



Cincinnati Skeptic

Newsletter of The Association for Rational Thought

Vol. 11 No. 1

August/September 2001

Poker is a game of chance, but not the way I play it.

— W. C. Fields

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The Association for Rational Thought Annual Report, 2000 - 2001

By Virginia Jergens, Secretary

Eleven officers and members reported working a total of 1089 volunteer hours for A. R. T. during the 2000- 2001 year..

President's Report

A.R.T. continues as an organization that helps inform its membership about issues of interest to skeptics. It also has a smaller positive impact on the community at large in the greater Cincinnati area.

Our programs were quite varied this year and included a couple of events with more interactive activity than our usual talks and slide lectures. Thanks and kudos to Brad Bonham. We had excellent talks on Darwin's theory of evolution, rationality through the ages, dinosaurs, the Drake equation, standardized tests, and the Newark, Ohio, holy stones. The last talk was a fascinating example of a nineteenth century hoax aimed at justifying a particular set of beliefs.

For activities we had a Superstition Bash on Friday, October 13, just in time for Halloween. Thanks to Donna Loughry for organizing and putting so much work into the party. To finish the year, we toured Big Bone Lick State Park, Kentucky, with the park naturalist.

Our web site is now well established and generates a steady number of hits. Each year, David Wall gives it an improved look and feel. As a measure of public interest, we get a steady stream of e-mail addressed to the president either asking questions or wanting to discuss topics from the blurbs. I would like to thank all the members who have helped answer those letters that merited a reply. Many times questions for which I didn't have an educated reply were answered by other members of greater learning. This is a great public service that goes towards our organizational goal of skeptical education.

Our newsletter as always is informative, erudite and funny. It is a great mixture that works well. The book reviews and columns supplied mostly by our editor Wolf Roder and columns supplied by president emeritus Joe Gastright are always interesting and entertaining. The summaries of our talks captured with great clarity by our secretary Dimmy Jergens let the larger membership who are unable to attend the talks learn what our speakers have to say.

For the future, our finances have stabilized with our
(Cont. Pg 7)

June Meeting

Really Big, Really Neglected Bones

For the June meeting, members drove south to Florence, Kentucky, and then west a few miles through gently rolling Kentucky horse country to Big Bone Lick State Park, where the pastures edged with white board fences give way to woods, grassland and salt springs. There Park Naturalist Jonathan Barker led the group around the last remaining salt spring while he talked about the park, recognized by scientists as the birthplace of American paleontology because of its wealth of prehistoric mammalian bones.

Although the park is held in high repute by paleontologists, and according to Jon is the crown jewel of the Kentucky park system, its glory is lodged firmly in the past, obscured by time and neglect. Nevertheless, it yields its treasures to an infusion of information and a generous imagination.

The story of the park is the story of the end of the last Ice Age, a period of about 8,000 years, 12,000 to 20,000 years ago. During that time the Wisconsin glacier lurked north of Cincinnati, providing temperatures on average 30 degrees cooler than those now prevalent in the area. Winter days commonly saw temperatures at 10 degrees below zero.

(Cont. Pg 5)

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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 1st.

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**Comments Corner**

Suffrage was only a few Bumps away

Dr. Joseph Rodes Buchanan was in New York in the Fall of 1842 to demonstrate his new science, Neurology, before a select committee of leading citizens chaired by the poet William Cullen Bryant. He was working with a Mrs. O, a "highly impressible" forty year old housewife and mother who, we are assured, was a complete stranger to him and to phrenology. He proposed to demonstrate how the flow of Nervaurea from his finger tips could excite the phrenological organs of his subject so that she would exhibit the very emotions and behaviors that each bump, or region controlled.

Now it seems the nervaureic effect was a two way path. Buchanan started by having his subject test her abilities by instructing her to stimulate certain organs on members of the committee. In theory she should feel the emotions raised in each subject by her actions. First he placed her index and middle fingers on the upper forehead of Dr. Forry - on his Reflective organ. When asked for her mental emotions, she replied "I have a desire for knowledge, and to know all about this subject." When asked for her motive, she responded that she was influenced by the love of knowledge alone.

