruz, which is famous for its many ghost sightings over the years. As the name indicates, a small stream actually flows through the dining room and the lodge, so that many noises may be heard under or over the babbling of the brook. Ghosts are the talk among the staff, so that it is not amazing many experience ghostly events. Joe collected narratives from this staff. He thought he could identify three types of responses among them: (1) those who did not believe, (2) those who might only perceive a ghost out of the corner of an eye, or hear music, and who were moderate believers, and (3) true believers who fully saw a ghost. Joe also identified that these three groups differed in phantasy proneness in the expected direction.

Joe took up the question of *simulacra*, faces in the clouds, the image of Jesus on a tortilla, or a camel among the rock pillars of Bryce Canyon. The face on a rose petal from the Oprah show, however, was something else. Joe showed us how one could pick

out a drawing on the wet rose petal with a stylus or similar instrument.

Joe described the case of a "psychic detective" who claimed to have helped the police in a small New York state town. But as usual, the police reported no help, no actual clue from the psychic. These folks tend to retrofit their vague comments after the fact, so that a statement can be interpreted as "but I said to look near water" after the search leads in such direction. This amounts to drawing a bull's eye around the spot after the arrow has landed.

Joe discussed the famous Fox Network program "Alien Autopsy" which had been as full of holes as a Swiss cheese. Kodak did not and never authenticated the film as was implied by the program. There were many points of internal evidence showing we were looking at a hoax. There were bogus security markings, pathologists held the scissors wrongly, we never saw the opening of the body, filming was fully untypical of forties army procedures. Concerning the alien craze in general, Joe has prepared a delightful poster showing the historical development of "alien" images from the earliest modern flying saucer times. Size and aspect varied greatly for about two decades until the "modern" big-eyed alien slowly evolved by media confluence. The audience at the Lexington talk later expressed a strong wish this picture be printed as a poster and made available to schools and interested individuals.

Spontaneous human combustion came in for comments. Joe Nickell has become an expert on this topic and has published several articles on the nature of the phenomenon, which is completely physical, and does not require extraordinary causes. On investigation it can usually be shown how a person has caught fire from smoking, a fire place, or other open flame.

Joe took us through "crystal tears" and showed us how it was done. Small quartz crystals can be secreted under the lower eye lid, and actually produced from that hidden place. Milk drinking statues of Ganesh, the elephant faced god, depend on one of two processes. Some statues are sufficiently porous to absorb a small quantity of milk, others are white porcelain, so that milk trickling down the statue is invisible in the dim light of the temple.

Weeping icons of saint or mother of god are equally bogus. As Joe commented, most weeping statues will either stop weeping when he examines them, or he will be prevented from doing a thorough examination. "A true miracle should have nothing to hide."

Joe's last topic was on "the Shroud of Turin is back," meaning back in the news, back on display, given credence by the Pope, and back in the hearts of true believers, which include a number of the "experts" of the shroud guild. Joe made it quite clear that the rational evidence from science and history is unquestionable; the shroud is a medieval artist's work, probably a painting, but maybe crafted by some other process. "It is clear as a bell, the Shroud is a fake." Despite the overwhelming and conclusive findings of competent researchers, the shroud continues to be promoted by those who simply take its genuineness as given. Persons who believe they have the final answer, and will rationalize all contrary evidence away.

At this time, about ten o'clock, the formal presentation ended, but the crowd stayed on for another full hour for a very open give and take. Some discussion commented on the remarkable openness of young children, sub-teens, who are so very free to follow a rational lead. They will be delighted to investigate, or follow an investigation, and have fun doing it. Children want to know what is going on. CSICOP in fact has prepared a skeptical science kit, which teachers can request without cost on official school stationery.

