



Cincinnati Skeptic

Newsletter of The Association for Rational Thought

Vol. 9 No. 3

December 1999/January 2000

It has been said that the primary function of schools is to impart enough facts to make children stop asking questions. Some, with whom the schools do not succeed, become scientists.

Knut Schmidt-Nielsen, *The Camel's Nose* (1998)

In this Issue:

Haunted Houses/Heads.....	1
Forthright Deception.....	1
Comments Corner.....	2
From the Un-Easy Chair.....	3
Letters to the Editor.....	3
Too Many Books.....	4
Porter Henry Obit.....	6
A Skeptics View of Y2K.....	7
Puzzle for Thinkers.....	7
Viruses and E-mail.....	14
Membership information.....	15

November Meeting

Forthright Deception: A Lawyer-Magician Looks at Consumer Fraud.

November speaker Bob Croskery has two skeptical windows through which to view the world. He is a skilled magician, and in fact earned his living for about five years working as a magician. In addition he is a lawyer who specializes in litigation related to consumer fraud and deception.

After warming up with a multiplying balls trick and a joke or two, Bob told us about his unlikely route to an interest in consumer fraud. In the late 1970's, just as the Vietnam war ended, he joined the army and was assigned to a White Sands, New Mexico, unit engaged in testing an anti-aircraft system which eventually became the Patriot missile. His lowly private's job was to test the system to see whether the product matched the army's specifications. It didn't.

But Bob Croskery more than met specifications: after a year at White Sands, he won a presidential commission to West Point, from which he graduated in 1982, finishing his required post-graduate tour of duty in 1987. At this point he returned to a high school pursuit, hiring out as a magician. He founded a company providing entertainment acts for Cincinnati area businesses. When recession put an end to that effort, he went back to school and picked up a law degree.

Ohio is a good state in which to specialize in consumer law, because its consumer protection laws are unusually favorable to the consumer. An Ohio consumer who wins may get damages plus triple damages, plus reasonable attorneys' fees, reasonable in this context being about \$200 an hour. Under the Ohio

October Meeting

Haunted Houses or Haunted Heads?

Investigate Between the Ears, Not the Eaves

Founding A.R.T. member Joe Gastright took on the formidable job of filling in at the last minute for ghostbuster Bob Baker, who was unable to speak at the October meeting. Joe stole the title of his talk and several stories from his old friend and skeptical colleague and waded into an impromptu and highly knowledgeable talk on ghosts, why people believe in them, and how to de-haunt the haunted.

Armed with a small pumpkin, as yet uncarved into the traditional Jack o' Lantern, Joe told listeners that his views of Halloween had changed somewhat since he spoke to A.R.T. on the topic several years ago. The Celts to whom Halloween is attributed were a stone age group probably originating in the area where Germany is today. Eventually their culture spread all over Europe, and eventually to England and Ireland. Unfortunately, little is known of this people because they failed to write anything down.

Most of our Halloween customs are descended not from the Celts but from early Christian customs

(Cont. Pg 8)

President**& Membership Secretary:**

Roy Auerbach: (513) 731-2774

E-mail: raa@one.net

Vice President:

Nurit Bowman(513) 731-0642

E-mail:nurit@netscape.net

Media Resources Coordinator:

Joe Gastright: (606) 581-7315

E-mail: joeskep@aol.com

Program & Membership Chairman:

Brad Bonham: (513) 761-5613

E-mail:bonham@compuserve.com

Newsletter Editor:

Wolf Roder: (513) 556-3424

E-mail: roder@uc.edu

Treasurer:

Rick Prairie (513) 681-8444

E-mail:Richard.Prairie@uc.edu

Investigations Officer:

Dick McGrath(606)344-3395

Recording Secretary :

Virginia Jergens:(513) 871-4876

E-mail:vhj@one.net

Publicity Coordinator:

Gary Himes (513) 752-5135

Web Site Manager &**SANE Manager:****(Skeptical Area Network Effort)**

David Wall (513) 321-3381

E-mail: darkon@one.net

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

Copyright © Association for Rational Thought (ART) of Cincinnati, Ohio, all rights reserved. This work may be copied for skeptical, non-profit educational use if proper credit is given to individual authors and to the *Cincinnati Skeptic*. We request you mail us two copies of any reprinted material.

**Comments****Corner.....****Slippery Symptom Syndrome**

Lets make a visit to a local doctor's office and listen in to one of the more frequent patients. Its either Mabel or Phil depending on your own preference. Doctor Tolliver already has "trouble sleeping" on his note but ask's for more:

Well I just don't feel well and I think its related to the insomnia. First I feel tired all day, but when I get in bed I just lay there and toss and turn. At work I can hardly keep my eyes open and just can't seem to get anything done. I have to write everything down or else I forget it before the day is over. I just can't concentrate any more and I am getting worried about my job. This has been going on for years, but lately it seems to be getting worse - ever since I saw you last year.

A few more questions show that he/she has been staying home a lot, avoiding previous hobbies, watching a lot of TV and so forth. The arthritis and acid stomach are still there but they come and go, and the medicine seems to help. "My friend has been taking St. John's Wort and say's it really help's, what do you think?"

The only thing wrong with this report is that the doctor is seldom asked or told about a herbal or neutra-ceutical before it is tried. If the doctor had a popular placebo with the publicity of St. John's Weed, it would probably be as effective as anything he can prescribe. The symptoms above are the classic symptoms of depression and the widely used "pepper uppers" and tranquilizers used for treatment all have side effects which make their use problematic.

A syndrome like the one described earlier is quite common but not necessarily confirmable or treatable. A syndrome is a set of symptoms commonly found in association with one another but not scientifically connected to an organic cause. In the hands of another therapist the same symptoms would be recognized as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome which is more acceptable to some sufferers because its not "mental". Its better than being "depressed" because depressed people are thought of as in need of a "talking cure" or worse as "malingerers".

A really unlucky patient might fall into the hands of a believer in MCS. If the patient had ever been exposed, past or present, to microscopically small doses of any "*chemicals*" then Multiple Chemical Sensitivity Syndrome shows these same symptoms and as many more as you want. Sufferers are instructed to find protective environments and avoid contact with all chemicals?

Along with those other chronic reasons for alternative treatments, "pain, body fat, and sexual disorders," fatigue, memory loss, inability to concentrate, and sleep disorders will keep the practitioners of Alternative Medicine and the purveyors of "weeds and seeds" in business forever.