Buchanan then moved one of her other fingers over to Forry's region of Benevolence. She proceeded to change her answer. Now she desired knowledge "in order to do good with it - in order to help her fellow beings." When he moved the finger on to his organ of Skepticism, she hastily jerked her hand away, saying "I feel nothing there." Buchanan commented that "this always happens with skepticism."

At the next session on 16 November, Buchanan and his assistant did all the exciting and the session revealed a strong under current of feminism lurking in his subject. When her organs of Self Esteem, Combativeness, and Firmness were stimulated simultaneously, she commenced an animated conversation in which she took the lead and soon became the sole speaker. She said that she "was qualified for a higher station in life, and that she possessed intellectual powers sufficient to exert a controlling influence over public opinion." Buchanan reminded her that the "domestic sphere is the only one proper for a woman because of her delicate health and feeble constitution." She responded vehemently that "The mind can overcome the body's weakness!"

Buchanan's assistant, on his orders, slipped up behind her and touched her organs of Humility and Physical Relaxation. Within seconds her voice lost its force, the brilliant animation disappeared, and her arms fell languidly to her side. Her voice became feeble, her eyes were downcast, and tears trickled over her cheeks. Presently in a sad and moralizing tone she said "I am only a poor woman and what can I do." The assistant again touched her "uppity" organs and before her tears had dried she was on the attack again, "I will crush under foot the monster prejudice that man has erected around woman." The committee had seen enough and they signed a report which stated: "These experiments have, in our opinion, demonstrated the discoveries made by Dr. Buchanan."

It is remarkable that William Cullen Bryant, the noted author and editor, not only was convinced but printed his endorsement in the Democratic Review in January 1843. Buchanan took his act on the road and I wouldn't be surprised if it didn't improve with practice. Inman, his assistant, knew his lines by heart and was the usual subject in other "experiments." Today James Van Praagh has a similar routine which works just as well. The local papers still eat it up as we well know.

- Joe Gastright



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

Rare Earth: Why Complex Life
is Uncommon in the Universe
by Peter D. Ward and Donald
Brownlee

(New York: Copernicus, 2000)

More than fifty years ago, in the late forties, I read a shockingly disappointing popular science volume. The author, an astronomer, carefully explained how it was quite unlikely that any complex life, much less intelligent life, existed in our solar system. At the time I was steeped in science fiction, which assured life on Mars, described a cool, rainy Venus, and quasi-human life on other moons and planets. Rare Earth will destroy your expectation of life elsewhere in the Universe, and show why Star Trek is merely fiction. Ward and Brownlee consider the question, by examining what makes life possible and limits it on Earth. Let me add that Ward is a paleontologist and Brownlee an astronomer, both at the University of Washington, and that the book is strictly science.

They begin by describing recent findings of life in extreme environments on earth. There exist single celled and other microscopic beings near the ocean bottom where volcanic magmas at 2000 °F meet freezing water under 400 atmospheres pressure. Other extremophiles (lovers of extreme environments) have been found in the boiling geysers of Yellowstone, inside the very sub-zero rocks of the Antarctic, and deep in the ground in the mud at the bottom of oil well drillings. This kind of living material may indeed be widespread in the universe, and in fact act as seed for evolution on a suitable planet. But, suitable planets for carbon based life in liquid water must be rare.

Not many of the various scenarios considered possible for the evolution of solar systems are conducive for the evolution of terrestrial planets. Nor are all regions of the universe or of a galaxy healthy for life. It is best not to appear near an active radiation source, or in a multiple star system, or in a globular cluster, or near a pulsar or black hole. The solar system must be rich in metals, and may be best moving slowly in the middle distance from the center of a spiral galaxy.