— reported by Wolf Roder

Author, co-author or editor of sixteen books:

*Inquest on the Shroud of Turin* (Prometheus Books, 1983, 1987, 1988);

*Secrets of the Supernatural* (with John F. Fischer, Prometheus, 1991);  
*The Magic Detectives* (Prometheus, 1989);  
*Pen, Ink, and Evidence* (The University Press of Kentucky, 1990);  
*Wonder-Workers! How They Perform the Impossible* (Prometheus, 1991);  
*Ambrose Bierce Is Missing* (University Press of Kentucky, 1992);  
*Missing Pieces* (co-author Robert A. Baker, Prometheus, 1992);  
*Mysterious Realms* (Prometheus, 1992);  
*Looking for a Miracle: Weeping Icons, Relics, Stigmata, Visions, and Healing Cures* (Prometheus, 1993);  
*Psychic Sleuths* (Prometheus, 1994);  
*Camera Clues: A Handbook for Photographic Investigation* (University Press of Kentucky, 1994);  
*Entities: Angels, Spirits, Demons, and Other Alien Beings* (Prometheus, 1995);  
*Detecting Forgery* (University Press of Kentucky, 1996);  
*The Outer Edge: Classic Investigations of the Paranormal* (CSICOP, 1996);  
*The UFO Invasion* (Prometheus, 1997);  
*Crime Science* (in progress).



## ART BUSINESS

### Annual Report, 1997-1998

Prepared by Virginia Jergens, Secretary.



### President's Report

This was an excellent year for ART. As a group, we perform two actions that bind us together and give us a way to be seen by the community: creating a newsletter and holding meetings with invited speakers. Both of these were well executed this last year. ART has a stated goal of acting as a force for education and critical thinking in the community and we have had some limited success in reaching out to the education community in Cincinnati this year. This is a connection we hope to expand.

I would like to extend my thanks to everyone in the organization who worked to make this year interesting and successful. Our excellent program schedule was managed by Brad Bonham for the second year with several high points in the year including Mark Abrahms of AIR, a meeting with Cincinnati teachers, and even a meeting on gardening myths. Our membership efforts chaired by Brad with membership lists kept by Donna Loughry increased to the highest point in our history and we must work to continue that growth. Increases in membership are partly the result of Donna Loughry and Wolf Roder in regularly putting out an informative and funny newsletter and the already mentioned speaker program.

Notices of our meetings are now distributed further than ever before in the community through the work of Gary Himes. Thanks to David Wall, our web page has gotten better and better as the year progressed with over 50 blurbs by years end. Unfortunately, our web host Cyberwarped has given up the ghost and we are looking for a new server to host [www.cincinnati-skeptics.com](http://www.cincinnati-skeptics.com).

Rick Prairie, our treasurer, is helping us create a budget to help us understand what it will take to improve services to our membership and the community. He is also working with a team to investigate getting tax exempt status. Many thanks to Dick McGrath and Joe Gastright for adding their support, advice, and expertise. Last of all, thanks to Dinny Jergens for acting as secretary and for keeping us all on time with such responsibilities as this report.

I look to the coming year to repeat the past one with good talks, informative news, and more members. See you at a meeting. --Roy Auerbach, President.

### Vice-President's Report

No report. --Joe Gastright, Vice President.

### Treasurer's Report

I took over the Treasurer's position in September, 1997. At that time my predecessor Dick McGrath turned over a check for \$415.88. Since then the checking account balance has increased to \$644.43.

<b>Income</b>	
Membership Dues	\$ 1,260.00
Cash Donations	855.00
In-Kind Donations	872.85
Blurbs	106.00
Sale of AIR Books	70.99
<b>Total Income</b>	<u>3,164.84</u>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Membership	
Postage	284.03
Printing of Flyers	588.35
Stationary	11.12
P.O. Box Rental	58.00
Newsletter	
Bulk Mail	390.00
Postage	49.87
Printing	1,511.57
Programs	
Coffee	31.69
Guest Meals	11.66
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<u>2,936.29</u>
<b>Net Income</b>	<u>\$ 228.55</u>

In reviewing the past Treasurers' reports, I found that our year end balance has varied from \$462 - \$685. A budget meeting held in January 1988 closely estimated cash income and newsletter expenses, but grossly underestimated membership expenses which were paid this year by in-kind donations. --Richard Prairie, Treasurer.

### Secretary's Report

I took minutes for Executive Council and Membership meetings, adding them to the official records of A.R.T.'s activities. I sent copies of Executive Council minutes to council members and distributed to them an action list for each meeting. I reviewed and updated the action list with Executive Council members during each meeting.