Now for the rest of the story.....The list of symptoms that I started with did not come from an article on "Depression". The five symptoms I listed were in an article on "The Ten Common Signs of Possession." So you see that earlier ages had hypotheses about the cause of common "I don't feel good!" symptoms which were as inventive and as well corroborated as the ones listed earlier. Exorcism anyone?

— Joe Gastright



From the Un-Easy Chair...

Religion and Science in ART.

ART is concerned with using the evidence of science to disprove the false and mistaken claims of pseudo-science, health quackery, the paranormal, and deliberate fraud. We believe that false information imperils individuals' health and happiness as well as financial security.

We do not question religious beliefs held on faith. Religious tenets held on faith and supported by texts believed to be sacred can not be examined scientifically. Thus they are not a concern of the Association for Rational Thought.

It is only when religious beliefs extend into the natural world to make scientific claims that ART will consider the issue. Let me illustrate my point with an example. If someone believes the spirit of Jesus is present in the famous Shroud of Turin because God placed His image there using the hand of an artist, and holds this faith regardless of the material source and history of the shroud, the Association for Rational Thought has no comment.

It is only when believers claim the cloth was actually woven in the first century CE that we turn to scientific evidence to support our position that this claim is untenable. To support our point of view, we point to three independent radioactive carbon tests which concluded that the cloth dates from the fourteenth century and the historical testimony that the image was painted at that time by an artist. What is more, as rational thinkers we are prepared to consider conflicting evidence and the possibility the historical record is biased. But, we do want to see the evidence. And we do want to draw conclusions about the natural and historical world from natural and historical evidence, rather than from faith-based beliefs.

In this controversial and difficult matter I speak only for myself, as editor of this newsletter, but I believe I also speak for the majority of the membership of ART.

— Editor

Letters to the Editor...

The Church and Astronomy

The claim that the Roman Catholic Church aided astronomy during the Middle Ages by collecting astronomical information is not sustainable. The Church did indeed provide itself with astronomical information allowing it to establish correct dates for Easter, but the other information collected and the understanding of the universe that it led to were suppressed. Useful data and ideas that are not accessible to scientists do not contribute to science. The notion that "the Roman Catholic Church once waged a long and bitter war on science, and on astronomy in particular" stands.

Virginia Jergens, Cincinnati

Note: This letter appeared in *The New York Times* on Tuesday 26 October 1999



Dear Friends,

The "bread" story in your June/July issue is all wrong. In the first place it was not a man who put *butter* on the bread, but a young girl. Maybe having a man make his own meal is a PC update of the story. And, of course she did not put butter on the bread, but *schmaltz*. Because with butter you would not be allowed to add any kind of lunchmeat. However, the last line is definitely correct. Man or girl, butter or schmaltz, the bread was "greased" on the wrong side.

— Marie P. Prins, Oost-Souburg, The Netherlands

There once was a mathematician
Who preferred an exotic position.

'Twas the joy of his life
To achieve with his wife
Topologically complex coition.

Too Many Books.... Too Little Time....

*Apocalypse Pretty Soon: Travels in
End-Time America*

by Alex Heard

(New York: Norton & Co. 1999)



"I think billions will be killed." She said it quite cheerfully and briskly, explaining, "Well, the Earth is a living entity, and when you pass the 3 percent mark in terms of ecological change there's a reaction—a violent reaction. As they say, Earth Changes is a birthing process, but it's going to be a bloody birthing." (p. 108). Or such is the opinion of a non-religious, ecology cult explored by journalist Alex Heard. Altogether he examined eight cults in major chapters, with plenty of side trips and lots of good quotes. I get the impression Heard is quite sympathetic to the change seekers and doom sayers, in fact, would like to go along believing their stories. But, his good sense, his reporters cynicism, and a fair dose of rationality keep him on the side of the skeptics. As one consequence his subjects do tend to come off as quite friendly, mostly harmless, if sometimes also quite stupid if not crazy.

I've mentioned one of the cults, let me review some of the others. In chapter one the Unarius-Science of Life society expects space brothers to arrive in UFO's to aid mankind. In two, the fundamentalist preacher and the rabbi are breeding an all red cow, to have this requisite animal for sacrifice when the Temple is rebuilt. Which of course must happen before the battle of Armageddon can take place. Heard calls them "religious hobbyists" who only fall short of Pooch Corner coziness when you consider the obstacles they face. Chapter four looks at one of the successors to Koresh in a town I have come to think of as Wacko. The chapter also explains the events around the bunch who called themselves the Republic of Texas and who tried to secede from the United States. This is one group with potential for violence. Yet Heard comments on one of the leaders: "To me he didn't seem evil, just stupidly, dangerously misguided, in that he was breaking the law to express political views that he should have expressed through normal political means, like joining the Young Americans for Freedom." (p. 153). Chapter five is about Dr. Steven M. Greer, who has seen more UFO's than all other viewers combined, and who is using signals to call the space friends down to Earth by assuring them we are good and harmless. As Greer reported himself, he has scored "a confirmed, close range, multi-witness... interactive encounter with five UFO's that responded in kind when

signaled with a 500,000 candle power light in intelligent sequences." (p. 197). In six, a number of deep thinkers are introduced who intend to build independent countries on floating sea islands or perhaps on space ships. But, "the history of nations that never existed is by nature sketchy." (p. 223). In seven we meet some people who intend to live to 120 or forever, in other words food supplement junkies. Heard asked a physician and nutrition expert about the diet pursued by one of these fools. The doctor's advice: "Don't touch this stuff!" (p. 259) And finally in eight we visit with the Institute of a gentleman who has learned, and will teach us, how to have out-of-body experiences. Just why you would want to have out of body experiences is not clear. When Heard fails to succeed getting an OBE, the trainer firmly instructs him: "Just use your imagination when you're not getting it, and if you can't imagine it, *pretend* to imagine it." (p. 320).

All in all, and considering the wide variety of screws loose, this book is lots of fun if you go for that sort of amusement. Alex Heard concludes with this thought: "The terrifying specter of evil lunacy might always be loose in the world. But, fortunately, so will the amiable spirit of Gomer Pyle." (p. 339).

— Wolf Roder



Cellular Phones and 20/20.