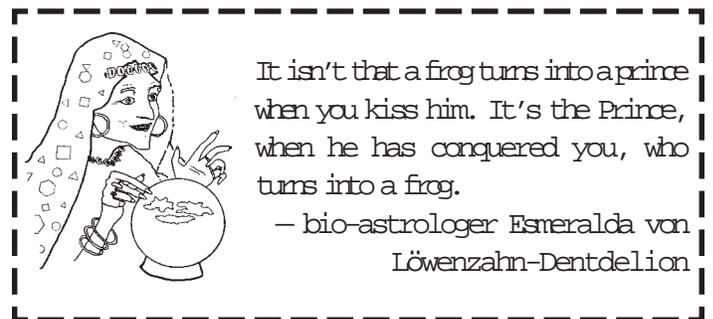
The bulk of the book examines the conditions which have made multi-celled life on earth possible. Life requires water, it can not exist in the absolutely dry desert, nor in the thoroughly frozen arctic. This narrow zone of life, between about 40°F and 100°F at a one bar atmospheric pressure requires a planet just large enough to retain an atmosphere; at distance from a star just so; in an orbit close to circular so as not to leave the life zone of its solar system. On earth it took four billion years of evolution before multi-celled life appeared. This means the planet's axis must remain near a fixed angle to its orbit, and the climate must remain within narrow limits of heat and cold, rain and dry for geological periods.

Life requires the right chemical evolution of the planet. The element carbon must be widely available, but not overwhelming. In the earth's atmosphere and oceans a constant exchange of carbon dioxide proceeds. The vast majority of the element remains, and must remain sequestered in carbonate rocks of the crust. A delicate balance needs to be maintained in the carbon cycle between air, ocean, soil, animals, plants, and microorganisms. Ward and Brownlee explain the necessary role of plate tectonic movements of the crust in keeping this balance. They doubt any planet without plate movement could acquire complex living beings.

Survival has been precarious at times. There have been long ice ages recently, and complete icing over of the planet in the pre-cambrian epoch. Even within the age of life major extinction events have occurred repeatedly. Vicissitudes of volcanism, asteroid impacts, icing over, or run away green house warming must remain within incredibly narrow limits over the entire period of life's evolution.

So, who should read Rare Earth? Let me put it this way. If you have any illusions Carl Sagan's "Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence" will show results, or that a Star Trek might be possible, you owe it to yourself to study this book.

— Wolf Roder



It isn't that a frog turns into a prince
when you kiss him. It's the Prince,
when he has conquered you, who
turns into a frog.

— bio-astrologer Esmeralda von
Löwenzahn-Dentdelion

Quantum Leaps in the Wrong Direction

By Charles M. Wynn and Arthur W. Wiggins

With cartoons by Sidney Harris

(Washington DC: Joseph Henry Press, 2001)

Charles Wynn, Professor of Chemistry at Eastern Connecticut State University, and Arthur Wiggins, Professor of Physics at Oakland Community College in Michigan have written a very accessible book on the differences between science and pseudoscience. The book is written in a punctuated style with short sections, each section with headers followed with a few paragraphs of text. This modern sound bite style makes the material easy to understand and perhaps more accessible to the general public.

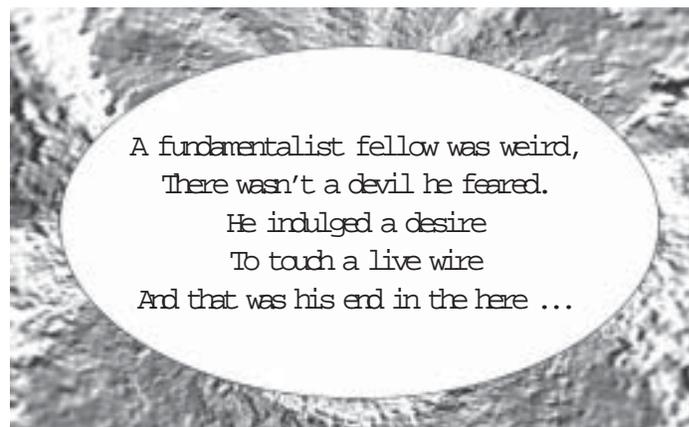
The range of topics covered in the book is quite ambitious. The organization is very effective, starting with a discussion of what are sciences and pseudosciences and the scientific method. The scientific method is clearly described and the concepts are applied throughout the books to both scientific and pseudoscientific claims. After describing the method, the authors use it in a classic example of science, the development of the atomic model. A chapter follows on how pseudoscience differs from science in "The road to reality versus the road to illusion." This chapter is extremely effective in describing the modus operandi of pseudoscience starting with a section titled "Pseudoscience Sells." The first three chapters dealing in general with science and pseudoscience are very well written and effective