In addition to keeping the minute books, I prodded other officers to summarize their activities for the past year in an annual report for publication in this newsletter. These annual reports are not mere window dressing. They are an important part of the record of our activities we will use to obtain Internal Revenue Service recognition as a tax-exempt organization. These reports will also be useful should A.R.T. seek grants for educational or other projects.

I also organized all past annual reports into a loose leaf notebook and assembled a complete file of all past newsletters into a notebook. All of A.R.T.'s records from its founding in 1991 to the present are now assembled in four volumes: membership meeting minutes, executive council meeting minutes, annual reports and the newsletter.

Beyond the official duties of the Secretary, I wrote articles for the newsletter summarizing the talks of each of the ten speakers at A.R.T. meetings this year. In addition I wrote several articles for the newsletter summarizing executive council and membership meeting business.

My volunteer hours for the past A.R.T. year, July 1, 1997 - June 30, 1998 were 183. ---Virginia Jergens, Secretary.

### Membership Chair Report

Membership is up -- primarily due to a mail solicitation sent to approximately 300 Skeptical Inquirer subscribers in southwest

Ohio in early December 1997.

As near as I can tell, our June membership roll breaks out like this:

Courtesy (including speakers)	9
Lapsed Members	18
Current Members	82

Of the Current Members, 22 are new since September, 1997 (and all but 1 or 2 are since the Skeptical Inquirer mailing); 2 are re-activations by former supporters.

Since no renewal notices were sent out this spring (and since some of those lapses are getting antique), it would be premature to say we've broken our goal of 100 Current Members. This should however, be achievable in the 1998-1999 year, especially if we can coordinate a mailing to Skeptical Inquirer subscribers in local Kentucky & Indiana zip codes.

The mailing announcing the special Marc Abrahams program in March numbered nearly 900 pieces. Most went to members of local skeptical groups in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana. Several hundred pieces went to key individuals and departments at schools, colleges, museums and so on within about a 50-mile radius of Cincinnati. While this was not a direct membership solicitation, it served to inform tri-state skeptics about ART programming activities and went a long way toward raising our profile within a targeted portion of the community-at-large.

A minor duty of the Membership Chair has been responding to requests for sample copies of our newsletter, submitted via a form posted at our web site. Since this activity was initiated in late August 1997, about two dozen requests have been answered. Fifteen were "local" (w/in 50 miles of Cincinnati); 6 were out-of-towners (Iowa, Maine, Michigan, Ohio, Texas, Tennessee); 3 were international (Botswana, New Zealand and one I can't recall). While none of the local folks have joined, one did visit a meeting. All the locals will be placed on the rolls for membership solicitation in 1998-1999. --Brad Bonham, Membership Committee Chair.

### Membership Secretary's Report

At the end of the 1997-1998 year we had a record high 100 members, 82 who had paid their dues for this year and 18 who had not yet paid this year's dues. We also have over 100 Courtesy membership for Speakers, and the News Media. Twenty-five new members joined A.R.T. this year thanks to Brad's hard work publishing and distributing hundreds of program flyers to alert people of our organization. Sending program fliers to local *Skeptical Inquirer* subscribers who were not A.R.T. members produced 10 of the 25 new members. The rest came from other sources such as friends, a magicians's group and a course Wolf Roder and Joe Levee taught at U.C. Twenty one of the new members joined between January 1 and the end of the program year in June. --Donna Loughry, Membership Secretary.

### Meeting Organizer and Program Chair's Report

We survived our second year of 10 monthly programs. Attendance remains strong in spite of a couple of bad dates (on or close to holidays) and/or weather.

Though not part of the original line-up, with the inclusion of the Marc Abrahams / Clear the Air program, we jumped feet-first into programming with a speaker-of-note. While this type of programming was among our goals for the next year or two, we got a little ahead of ourselves in seizing the opportunity to snag this speaker. As a result, I got more than a little over-committed and three things have suffered -- follow-up on the event; follow-up with contacts made during the promotion phase; and planning / arrangements for the 1998-1999 regular programming. Not wanting to be in this position again, don't expect any more of these spur-of-the-moment things until we find someone to

share the work of the regular monthly program duties.