It began in 1993 when a Florida man brought suit against cellular phone companies after his wife died of brain cancer. "She talked on the thing all the time and held it against her head," he said on Larry King Live. That was the extent of the evidence and a federal judge threw out the claim two years later. Wednesday night, ABC News 20/20, in what Diane Sawyer called "the report everyone will be talking about," asked its own experts. They were familiar to anyone who followed the power-line controversy. The editor of Microwave News, Louis Slesin, was repeatedly referred to as "Dr. Slesin." Doctor of what? Reached by phone this morning, he would not say. However, *NW* has confirmed that Slesin's PhD is in "Urban Studies and Planning."

— *What's New* by Robert L. Park, 22 October 1999



Everyone is entitled to do something really stupid now and then, but some people do abuse the privilege.

— bio-astrologer Esmeralda von
Löwenzahn-Dentdelion

Refuting Evolution: A Handbook for Students, Parents, and

Teachers Countering the Latest Arguments for Evolution

by Jonathan D. Sarfati, Ph.D, F.M.
(Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 1999)

The back page informs us the author is an Australian with a Ph.D. in physical chemistry from Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand. It further says "he has co-authored various technical papers" in his specialty of vibrational spectroscopy. I could find only one such a paper, it appeared in *Spectrochimica Acta*, 1994. In any case he has been a Christian since 1984, and now works full-time for the ministry *Answers in Genesis* in Brisbane, Australia, where he is a research scientist and editorial consultant for their magazine *Creation ex Nihilo* and the associated *Technical Journal*. The foreword was written by Ken Ham, director of the *Answers in Genesis* ministry in Northern Kentucky.

Refuting Evolution is explicitly intended as a response to *Teaching about Evolution and the Nature of Science*, a teachers' guidebook published by the National Academy of Sciences. Given Sarfati's qualifications we may expect an authoritative scientific statement of "Creation Science." Unfortunately, it is a rehash of all the old arguments rather than a report on scientific findings.

The first chapter is about the rationalistic and naturalistic bias, and the atheism of modern scientists. The book insists the scientific consensus around evolution is *not* overwhelming. In support it cites a long list of famous "creationist scientists;" none from the twentieth century.

Much of the book is given over to citing the Bible, and instructing us in what creationists may or may not believe. Thus, "the Hebrew words for the animals taken into the ark do not include invertebrates" from which it follows "they must have survived off the ark somehow." (p. 46). Yes, how, and what is the empirical evidence for this amazing statement. On the same page, Koalas could have migrated to Australia from Mt. Ararat. Could they really? Just as easily they could have been dropped by UFOs. There is no evidence for either scenario. One has to conclude that Sarfati has no idea about science despite his Ph.D.

One chapter is devoted to a rehash of "missing links" in the evolution record. Another chapter denies evolution of birds from dinosaurs. Since *Archaeopteryx* had feathers, he clearly couldn't have been a dinosaur. As for whales, the evidence is just not there to infer any kind of evolution. And so he goes on.

Human beings are too dissimilar from animals to have common ancestors. Sarfati deals with the more recently discovered DNA similarities, but draws on the same old saw

to explain them away. Similarities are due to a common designer, who "used the same biochemistry and structures in many different creatures." (p. 82). As for the notion that embryonic development has similarities, it just isn't true according to Sarfati. "The only way for Haeckel to have drawn them looking so similar was to have *cheated*." (p. 85). Emphasis in the original. Let me add that the German naturalist Ernst Haeckel has been dead since 1919 and that Sarfati is arguing about hundred year old illustrations.

There is nothing new in *Refuting Evolution*. It is perhaps interesting to have it all together in one place. It is astonishing to see how much of modern science the fundamentalist Christians have to reject to uphold their faith. Creationism is not merely about a theory originated by Darwin, but to support their imaginings, devotees have to reject all of historical geology and astronomical cosmology. Any evidence which shows the earth to be quite old must be rejected, which includes earth magnetism, nuclear physics, dendrochronology, as well as glottochronology. What is more, creationists also reject modern historical and archaeological scholarship which sees the story of Genesis as a myth borrowed from older Mesopotamia civilizations.

At the end, Sarfati argues that the "intelligent design" explanation is legitimate. He fails to bring forward any evidence showing how a process of deliberate design may have worked. Rather it is the same old negative argument, nature is too complex for the trial and error procedures of evolution. Not even Sarfati's Bible speaks of design or describes a design process, rather the opening words of Genesis strike this non-expert as plain and simple word magic.

— Wolf Roder



Burrp! Is it Oxygen in the Water or Air in the Head?

According to *Sports Illustrated*, hockey players in the Stanley Cup finals relied on "oxygenated water" to boost blood-oxygen levels. According to *Oxyl 'Eau*, the Canadian company that sells it, the boosted water has twice the oxygen of tap water, or about 16mg/liter, which is certainly possible if it's bottled under pressure. Assuming the oxygen miraculously ends up in the blood instead of the bladder, how much of this water would it take to supply even one percent of a player's oxygen? A trained athlete playing hard uses about 0.13 grams of oxygen per second. We calculate that players will need to drink 146 liters in a 60 minute game for a one percent boost. They sure would need frequent breaks!

What 's New Robert L. Park with Helene Grossman,

23 July 1999

We mourn Porter Henry: Extraordinary Skeptic

by Virginia Jergens

J. Porter Henry, Jr., died October 31, 1999. He was 88 years young, a lively, intelligent, funny person, a delight to be with. He was a mathematician, a pioneer in sales and management development training, author of several books, winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor. He was also a member of A.R.T. In fact, he was the founding member. In 1991, the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) undertook a series of executive council meetings held across the country to encourage local participation in skeptical activities.

Porter and other Cincinnati area skeptics met for lunch with the CSICOP executive council at the Commonwealth Hilton at I-75 and Turfway, on Sunday, December 2, 1990. Among the participants were me, my husband Dick Shepherd, and my son Peter Jergens. After lunch, Paul Kurtz and other CSICOP luminaries spoke. The meeting broke up around 3 p.m. with murmurings of how nice it would be to have a local skeptics' group. Names of those interested in forming such a group were collected.

There the matter sat until Porter borrowed the list of Skeptical Inquirer subscribers from CSICOP, called Joe Gastright and Dick Shepherd, and conned them into joining him for lunch at the Washington Platform Saloon and Restaurant at the corner of Court and Elm Streets. In that dim establishment, Porter, Joe and Dick cooked up a plan to bring the light of reason to Cincinnati.