The chapters after that deal with specific examples of pseudoscience. Chapters on UFOs, out of body experiences and mediumship, astrology, creationism, ESP, and a chapter that includes various miscellaneous topics are more varied in their effectiveness. Topics such as UFOs and astrology were among the best with creationism and out of body experiences being less effective. Some of the problem lies in covering too much ground in a short book meant to have popular appeal. The book's punctuated style itself prevents the authors from treating some topics in the depth they may deserve. This is most apparent when they simply assert what is right without giving an indication of the background supporting the claim. For instance, arguments relating to evolution and scientific creationism are asserted without explanation. The authors talk about life starting on this planet one billion years after planetary

formation without in any way telling how we know the age of the earth or the evidence for early life.

As skeptics, what are we to think of this book? It is not written in a way that will much affect current skeptics or believers. Skeptics have heard all the arguments although they will find the general exposition on science and pseudoscience nicely done and may discover a few facets they didn't know. Believers will dismiss out of hand many of the statements and arguments as old ground they have already discounted. How effective is this book, then, to the target audience of people who are not strongly in either camp? I believe the book may be very effective indeed. Its title, the style of writing, the Sidney Harris cartoons are all designed to make the book accessible while still covering topics in the way skeptics think of them. I will recommend this book to someone who wants to know more but is not yet firmly fixed in either camp. It is also an excellent first book or gift for young people and students.

— Roy Auerbach



A fundamentalist fellow was weird,
There wasn't a devil he feared.
He indulged a desire
To touch a live wire
And that was his end in the here ...

No Alien Abductions.

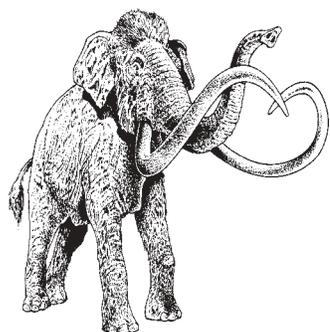
William Cooper, author of *Behold a Pale Horse* which argued the Eisenhower administration had signed a treaty with Aliens allowing them to abduct humans in return for advanced technology, has changed his mind:

Today, Cooper says he was wrong about aliens. The truth, he explains, is global elites are using the fear of aliens to control Americans, in particular through the "Star Trek" TV series, which he says is "an indoctrination into the concepts of socialism through subliminal initiation of the youth of the nation."

— Southern Poverty Law Center, *Intelligence Report*,
(Summer 2001) p. 12

Really Big, Really Neglected Bones..... from page 1

The hills now forested were covered then with tall grasses and a scattering of trees. Many large mammals well-adapted to the cold frequented the area, pushed south by the glacier and drawn by wide spreading, sulfurous salt springs. The water, trapped in sandstone



when Ordovician seas retreated ages earlier, seeped up through cracks in its shale overburden and formed salty, sulfurous wetlands. The salt was provided by the ancient sea, the sulfur by the shale.

Mammoths, mastodons, giant ground sloths and huge ancient bison all

waded in the mud and drank the salty water. Stag moose, caribou, musk ox and the Pleistocene horse also came. Most of the animals probably arrived in herds. Some were trapped in the bogs, either dying when they drowned, or starving to death stuck in the muck. Scavengers feasted on the remains; the mud gradually covered the bones, which sank and slowly fossilized in the mineral rich water.

Not all animals visiting the spring left fossilized traces. Birds, small scavengers and other animals whose skeletons were too light in weight to sink into the mud are not represented

The glacier retreated; the huge prehistoric animals were hunted out by human beings. The salt springs remained, slowly drying up, but still attracting people and animals. Today there is only one remaining small, murky spring. The surface of its water is edged with delicate, whitish zigzags of salt crystals. The air wafting from its surface has a distinctly sulfurous smell.

Today the huge animals of the past are gone, but the spring is still visited by deer, raccoon, possum and

other animals in search of salt, their foot prints visible in the mud around the spring.