That said, this was a fun program, and while it did not draw as well as I might have hoped from among teachers (Too little notice? Not the type of program they're looking for?), it drew as well as I could have hoped for from the ranks of skeptics -- especially considering that this was a full day commitment and carried an additional fee. --Brad Bonham, Meeting Organizer and Program Committee Chair.

### Newsletter Editor's Report

The work of the Newsletter Editor is right out there, for all to see, to comment on or to criticize. We again published nine issues of 12 pages each this year. The newsletter has appeared monthly with the exception of three double issues, Aug./Sept, Dec./Jan, and June/July.

The format and layout of the newsletter has not changed, as I have tried to keep it consistent. We generally feature a summary of the presentation from the last meeting on the front page. All of these have been written by Virginia Jergens, to whom I owe much thanks. The various sections, editorial, book reviews, news, and letters have not changed, neither have the short pieces: motto, Esmeralda, puzzle, crazy of the month. Donna has enlivened the *Cincinnati Skeptic* with more illustrations than last year.

The cost of producing and mailing 250 copies of the newsletter has not changed materially and continues at \$185. Allowing for a small amount of incidental costs, each copy comes to about 75 cents. --Wolf Roder, Newsletter Editor.

### Web Site and SANE List Manager's Report

When I succeeded Virginia Jergens as SANE list manager in spring of 1997, it had 34 subscribers, all local, and most of them A.R.T. members. Shortly thereafter I had the opportunity to move the list to a listserv (on Cyberwarped.com), which automated much of the administration of the list, and added new capabilities. Instead of doing it all by hand, we had the features of a full-fledged list-managing program at our fingertips. Another added benefit is that the list traffic was no longer funneled through the SANE list manager, but was automated by the listserv program. I hoped for greater participation from the list members, and was gratified, after a short period of adjustment, to see people taking advantage of it.

By the beginning of the summer of 1998, the list had grown to 48 members. Most are still ART members, but there are a few non-locals who subscribed, apparently through learning about it on our web site. While most of these are still from Ohio or Kentucky, we have one from the Ukraine Republic, two from the United Kingdom, one from Germany, and (briefly) one from Israel. There are other addresses for which I cannot identify a location, as they are from large Internet Service Providers operating across the United States. SANE is presently looking for a new home, as Cyberwarped is no longer in existence as a full-time server. More on this later.

I inherited the web site from Roy Auerbach, who, like Virginia, was also busy with other tasks. Cyberwarped had just come online, and offered free web hosting, so I moved the web site to Cyberwarped. Roy registered the cincinnatiskeptics.org domain with Internic, and with the help of Anthony Walls, Cyberwarped's owner, the domain was set to point at our site.

At first all I did was make a few minor cosmetic changes. However, during an illness which had me stuck at home and bored out of my skull, I wrapped HTML around a large number of the blurbs and added them to the ones already on the web site. A few other blurbs have been added since then, but most of them were done in that one splurge of work. I've added a picture to some of them, hoping to spice them up a little, but most still lack illustrations.

Other additions include the 1997- 1998 meeting schedule, a bare-bones search engine, a special announcement for Marc Abrahams' visit, and the beginnings of a collection of web links,

along with an semi-automated system for adding to the links. Plans for the future which are actually old plans that I have yet to get around to include the placing of the newsletter on the web site. I've thought of several ways to do this, but most have turned out to be either too labor-intensive for the limited time I have to spend, or depend on people having the word-processing software to read the newsletter files. I tentatively plan to convert as many as I can to Adobe Portable Document format, as that would involve less time and effort.

I didn't start keeping logs of accesses to the web site until November of 1997, and only have logs up until the end of April 1998. In the following discussion, only accesses to actual HTML documents are counted. The server also tracks the number of images that are accessed, which would mean multiple *hits* for pages containing one or more images, so they are ignored. In any case, here are some summary statistics of the daily number of accesses to the web site.

	Mean	StdDev	Median	Max	Min	Total
Nov. 98	17.0	18.6	12	62	0	511
Dec. 98	36.7	47.8	18	236	1	1139
Jan 98	28.9	21.3	22	75	0	896
Feb. 98	62.9	42.3	64	180	0	1761
Mar 98	50.7	41.	48	204	0	1571
Apr. 98	48.7	28.	41.5	126	10	1460
Overall	40.5	38.1	31	236	0	7338

(pooled)

(The mean is the regular arithmetic mean, and the standard deviation is the population SD based on the arithmetic mean)

The most popular sections of the web site are presented in the table below. *Hits* is the number of hits over all the months for which I have data.