With Porter at the helm, the group mailed a questionnaire to local Skeptical Inquirer subscribers and invited them to a luncheon meeting to organize a skeptics group. The original questionnaires completed by Skeptical Inquirer subscribers interested in forming a local group are included in A.R.T.'s records. At that time, the skeptical issues most interesting to members were UFO reports and pseudoscientific and fraudulent health and medical issues.

The first meeting was held Saturday, Sept. 21, 1991, at 10:00 A.M. at the Holiday Inn on Rte 42 and I-275, Porter presiding. Lunch was \$15. Fourteen people attended that meeting, and twenty-seven others expressed interest in joining. At that meeting, the following pro tem officers were selected: Joe Gastright, President, Porter Henry, Secretary, Richard Shepherd, Treasurer and Virginia Jergens, Newsletter Editor, Dues were set \$15 (\$5 for full time students).

Porter's efforts on behalf of the skeptical community did not end with that founding meeting. In addition to a variety of activities for A.R.T., including writing for the newsletter, Porter painstakingly transcribed long hours of audio tapes recorded by Phil Klass, CSICOP's UFO investigator. We will greatly miss his twinkling wit and thoughtful approach to all matters skeptical.

A SKEPTIC'S VIEW OF Y2K

Y2K

Aside from the joke going around about turning Monday into Mondak and Tuesday into Tuesdak, the ideas, comments and hysteria for Y2K are becoming monstrous. Will there be a world wide calamity--I doubt it! Will some people part-take in self-full filling prophecies and actions? Maybe.

I work in the world of finding corrections for the Y2K bug. Our company has been ready for several months now. I spent the better part of a year and a half both preparing my own company for the new century and tracking our supporting companies with their preparations. Preparing my own company for the new century was the easy part as I was very aware of it's approach several years ago (as were most forward looking programmers). Therefore, I wrote programs to include 4-digit years when I could.

Among our "supporting" companies are companies such as Cinergy, Cincinnati Water Works and Cincinnati Bell. We also had to get statements from our Banks, Landlord, Insurance, etc. (Don't ask our Payroll Manager about our payroll company -- They changed to a Y2K compliant system in mid-July. We only recently had a 100% correct payroll!). Almost all companies have recently changed their computer software to the Y2K compliant software. Therefore, we are getting all of the bugs now, not in January.

But why does all of this tracking and statement getting need to be done anyway? Because of the readiness of any company to make some extra money off of someone else's mistake. Legal companies are setting up entire departments for Y2K litigation. Here's one scenario: Company A requests a shipment of widgets from Company B. These widgets are considered a very critical component and Company A keeps no extra stock on hand (known as Just-in-time Inventory). Company B misses the shipment because somehow the date read 1900 instead of 2000 or 2020 instead of 2000. The missed shipment stops a production line, idling all of the workers on that line, causing Company A to miss it's shipment date to it's customer and losing the order. Therefore, without asking any questions, Company A sues Company B. An ironic twist to the story would be if Company A's Purchase Order stated that the order was due in 2020. Then Company B could counter-sue Company A. And so it would go on and on....

On a more personal note. How will Y2K effect me? Will there be some glitches? Yes. Most of the glitches will be in the smaller end businesses like the Mom and Pop store down the street who don't have the time and/or money to make needed changes. There may also be some glitches in the rural areas of the country as some of the rural supporting companies can't find the people to make the changes needed in their software.

What should you do? That depends on where you live. Here in Cincinnati, I believe that Cinergy, the Water Works etc. will be ready and operating or have contingency

plans drawn up. If there is a major outage, it will be weather related--not Y2K related! Since I live in the city, here is what I recommend:

- 1) Do have a little extra cash on hand for those times when the local Mom and Pop stores can't take credit cards. But don't have so much extra cash on hand that some burglar could make a big haul.
- 2) Know and be able to prove what you have in your accounts. Especially keep your statements and records straight.
- 3) I am planning to prepare as I usually do for food, water, and warmth in the event that we are snowed in or there is too much snow outside that I can't get out to go grocery shopping when the refrigerator is empty.

Finally--be sensible, think and find out -- ask realistic questions. I find it sometimes hard to resist going along with the latest, exciting, out-of-the-ordinary fad of survivalism. Every company in the United States is very aware in many ways about the coming new century. We will survive peacefully!

Happy New Year to Everyone!

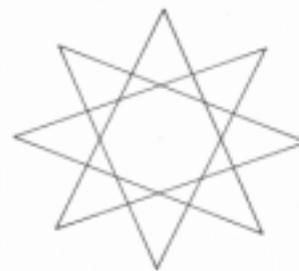
Donna Loughry

A Puzzle for Thinkers

Stars in your Eyes?



An eight pointed star can be thought of as consisting of eight equal length sides or lines. (See drawing.) How long would one of these sides be, if the distance from one point of the star to its opposite point is ten inches?



Solution to last month's puzzle:

The smallest number which is the sum of two cubes in two different ways:

$$1729 = 10^3 + 9^3 = 12^3 + 1^3$$

The easiest way to find these is to take the cube root of 1729, which is just over 12. Any useful cube must be smaller than this. Thus it is easy to try the numbers smaller than 12 one by one to see which may fit.

Haunted Houses/Heads from page 1....

associated with All Saints Eve, the night before All Saints Day, a Christian holiday placed so as to compete



with the Celts' fall harvest festival. Pumpkins carved into Jack o'Lanterns, for example, are our modern version of lamps carved from huge, tough turnips which Christians carried on Halloween to prevent attacks by evil spirits.

The core of Halloween, however, is the harvest festival the Celts called Samhain (pronounced sah wen). Samhain did not celebrate a particular deity, although the Celts are thought to have probably been polytheistic, but was a harvest festival. Its name in Celtic means "end of summer," and in Gaelic, "November," both suggesting the harvest nature of the festival.

The Celts appear to have had considerable control over their ghosts: Samhain was the only night of the year on which ghosts were permitted to appear. In addition to celebrating the harvest, all executions for the year were done on Halloween, and black cats were thrown into bonfires lighted on hill tops to cheer on the diminishing sun.