Nearby Big Bone Creek has worn its way down into the layer of gray bone-laden clay, revealing an occasional chunk of ancient bone. A camp ground used by prehistoric people associated with Ft. Ancient lies near the creek, unavailable to park visitors due to lack of funds to restore the site. Later groups of Native Americans continued to use the springs as a source for salt.

The site was first recorded by Europeans when a French trapper from Niagara came upon the area in 1739. Seeing thousands of huge bones sticking out of the mud, he named the place Big Bone. "Lick" was added to its name when it became a source for salt for European settlers, who boiled away 600 to 700 gallons of water to produce a bushel of salt.

Thomas Jefferson, a dedicated naturalist in addition to his other pursuits, learned about Big Bone Lick and sent Merriweather Lewis there to collect bones. Lewis collected some bones on his way west to meet Clark, and on the way back from his historic trip assembled a large collection which went to the White House, where Jefferson displayed it.

When Jefferson left the presidency, he sent bones to France, England, and his own home Monticello, leaving a collection for the White House.

This latter collection vanished, but may have been located again recently when boxes of bones long untouched were found at the University of Virginia, which Jefferson founded.

The area continued to be used as a hunting ground and to produce salt. From the late 1600's until 1812, it was protected because it was a valuable source for salt. At that time, its protection

was lifted, and the land came into private ownership. Lacking any better ideas for making this boggy, salt- and sulfur-ridden area profitable, the owner built two hotels and promoted the springs as a health spa for well-to-do southerners.



The salt spring spa idea proved very successful, attracting many from the south. Upon their arrival, visitors saw an upright post providing several streams of continuously running salt water. They bathed in the water and drank it, spending the summer around the springs, taking the waters. All of this came to an end with the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. Now all that remains



of this prosperous era is the foundation of a hotel and a cistern used to collect water.

Almost a century passed before the Commonwealth of

Kentucky established a park to preserve this paleontological treasure: the park was not established until 1960. Even then it was sadly neglected. Paleontologists from the University of Nebraska, under circumstances which are still a matter of contention, moved in with bulldozers and back hoes, dug up several tons of bones, and shipped them to the University of Nebraska, where they still reside, the object of a number of lawsuits.

This unfortunate state of affairs persisted until 1972, when the park finally began to receive modest funding. Today in addition to picnic and recreation areas, there is an old-fashioned, one-room museum of oddly assorted bones and other antiquities displayed in dark stained wooden and glass cases off the gift shop. None of the huge, magnificent specimens found in the park is displayed here.

Outdoor interpretive facilities are limited to the half-mile trail we walked, including a small rec-

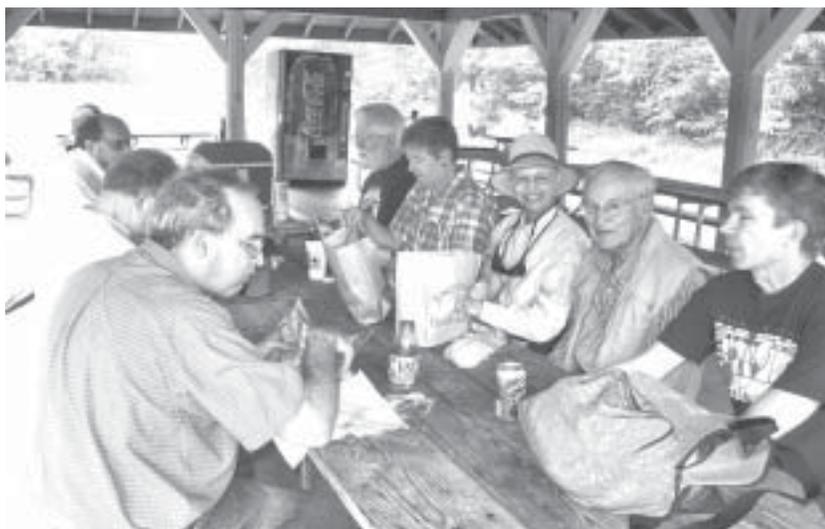
reated "salt" bog with life-sized models of some of the prehistoric animals which frequented the salt springs and casts of bones of those animals, although not casts of bones found on the site. Because the bog is freshwater, not salt which inhibits plant growth, the recreated bog lacks the mud typical of the original. A small planting of Dogwood, Tall Coreopsis, and Joe Pye Weed suggest what the vegetation typical of the prehistoric era might have been like. Interpretive maps and texts are displayed along the trail.