Rank	Section of Web Site	Total Hits	Percent
1	Home page	959	13.0690
2	Blurb Index	599	8.1630
3	Cryptozoology blurb	275	3.7476
4	Table of Contents	243	3.3115
5	Snake-handling blurb	204	2.7800
6	Pitdown Man blurb	193	2.6301
7	Biorhythms blurb	160	2.1804
8	Skeptical Resources (old links index)	147	2.0033
9	New Links index (mostly me testing)	146	1.9896
10	Philadelphia Experiment blurb	139	1.8942
11	Spontaneous Human Combustion blurb	133	1.8125
12	Darwin's Deathbed blurb	127	1.7307
13	Sample Newsletter page	124	1.6898
14	Satanic Ritual Abuse blurb	115	1.5672
15	Iridology blurb	108	1.4718
16	Meetings main page	105	1.4309
17	/robots.txt (search engines read this)	103	1.4037
18	SANE page	103	1.4037
19	African Pseudo-History blurb	93	1.2674
20	Near-Death Experience blurb	89	1.2129
21	Anti-Gravitational Mystery Spots blurb	84	1.1447
22	Hundredth-Monkey Phenomenon blurb	84	1.1447
23	Holocaust Denial blurb	81	1.1038
24	Anthroposophy blurb	79	1.0766
25	Membership & General Info on A.R.T	78	1.0630
26	97-98 Meeting Schedule	76	1.0357
27	Bermuda Triangle blurb	75	1.0221
28	Dowsing blurb	75	1.0221
29	Alien Abductions blurb	71	0.9676
30	Creationism blurb	71	0.9676

Our site was accessed by people from around the world, including every continent except possibly Antarctica. (I'm not sure if it has its own country code or people working there access

the net from a domain belonging to their country. However, I do know that at least some of them have access to the net.) Most of our accesses were from within the United States, and the repeat customers appeared to come mostly from Cincinnati and surrounding areas.

At present our web site is without a home, as is the SANE list. Our host providing free web space and listserv lists to several groups for over a year. However, running a full-time server is fairly expensive, and he can no longer afford the money or the time involved and is shutting down. Repeated attacks through the network by crackers have also made the job more difficult than it need be.

I am presently searching for a new host for our web site and SANE. There are several possibilities, but at the time of writing they are too indefinite to say much about. --David Wall, Web Site and SANE List Manager.

### Publicity Coordinator's Report

I continued to post our press releases for upcoming meetings with the *Cincinnati Enquirer* and the *Eastern Hills Journal*.

The *Eastern Hills Journal* published our releases very sporadically throughout the 1997-98 season. I contacted them and arranged for future releases to be sent by fax, rather than mail, as this should make reception of them more efficient.

I have added the *Kentucky Post* to our list of newspapers that currently carry our press releases. I have also expanded our coverage into the area of free-distribution periodicals, specifically *City Beat* and *Everybody's News*. The latter has not yet carried our releases but has agreed to accept them in the future.

I put the *Downtowner* on our list of periodicals to approach about receiving our press releases in the 1998-99 season.

A representative of *Cincinnati Magazine* who wanted to do a short piece on our organization contacted me. I referred him to Dinny and Roy for more in-depth information.

I purchased a fax machine for my own use which I am also using to distribute our club notices. --Gary Himes, Publicity Coordinator.

### Media Resources Coordinator's Report

No report. --Joe Gastright, Media Resources Coordinator.

### Investigations Officer's Report

During the past year Investigations Officer was changed from Joe Gastright to Dick McGrath. There were no investigations by the whole membership of A.R.T. working together. It was thought we might be able to investigate a so-called haunting reported on TV, but such did not work out. Joe Gastright continued on his own to research Therapeutic Touch and use of magnets in medicine. Dick continued his study and evaluation of the Shroud of Turin and likely also other members did their individual investigations, but such were not reported to us. --Dick McGrath, Investigations Officer.