The Christian church as it overtook the pagan religions that preceded it in Europe made every effort to turn Halloween into a peaceable, dull and sanctimonious holiday by turning it into All Saint's Eve. In this it was like most religions, which typically take unkindly to members' dealing with or conversing with ghosts or spirits. The reason for this traditional aversion to allowing religious adherents to talk to spirits is that it was well known that no good can come of it. Now we know that talking to spirits, although often harmless, sometimes allows the anonymous release of whatever angry, jealous, or frightened thoughts people have but are unwilling to speak themselves.

The only religion that permits and encourages conversations with the dead is a product of American culture: the spiritualist movement, which developed in the United States during the nineteenth century. Spiritualism is organized around contacting and conversing with the dead.

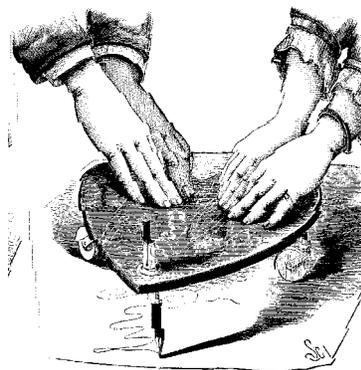
A current example of the traditional horror of ghosts felt by church authorities is the brouhaha in Birmingham, Alabama, brought on by a request by fundamentalist church groups there to have Halloween moved from



October 31 to the fourth Saturday in October so that it could never occur on a Sunday. These groups feel that Halloween desecrates Sunday because it is a celebration of spirits.

Every civilization that we know about has had beliefs about ghosts. But the belief, although common, sometimes turns whole lives upside down and creates a great deal of personal unhappiness. In the United States, for example, where surveys have found that 52% of the population believes in astrology and 42% believe that dinosaurs and human beings inhabited the earth at the same time, a modest 35% believe in ghosts. For this 35%, and for anyone who believes that messages can be received from the dead, a practice like using a Ouija board to receive spirit messages can be quite unsettling. Using a Ouija board generally produces harmless messages initially, but then the messages become frightening, violent, or vicious, as the users' unconscious thoughts begin to appear.

A handy way to reveal the earthly source of Ouija board messages is to blindfold the user, and provide a board with a scrambled alphabet. Under these



circumstances the "messages of the spirits" became unintelligible.

Saying that all of his tips for good hauntings to investigate have come from Bob Baker, Joe recalled his investigation into a haunting at a Kentucky country western bar owned by Bobby

Mackie involving ghosts and an alleged "gateway to hell" which turned out to be a hole in the basement floor. The Bobbie Mackie spirits seem to be the product of a publicity campaign, since a new one appears every two or three years just in time to renew public interest in the bar.

Another local haunting involves the Southgate-Gano House in Covington. This handsome example of Federal architecture is said to have been the scene of the tragic suicide of the daughter of the owner over love gone awry. The suicide is said to have occurred at a party at the house attended by the Marquis de Lafayette.



Joe checked the story in various sources, found that it has a classic history: Modern newspaper stories about this ghost are based on older newspaper stories which are based on even older accounts, each account changing the story just a bit

to avoid plagiarism. In this case the house that was the scene of the suicide turns out to have been in Lexington, not Covington, and Lafayette, although he did stop in Covington on his way from Lexington to Cincinnati, did so only in order to relieve himself.

Local historian and architecture expert Walter Langsam tells the story of being hired to examine a suburban ranch house whose owners believed the house was afflicted with ghosts because it had an antique mantel piece from an old house in Covington in the living room. Walter investigated, decided the mantel piece was of modern Italian origin, and had been bought at Aronoff's, not removed from an older house. In spite of his input, the story appeared on TV news one evening alleging that the house was haunted because of a spirit attached to a mantel piece from an old house in Covington.

All ghost stories are either literary ghost stories, found in literature from ancient to modern, and often quite powerful, or folk ghost stories, plain, unornamented stories told by ordinary people. The deeper into history the reader goes, the greater the proportion of literary ghost stories, because they are more likely to survive than folk stories. Ghost stories vary greatly over time, driven by cultural forces. An excellent examination of these changes is found in R.C. Finucane's *Ghosts: Appearances of the Dead and Cultural Transformation*, available in paperback from Prometheus Books.

Ghost stories have performed a variety of social

purposes. In ancient times, ghosts were said to complain to the living about deficiencies in their burial rites or grave, so graves were tended to placate the ghosts, who stayed pretty close to their graves. In addition to encouraging grave maintenance, ghost stories have frightened the guilty with the threat of revealing their secrets. But the main job of ghosts through the ages has been to comfort the bereaved. With the rise of the Christian church came ghosts said to ask for prayers for salvation and other dull matters. In the sixteenth century, ghosts were upbeat and humorous, but turned gloomy during the Puritan seventeenth century. In the nineteenth century, ghosts were in decline. Stories told of seeing ghosts doing the wash or making beds, not delivering important messages as in the past. According to surveys carried out in Britain, twentieth century ghosts differ little from their nineteenth century colleagues, and are seen hovering over beds or standing by the side of the road in historical costumes as they were a century ago.



A "haunting" is a ghost that is said to appear at the same time of night, in the same place, doing the same thing, night after night in an unchanging pattern. Haunting ghosts never speak.

The manner in which ghosts are thought to transmit messages to the living also varies over time. In the past, ghosts were said to appear and deliver messages to the living. In 1848 the Fox sisters, the first spiritualists, claimed that ghosts talked to them rather



than to the person for whom the message was intended. Persons concerned about messages from dead relatives attended their seances, asked questions, and received answers said to be from their dead relatives. These answers were delivered through mysterious ghostly knockings, actually the popping of joints in the sisters' feet. Later spiritualists required no questions, but instead just made comments repeating what they claimed the dead had said to them. Today, in a process called "channeling," spiritualists claim that the voice of the dead, usually the voice of a wise and ancient sage, speaks directly with the channeler's own

voice. The Ouija board, a trademarked device including a pointer and the alphabet, is also used to receive alleged messages from the dead.

History affects ghost stories in other ways. War promotes ghosts and ghost stories because many people die young, their lives interrupted and unfinished, leaving behind unresolved conflicts and incomplete agendas. Parents, brothers and sisters, friends, and



neighbors grieve and want to correct relationships. The Civil War produced a market for messages from beyond that established the medium in the United States. World Wars I and II also boosted the market for mediums.

In Britain overreaching mediums destroyed spiritualism as a business when they indulged in fraud and became a target for law enforcers.