A herd of thirteen bison represents the last of the big mammals to visit the springs. They are Bison bison, called American buffalo by Europeans who confused them with the Asian buffalo. The herd now consists of ten adults and three calves, with another expected soon. Thirteen is the maximum the space will allow, so surplus is sold to provide other herds or for butchering. The entire animal seems to be as valuable to the white man as it was to earlier hunters: the hide, head, toes, tail, meat, horns and bones can all be sold for respectable sums.

The buffalo munch grass contentedly behind tall fences made of sturdy wooden posts and metal fencing, but their placid mien is deceptive. They are strong enough to charge the fence and go right through it, reaching speeds of 40 miles an hour.

Many local roads are built on "buffalo traces," the paths the bison made in their seasonal trek from salt lick to salt lick. The traces were useful to any animals moving through the area, human or otherwise, because much of the area was covered with tall stands of Indian grass, Big Blue Stem grass, and Kentucky cane. The grasses were tall enough to be a major impediment: European settlers told stories of becoming lost even near home, and finding their way only by climbing the occasional tree to get their bearings.

— Reported by
Virginia Jergens.



A Skeptics picnic



A Puzzle for Thinkers

This one is difficult.

The census taker inquires the age of the lady. She gives it to him. Then he asks the ages of any others living in the house. She tells him: "Three other persons live here. The product of their ages is 1296 and the sum is this house number.

The census taker figures and calculates. Eventually he claims: "Ma'am, you didn't give me enough information. Are you the oldest of the four?"

The lady answers: "No" and the census taker is satisfied to pencil in everybody's ages.

How old are the other three inhabitants? About what is the lady's age?

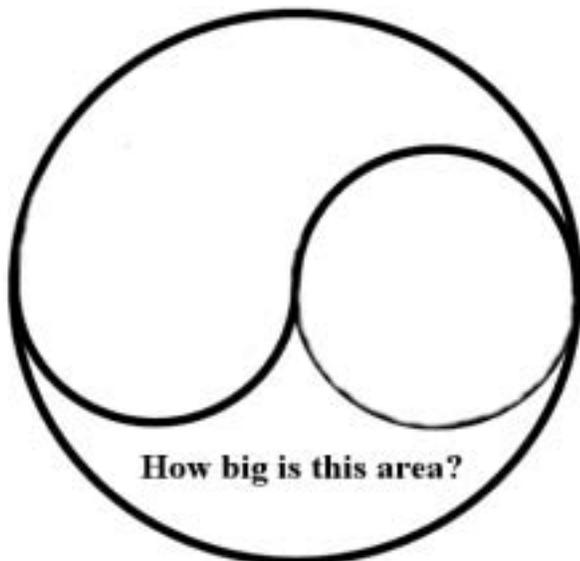
— adapted from © 2000 Oregonians for Rationality

Solution to the puzzle in the last issue:

Drawing the Yin and Yang figure in a circle of 38 units. Since the smaller circles go into the large circle twice, their radii must be one half of the radius of the large circle. Hence, the small circles have an area of exactly one-fourth of the large circle—that is:

$$B (\frac{r}{2})^2 = B (\frac{r^2}{4})$$

The two smaller circles leave two equal figures bounded by three half-circle arcs, which thus must each also have an area of one-fourth of the large circle, or in this case 9.5 units.



How big is this area?

Annual Report from pg 1...

membership hovering around 100. This allows us just enough extra that we can consider speakers who may require a small honorarium. Since last year, we have had to hold meetings in various locations. I have always found this undesirable, because some of our members may not get proper notification of the new meeting place. With more funds, we may be able to consider more meeting place possibilities, including some that charge a small fee, and find one where we can meet regularly. In general, I want the executive committee to consider new activities for the coming year. We will also investigate forming stronger ties with CSICOP affiliates.