### No Brain Required?



A computer designer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology claims she has made improvements toward computers with "heart". Rosalind Picard says her new computers will exhibit human friendliness and empathy. Picard says current computers "are autistic. They have a lot of verbal and mathematical skills, but they really don't have emotional abilities." (UPI) I do hope they are not like some humans I know.



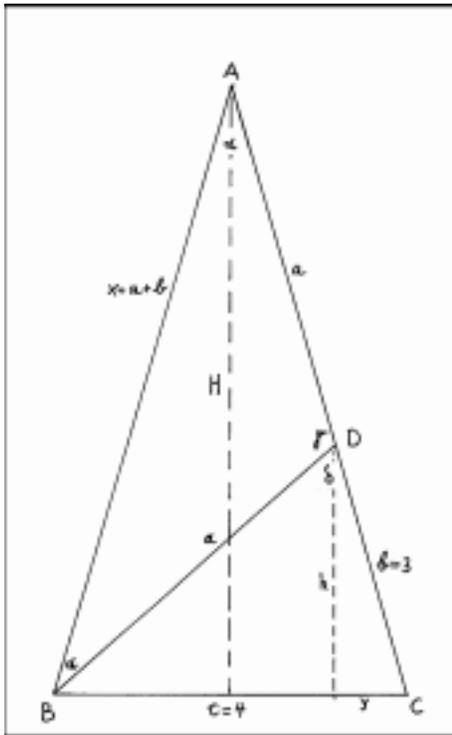
### Cards in Hands.

Jeremiah, the great bridge master thought he had seen every hand possible in his game. So he was not impressed when friends introduced him to Skat, a game that is played with only 32 cards, i.e. cards seven and above in the usual four suits. The game is played three handed, and each player is dealt ten cards. "There can not possibly be many different hands in this game" Jeremiah complained. Tell the nerd just how many hands can be dealt in Skat.

## A Puzzle for Thinkers

### Solution to last month's puzzle:

Notation of sides, angles, and vertices as in the drawing, where capital letters are vertices, lower case letters sides, and Greek letters angles. Except H which is the height of the ladder. The trick is to find either a or x where  $x = a + b$ . Don't try this without a good calculator. ( $x = 7.29$ , hence  $a = 4.29$ )



**Solution (1):** The triangle ABD is isosceles by definition of the problem, thus angle  $\gamma$  is equal to  $\gamma = 180 - 2\alpha$ , and the angle delta is  $\delta = 180 - \gamma$ ; hence  $\delta = 2\alpha$ . We can find the sine of one-half alpha, because half of the ladder is a right triangle with height H, thus

$$\sin\alpha/2 = c/2(a+b).$$

We can find the angle delta from the formula for angles in an oblique triangle, thus

$$\cos\delta = (a^2 + b^2 - c^2)/2ab$$

On the right side of these equations only a is an unknown. We are now looking for the point at which delta equals  $4(\alpha/2)$ . I solved this by successive approximation trying a between 4 and 5 feet. At the correct length  $4(\alpha/2)$  and delta converge on  $63.6793^\circ$

**Solution (2):** Consider that the height h of the triangle BCD divides this into two right triangles so that  $a^2 = (c-y)^2 + h^2$  and  $h^2 = b^2 - y^2$  which we can substitute. Using x-b for a, and inserting the known numbers for b and c, we get an equation in unknowns x and y:

$$(x-3)^2 = (4-y)^2 + 3^2 - y^2$$

which we can multiply out and gather the terms to get

$$x^2 - 6x - 16 + 8y = 0$$

The triangle making up half the ladder with sides H,  $c/2$ , and x is similar to the small triangle with sides h, y, and b so that y is proportional to  $c/2$  as b is proportional to x, written thus

$$y/2 = 3/x \text{ or } y = 6/x$$

which we substitute into the previous equation, and multiply through by x to obtain the cubic equation

$$x^3 - 6x^2 - 16x + 48 = 0 \text{ or else the equivalent } x\{x(x-6)-16\} + 48 = 0$$

How to solve a cubic equation is not generally part of high school math, so solve by trial and error (successive approximation) with x between 7 and 8.