The believer's point of view is that a ghost is a spiritual manifestation of the dead that can be seen and heard. The skeptic's point of view is that although science has no opinion about strictly spiritual matters, natural phenomena are subject to scientific verification. Something that can be seen either emits or reflects photons. Sound requires that some natural event cause molecules in the air to vibrate, thus ghosts that can be seen and heard are a natural phenomenon that can be investigated.

But no one has ever been able to gather evidence showing that ghosts could be seen or heard. Thus the explanation, "It was a ghost." is an unfalsifiable hypothesis, a proposition beyond the reach of science.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the success of the Fox sisters in England inspired, so to speak, the formation of the Society of Psychical Research. Most of the society's investigations at that time resulted in a conclusion that maybe there really was a ghost involved. From 1890 to 1894 the society undertook a huge survey looking into contemporary beliefs about and experiences with ghosts.

or as the society called them, "hallucinations". The questionnaire was completed by 17,000 people, and has been repeated on a smaller scale since then. Out of



the original sample, 673 people reported that they had had a firsthand experience in which they were touched by or had seen or heard an entity that was not a physical presence. Second hand experiences and doubtful sightings were reported by 1,684 people. Thirty-nine percent of the reports of ghosts were made by men, sixty-one percent by women, a proportion that continues to the present. Of the original sightings, 16% were thought to be of people known to be dead, 44% of living people, and 42% of people who were unknown.

The chief reason people believe in ghosts is that ghosts show that we do not really die, but just continue life in another form and place. As Alexander Pope said, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast: Man never is, but always to be blest."

Surveys asking information about ghostly appearances have found that the most frequently reported reason for believing a ghost was present was hearing strange sounds. The second was feeling cool breezes. Both are thought to be responses to something that frightened the person, who interpreted what he saw or heard as a ghost. When frightened, a person becomes hyperacute, listening and looking far more carefully than usual. In this state she hears and sees things usually ignored. The "cold breeze" feeling occurs when fright cuts off blood flow to hands and feet and skin, resulting in feeling chilled. The two most common reasons cited for believing that a ghost was present are common responses to having been frightened. These are often followed by confabulation, a normal psychological process that occurs whenever a story is repeatedly told or talked about: gradually and unconsciously, fact is replaced by fantasy in the person's memory.

Ghosts are also often the interpretation offered for sensations induced by nervous system phenomena that occur upon sleeping and waking. If the paralysis that protects the dreamer from the dangers of acting out dreams overlaps wakefulness, the individual may have a hypnagogic hallucination, seeing clear pictures in no order of dead relatives and friends, and interpret the images as a ghost standing at the end of the bed. Similarly, upon waking up, the sleeper may be aware before the ability to move returns and may see images of friends and relatives. These phenomena are called



hypnopompic hallucinations. If the sleeper's world view includes a belief in ghosts, she or he is likely to interpret these hallucinations as ghosts.

Another psychological state is responsible for the sensation that someone else is in the room. Mulling all of these events over and thinking and talking about them often produces confabulation, resulting in the production of a full-fledged ghost story.

Joe's first ghost investigation was of a young woman of eighteen who believed that a ghost had fallen in love with her and was following her. She was confused, bothered, and upset. She lived with her husband and two year old child, in an apartment not far from the farmhouse occupied by the rest of her family, her mother and her brother. On his first visit, Joe, who had no idea what to expect, talked to the family for three hours, recording the conversation. The family had lived

in the house for five or six years, and had found personal belongings about 100 years old in the attic of the house. Research at the public library led them to the name and genealogy of the farmer who had lived in the house, a bit over 100 years old. The mother was the first to see the ghost, which she reported to



Joe that she had seen for a split second in the kitchen. It is quite common for a sighting to be extremely short. Then her son, playing his guitar in his bedroom, sensed something behind him and just then his amplifier went dead. He interpreted the failure of the amplifier as the mischief of the ghost.

The family talked about the ghost in detail, going over the stories over and over. Incidents attributed to the ghost increased: keys moved, doors closed, closet rods fell down, faucets turned off, strange noises occurred, someone was seen going into the bathroom while the family was watching TV with the lights out. Although the family talked about the ghost constantly, they could find no one else who would discuss it with them. Their minister and their friends refused to discuss the issue. The desperate family contacted psychic Patricia Michele, who offers her services at an hourly rate, and told the family that the ghost was doing all these things because they had messed with his belongings. They put all the things they had found back in the attic, but the ghostly happenings continued.

The ghost became the focus of their lives. At a family birthday party, someone took a Polaroid photograph alleged to show the ghost in the background, a vague figure of a man in a stovepipe hat. The mother began to use a Ouija board to receive



messages from the ghost that she interpreted as meaning that the ghost was in love with her daughter and that someone would be hurt or even killed. Her daughter began to

see the ghost in her apartment several miles away from the house, and believed the ghost was following her. At last the family found Bob Baker, who asked Joe to investigate. After hearing the whole story, Joe talked to Bob and determined a strategy for dealing with the ghost. Believing the ghost to be the product of confabulation, and the mother to be the main source of this interpretation, Joe asked the brother and sister each to pledge not to mention the ghost for a month, and to change the subject to something else should the ghost come up in a conversation. Two to three months later the ghost was gone.

The family had fallen victim to an unfalsifiable hypothesis: the ghost did it. No matter what happened, this explanation was applied, and each time it was applied belief in the ghost increased. Constant talking about the ghost resulted in inadvertently building fantasy into fact. Gradually frightening and threatening ideas were associated with the ghost, especially through the use of the Ouija board by the mother, until every one in the family was frightened and upset. When the younger members of the family excluded the ghost as an explanation and topic of conversation, the whole fantasy, and the distress it caused, gradually melted away.

— Reported by Virginia Jergens.



Forthright Deception from page 1....

lemon law covering defective automobiles, the consumer may recover everything he paid for the car plus reasonable attorneys' fees.

One of the most interesting cases Bob has



worked with was not a case of defrauding the consumer. It was a case of handing the consumer too much information. In an effort to boost ratings, FOX television aired a show featuring a masked magician. Working incognito in front of the cameras, this magician revealed the secrets behind about twenty tricks, all of them stock illusions known and used by all magicians. This outraged many magicians, who generally consider purchase of a particular trick an implicit contract with the manufacturer to protect the trick's secrets. The World Alliance of Magicians wanted to take action against the masked marauder, but found little legal ground to stand on.