I want to thank all our members who have donated beyond the basic membership. I estimate that our base membership fees at our present level of membership are sufficient to support the normal activities of the organization centered around meetings and the newsletter. It is the gifts beyond basic membership fees that allow us the latitude to expand our horizons and support the web site.

I also want to thank the other officers for making this organization work as smoothly as it does. Executive and general meetings are always fun as well as productive. Look for an even better organization in coming years. As president, I estimate that I have worked 5-10 hours a month in meetings, answering e-mail, and other activities for a total of about 90 hours.

Roy Auerbach, President.

Vice-President's Report

As Vice-president this year, I must report very little activity in my office. I did enjoy writing a skeptical blurb or two and I hope contributed in a small way to the Executive Committee meetings. I hope that the coming year allows me to devote more time to the organization.

I wish to comment on the wonderful job done by all of the other officers and members of the executive committee. In every way I believe that A.R.T. is thriving and it is because of those persons that the organization continues to make progress for skepticism. Volunteer hours, 6.

Lance Moody, Vice-President.

Secretary's Report

I took minutes at executive council and membership meetings and entered them in A. R. T.'s records. I distributed copies of executive council minutes, action lists and membership meeting minutes to officers. I collected reports from officers on their activities for the year and prepared the annual report required by our by-laws. I maintained and distributed a list of officers' addresses and phone numbers and sent executive council meeting reminders to officers.

In addition, I wrote articles for the newsletter summarizing the talks given at A.R.T. meetings. I wrote several articles for the newsletter summarizing executive council and membership meeting business.

In December I began picking up mail at A.R.T.'s post office box in Norwood once a week and distributing the mail to the appropriate officers. I have found mail in the box in two out of three visits since then, so think weekly mail checks are worth continuing.

Next year I plan (once again) to prepare for our web site six issues of the newsletter issued when I was editor but not yet included on the web site. I also plan to prepare new three-ring binders for minutes and other A.R.T. documents. Ten years of minutes and

annual reports have outgrown our original binders. Volunteer hours: 155.

Virginia Jergens, Secretary.

Treasurer's Report

As of June 30, 2000 the checkbook balance was \$1667.81 with no outstanding bills. This year's balance, June 30, 2001, is \$1111.78, again with no unpaid bills.

INCOME

Membership Dues	1,110.00
Cash Donations	1,451.00
In-Kind Donations	474.20
Web Donations	350.00

Total Income 3,385.20

EXPENSES

Membership

Postage	508.20
Printing of Notices	229.80
Supplies	90.06
P.O. Box Rental	22.10

Newsletter

Bulk Mail	379.00
Postage	12.60
Printing	926.45
Labels	25.97

Programs

Rental	244.02
Guest Meals	81.72
Guest Travel	188.32
Posters & Supplies	252.48

Other

Web Expenses	670.00
Travel, Airfare	200.87
Miscellaneous	42.40

Total Expenses 3,941.23

Net Income (556.03)

Compared with last year's income and expenses, income was up \$600, due mostly to donations. Total expenses increased about \$1,300: Membership \$300, Newsletter \$100, Programs \$700, and Other, \$200. So whereas last year saw a slight increase, this year's unbudgeted Superstition Bash and travel to Amherst caused a loss. I again spent about twenty hours keeping the books, plus my time at executive meetings, for a total of about 40 hours.

Rick Prairie, Treasurer.

Meeting Organizer and Program Committee Chair's Report

Ten membership programs addressing wide-ranging topics were scheduled for the 2000-2001 season. Nine were presented as planned, including a special "Superstition Bash" held on Friday, 13 October 2000, in lieu of a Saturday morning program. The April 2001 program (Bill Jensen on Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.) was canceled due to concerns raised by social unrest in African-American neighborhoods that month. It's being re-scheduled for the 2001-2002 season. And, as in the 1999-2000 season, we took a field trip in the spring. This year it was to Big Bone Lick State Park in Union, KY—thanks to Rick Prairie for that suggestion!

Late in the summer of 2000 we learned we'd no longer have access to our long-standing meeting and eating place, James

Tavern (now Parker's Blue Ash Grill). This left us scrambling for meeting places (and feed troughs) and meant that members had to stay alert to changes in venue. Nevertheless, attendance remained strong. For the eight Saturday meetings that actually convened, we averaged 21.88 members, 2.6 visitors and 13.5 rowdies who stayed for lunch.