If you do solve the cubic equation, you will find that x is equal to the square root of 28 plus 2,  $x = 2 + \sqrt{28} = 7.291503$ , but you really didn't want to know it that precisely. The other two roots of the cubic equation are -3.291503 and 2.

**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 (CSICOP), 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 on the second Saturday of each month September through June, 10:00 AM at James Tavern in Blue Ash and publishes *Cincinnati Skeptic* each month. A.R.T. meetings are open to the public. A.R.T. also maintains a database of information on paranormal claims for local new media to consult and investigates local paranormal claims. A.R.T. was founded by Cincinnati area skeptics in 1991. Annual dues are \$15.00 and include a subscription to the *Cincinnati Skeptic*.

For more information call: President Roy Auerbach (513)731-2774 or Nurit Bowman, (513) 731-0642 or visit our website.

**Address Changes and Corrections, Membership Questions:** Roy Auerbach (513) 731-2774 E-mail: raa@one.net

**Mailing Label Information:** "00/00/00 Member": You are a member in good standing; your membership will expire on the date on the label. "Lapsed": (*highlighted*) - your membership has expired. Please send your dues as soon as possible.

**Yes!** -- I want to support the important work of **The Association for Rational Thought** and receive *Cincinnati Skeptic* and meeting notices. I have enclosed funds for:

- New Member     Renewing Member     Contribution     Gift membership for/by:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Work: \_\_\_\_\_ Home: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**In order to keep membership dues low, your additional contributions are *VERY WELCOME* !**

**I would like to make a contribution in addition to my dues to further the important work of the Association:**

Contribution Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Dues: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Make your check payable to the **Association for Rational Thought** and mail to A.R.T., P.O. Box 12896, Cincinnati OH 45212. *Contributions are not at present tax deductible, but we are working on it.*

- Request subjects for future meetings  
 Please do *not* include my name and address in mailing lists exchanged with other groups.



### *Skepticism and ART on the Electronic Media*

For the latest in skeptical news via e-mail, join **SANE**, the **S**keptical **A**rea **N**etwork **E**ffort. Send your e-mail address to list manager David Wall at **darkon@one.net** with subject "subscribe." You will find cheerful, rational messages from CSICOP, James "The Amazing" Randi, your fellow local skeptics and ART in your e-mail box every week. This is our means of staying in touch between issues of the *Cincinnati Skeptic*.

Be sure to check out our handsome skeptical web page at **http://www.cincinnati-skeptics.org** --- lots of nifty links to skeptical thinking around the world. Our web site contains the basic definition of who we are, what we do, and our bylaws. In addition, you'll find such things as how to get to our meetings held at James Tavern, other ways to reach us, how to sign up for our e-mail list service, how to send sample copies of the newsletter to potential members, and links to other sites of interest.

For the future, all of the draft skeptical objections will be entered in the web site and eventually, it will be possible to download an electronic version of the newsletter.

--David Wall, Web Site Manager

**E-mail: darkon@one.net**

**Web: http://www.cincinnati-skeptics.org**



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**The Association for Rational Thought** 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 elsewhere in this issue.

## **Preview Of Coming Attractions....**

**First Meeting of the 1998-1999 Season!**

**Please mark your calendar and plan to attend!**

**Date and Day:** 12 September 1998 -- Saturday

**Time:** 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM -- program  
12:00 PM - 2:00 PM -- lunch

**Place:** James Tavern at Cooper Road and Reed Hartman Highway. It is a great place to gather and then have the lunch/social portion of each meeting. This location is very accessible for folks wielding walkers, wheelchairs and the like. Coffee is available with a small donation during the meeting.



**Topic: Critical Thinking and its Relationship to Science**

**Speaker: Steven D. Schafersman, PhD; Department of Geology; Miami University**

A relative newcomer to the tri-state, Dr. Schafersman is along-time participant in skeptical and humanist activities on the national level, and helped found the local skeptical group while in Houston, TX. His interests (in addition to professional geological pursuits) include: critical thinking, the Shroud of Turin, naturalism as an essential part of science, and creationism. His homepage, with links to some of his writings, can be found at:

<http://www.muohio.edu/~schafesd/homepage/>