Enter our hero Bob Croskery, who as a magician was as outraged over the spilling of the beans as any other magic worker. And he also had the wherewithal to find legal means of corralling the magician behind the mask. But first he had to find the magician. Happily the masked magician had included in his act an illusion sold exclusively by a single magic shop. The owner had sold three of this particular illusion. Two were easily accounted for. The small world of magicians was quickly able to trace the the third.

The culprit proved to be Val Valentino, whom Bob sued, claiming he had a contract with the person from whom he had bought the trick not to reveal its workings. The suit had no chance of success, but that was not the point of this legal exercise. Valentino's continued financial success as the masked magician depended on remaining thoroughly masked. The suit, weak as it was, forced Valentino to admit his identity publicly in court, cutting off the masked magician's



profitability. Which was considerable: Fox has sold 275,000 video tapes of the program.

A pair of glamorous, \$12, thigh-high stockings marketed as wedding attire by Victoria's Secret was Bob's next target. A pair of these stockings was bought by Elizabeth Brown Murphy for her wedding. Ms. Murphy wore the stockings to her wedding and reception, and on to the honeymoon hotel afterwards, a total of about 10 hours. The trouble began when she tried to take the stockings off. The anti-slip silicone liner at the top of the stocking adhered so thoroughly to her skin that she was unable to remove them, even after soaking them with water. She was able to remove the stockings only by also removing strips of her skin. In addition to pain and stress, she was unable to consummate her marriage on her wedding night. And she has scars around her thighs which are still visible more than a year later. Bob has had calls from five other women who suffered the same damage. If there had been a warning on the label, she would not have bought the stockings.



In the course of suing Victoria's Secret, Bob has discovered customer complaint cards complaining of this problem. He has also turned up evidence showing that Victoria's Secret had done testing which revealed the problem. It will be up to a jury to decide what all of the bride's misery is worth, but it is likely to be more than the \$7500 Victoria's Secret offered the injured bride.

Compensation for wedding night injury reminded Bob to debunk the commonly heard story that the McDonald's hot coffee case was a case of clumsy, demanding consumer, not negligence on the part of McDonald's. Large compensations awarded by juries are not always outrageous. In the McDonald's hot coffee case, for example, the facts of the case are these: the plaintiff was an 83 year old woman, driving with her grandson. She was handed coffee 20 degrees hotter than most commercial coffee is kept at, and the lid on the cup was not seated properly on the cup. As she was handed the coffee to put in a cup holder, the coffee spilled into her lap, causing second degree burns to her genitalia, resulting in pain, injury,



and \$25,000 in medical expenses.

McDonald's refused to pay the medical expenses. A jury awarded \$4 million, based on research showing that this is the profit McDonald's makes on the sale of coffee in a single day in the United States. A judge later reduced the award to \$375,000. Neither the final award nor the extensive injury done by the coffee made it into the news.

After a charming card trick any sci-fi fan would love, in which ordinary cards portray "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" and are turned into pod-like spades by evil aliens, Bob turned to practical tips on how to use the Ohio lemon law. This law provides remedies should an automobile you buy turn out to be irremediably defective.

The law allows the consumer to sue the manufacturer, not the dealer. But dealers are involved in the process because they are responsible for correcting defects in new cars. Although car dealers often post signs saying that arbitration is required in all lemon law cases, that is not true. The law states that arbitration is required, but only in certain unusual circumstances. The dealers have every reason to promote the law as requiring arbitration, because arbitration costs them less than a suit in every instance. Arbitration always allows the amount refunded to the consumer to be reduced according to how long the consumer has owned the car or how far she has driven it. So the first thing you need should you decide your new car is a lemon is lawyer, but remember that if you win, which is not uncommon, your attorney's fees will be included in the amount you recover.



A car is classified a legal lemon if it meets certain standards of imperfection. First it must be a new car, no older than 18 months. If it has a defect that impairs safety, like a brake problem, the dealer must repair the problem on the first try. If the problem is not corrected on the first try, the law states that the consumer must get a new car, or the return of all costs associated with buying the car, including fees and taxes, and reasonable attorney's fees.

If the car has a defect not related to safety, like an air conditioner problem that remains uncorrected

after three attempts at repair, then it also is a lemon. A new automobile can also attain the rank of lemon by having at least eight problems that require repair in the first 18 months of ownership, or by being out of service at least 30 days during the first 18 months.

In each case, the purchaser must file a complaint within two years of the end of the warranty, in addition to the requirements above. The lemon law applies to leased as well as purchased vehicles. There are also provisions covering used cars.

Since dealers have a financial stake in preventing lemon status, they have a tendency when a car comes in for the second time with a given problem, to write up the service ticket and label the problem something else. So the air conditioner problem is entered on the service ticket at the first visit as one thing, for example, "noisy compressor." The next time the same car comes in with air conditioner problems, the ticket says "cold air vent not working," and so on.

Should you ever have the misfortune having a new car that is defective and difficult to repair, be sure that when you take the car back to the dealer for a second repair of a given problem that you or the service department employee makes the ticket out to show that the problem is the same one that the service department tackled unsuccessfully earlier. Remember that you yourself may write the problem on the ticket. If a problem develops and the dealer claims the problem can't be found, that visit to the service department still counts as a step toward achieving lemon status, so keep the service ticket.

-- Reported by Virginia Jergens

And while we're at it, why don't we teach courses in how to be responsible, or how to be married, or how to be a good parent, or, at the very least, how to be a reasonably honorable human being? Unfortunately, such courses will never be taught, because the information gleaned would have no application to real life.

George Carlin, *Brain Droppings* (1997) p. 250

How to deal with viruses warnings and e-mail.

The following was sent to Wolf who sent it to me and I sent it to my Dad. It originally came from Andy Jergens who may have obtained it elsewhere:

"General rule: If e-mail asks you to send it to all your friends you can stop reading right there. All such e-mail falls into one of four categories:

- (1) Chain letters
- (2) Pyramid schemes (which are chain letters + fraud)
- (3) Warnings about viruses or other unpleasant things which are well intentioned but totally false.
- (4) Requests to send something to someone: petitions are popular as are requests to send greeting cards or bottle caps or e-mail to some poor chap who really wants it to stop."

Andrew's list is a good start. It is numbers one, three and four that I have run across most often where I work. Some of the e-mails I get run like this:

"Dear Friend

Here is the info. for the new viruses:

WARNING No. 1

If you receive any CELCOM Screen Saver. Pls. do not install it!!!!!! This screensaver is very cool. It shows a NOKIA handphone, with time messages. After it is activated, the PC cannot boot up at all. It goes very slow. It destroys your hard disk. The filename is CELLSAVER.EXE

WARNING No. 2

Beware! if someone named <SandMan> asks you to check out his page. DO NOT! It is at "http://www.geocities.com/vienna/6318" <-DO NOT go to this site. This page hacks into your C: drive. DO NOT GO THERE...

WARNING No. 3

If you get an E-mail titled: "Win A Holiday" DO NOT open it. Delete it immediately. Microsoft just announced yesterday. It is a malicious virus that WILL ERASE YOUR HARD DRIVE. At this time there is no remedy. Forward this to everyone IMMEDIATELY!!

WARNING No. 4

If you receive an e-mail titled JOIN THE CREW or PENPALS, DO NOT open it!!!!!! It will erase EVERYTHING on your hard drive! PENPAL appears to be a friendly letter asking you if you are interested in a perpal.but by the time you read this letter it is TOO late. The Trojan horse virus will have already infected the boot sector of your hard drive, destroying all the data present. It is a self-replicating virus, and once the message is read it will

AUTOMATICALLY forward itself to anyone who's e-mail address is present in your box!!! This virus will destroy your hard drive and holds the potential to DESTROY the hard drive of anyone whose mail is in your box and whose mail is in their box and so on and on!!!!!! So delete any message titled PENPAL or JOIN THE CREW. This virus can do major DAMAGE to worldwide networks!!!!

AOL HAS SAID THIS IS A VERY DANGEROUS VIRUS AND THERE IS NO REMEDY FOR THIS YET. FORWARD IT TO ALL YOUR ON-LINE FRIENDS A.S.A.P.!

I believe these are valid

Your Friend, relation etc."

After reading a million of these false warnings, I ask; how are we supposed to know what is or isn't a true virus warning? Andrew's rules come to mind. In the above example, the reader is told this is a Virus Warning! (#3). The reader is also asked to send these warnings to all of their friends (#1 & #4.) I'd like to add a 5th and 6th rule to Andrew's list:

5) "If it sounds like an urban legend, it probably is!"

6) "If you don't know and can't tell who sent it, delete it!"

Some of these Virus Warnings are very funny to people who know and understand computers but can be very scary to the majority of people who don't know the details of how a computer works. For instance you *cannot* get a virus from the contents of the e-mail letter itself. But a virus *can* be imbedded in an attachment to the e-mail letter. (Note--the Microsoft Word Macros are an attachment to the e-mail.) A program has to be run in order for the Virus to survive. An E-mail letter is not a runnable program but the attachment may be.

If someone sends you a virus warning, check out the websites of McAfee (www.mcafee.com), Norton Anti-virus Software (www.symantec.com) or any other anti-virus software vendor. Since I use Norton's Anti-virus software, I know that they devote part of their web site to anti-virus hoaxes. (Sad but true!) If it is a hoax, you do not have to forward your e-mail to all of your friends. You can STOP the virus warning/chain letter. If it is a true Virus warning, you'll hear about it not just from your friends, but the everywhere else as well. I have never received a true virus warning from any e-mail that wasn't supported by warnings via the media, other friends or a vendor's web site. In addition to other people either my anti-virus software caught it, or I heard about it on the news or from Wolf and the U.C. Computing Department.

The bottom line--just use plain common sense. If it sounds too good/bad to be true, it probably isn't.

Donna Loughry

The Association for Rational Thought is an independent, nonprofit, scientific and educational organization. We share the ideas and philosophies of CSICOP, the Skeptics Society, and JREF.

CSICOP : the *Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal* publishes the *Skeptical Inquirer*, a journal of investigations of paranormal claims. PO. Box 703, Amherst, NY 14226-0703, phone: 800-634-1610, fax: 716-636-1733, www.scicop.org

The Skeptics Society, publishes *The Skeptic Magazine*. PO Box 338, Altadena, CA 91001; phone: 626-794-3119; fax 626-794-130; skepticism@aol.com and www.skeptic.com,.

JREF: the James Randi Educational Foundation publishes the *Swift Newsletter*. 201 SE 12th Street Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316-1815; www.randi.org

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: _____

We have kept dues low and will continue to do so in spite of rising costs. However, if you are able to, your additional contributions are very much appreciated. Please give generously, if possible. Thank you very much!

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 Skeptical Area Network Effort. 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 skeptical website at <http://www.cincinnati-skeptics.org> --- It contains: our BLURBS on various subjects; lots of nifty links to skeptical thinking around the world; the information for joining SANE; 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; and how to send sample copies of the newsletter to potential members.

—David Wall, Web Site Manager

Web: <http://www.cincinnati-skeptics.org>

E-mail: darkon@one.net



Association for Rational Thought
P.O. Box 12896
Cincinnati, OH 45212

Address Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.
U. S. Postage Paid
Cincinnati, OH
Permit 402

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....

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, wheel-chairs and the like. Coffee is available with a small donation during the meeting.

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

Please mark your calendar and plan to attend!..See you there!

Fourth Meeting of the 1999-2000 Season! Date and Day: 11 December 1999

Topic: The Intelligent Design Argument: It's Origin, Death, and Resurrection.

Speaker: Steven Schafersman. This talk will cover the history of the theist/creationist argument from design, the fine-tuning argument, and the anthropic cosmological principle, focusing on the arguments of design proponents (Paley, Ross, Swinburne, Schroeder, Davies), the philosophical refutations of them (Hume, Grünbaum, Drange, Smith), and the scientific refutations of them (Darwin, Dawkins, Weinberg, Stenger). For a number of reasons that will be discussed, the various versions of the design argument are currently very hot topics among creationists, theist philosophers and scientists, cosmologists, and popular science writers and readers. Come and find out why, and learn the latest thinking about this subject.

Fifth Meeting of the 1999-2000 Season! Date and Day: 08 January 2000

Topic: Y2K

Speaker: Post Mortem on the First Week of Y2K (in 2000 Words or less). Moderated Discussion with the Audience...Bring your experiences to share!!!

Join us....to find out what's real and what's not!

Y2K