The loss of James Tavern/Parker's as a meeting place means that we've been thrown into the situation of having to pay for some of our meeting rooms (policy at the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton Co. limits groups to three meetings per calendar year). Coupled with the need for a larger format reminder postcard (and consequent increased postage), program costs are up quite a bit. Any and all suggestions for meeting rooms that are available free or for a nominal fee are welcome. The going rate for this kind of space in many suburban community centers runs \$25, \$35 or even \$60 per hour, well beyond anything our budget can accommodate. The suggestion box is always open for topics and speakers. Don't hesitate to throw in your two cents worth. For that matter, if you'd like to work on program tasks, just holler.

When the Executive Council realized there was a second Friday the 13th looming on the 2001 calendar (Friday, 13 July), we added to the regular complement of ten membership programs our first "Skeptics in the Pub" gathering—a strictly social event with no topic or agenda. Held at Parker's Blue Ash Grill (formerly James Tavern), so we could sample the new menu, we drew 12 A.R.T. members and 3 visitors/guests (though as Free Inquiry Group members, they were scarcely real newbies getting their first glimpse of skeptics).

While this event was lots of fun, it is beyond the bailiwick of the Program Committee. If A.R.T. is to host one or two "Skeptics in the Pub" events a year (the frequency at which Friday the 13ths occur), we will need a new volunteer or volunteers to plan and carry them out. Here's your chance to join the worker bees! And have a great time, too.

Brad Bonham, Meeting Organizer and Program Committee Chair.
Recruitment Committee Chair Report

Although another year has passed without a membership drive, our retention is good (See Membership Secretary Report, below). With the approval of the Executive Council, Nurit Bowman, Membership Secretary, is shifting our renewal cycle from the monthly or quarterly approach that's been used since A.R.T. was founded, to a once-a-year proposition. We hope that this will make the record-keeping easier. Estimated volunteer hours for all my jobs, 416.

Brad Bonham, Recruitment Committee Chair.

Membership Secretary's Report

The membership of A.R.T. stood at 101 at the time of this report. I have spent quite a few hours learning the database program used to manage membership records since I have taken over this position. I sent out letters to all of the members who were behind on their dues. We now have 20 people whose membership expired before 1/1/2000 and 30 whose membership expired before 9/1/2000. I have decided, with the Board's approval, to change everyone's date of expiration to September 1, and I will, therefore, send out just one set of renewal reminders a year.

I went through all of the databases to check for any inaccuracies from the most current information that we received,

including e-mail addresses. The estimated time I spent on A.R.T. including attending Executive Council meetings is about 30 hours.

Nurit Bowman, Membership Secretary.

Media Coordinator's Report

Diane and I contributed to A.R.T. a new edition of the Chamber of Commerce's media directory for the Cincinnati area and explored its possible uses. We hope next year to explore and develop what A.R.T. can do to respond to media reports of pseudo-scientific nonsense. I estimate that we each spent about 15 hours on A.R.T. related business, for a total of 30 hours.

Bob Streifthau, Media Coordinator.

Publicity Coordinator's Report

I sent announcements of each of our meetings from January through June to the "Cincinnati Enquirer," the "Cincinnati Post," and "Citizens Beat." Most of the time these notices appeared in the papers but several times they did not. After a few announcements were missed, I started following up to find out why. They were missed for various reasons: space constraints in the paper or the contact person at the paper was out because of sickness or vacation. I used both e-mail and hard copy to submit copy, but came to the conclusion that hard copy is best.

I also contacted the "Cincinnati Business Courier" and "Cincinnati Herald" about placing announcements in their papers. When our meetings resume in the fall I will start sending announcements about them to these papers.

I recently talked to Annie Wilson about co-sponsoring meetings with the UC Skeptics. He seemed receptive to the idea, but nothing so far has been worked out. I will be contacting a student representative when meetings resume in September.

I spend approximately two to three hours each month preparing the notices, contacting the papers, and following up by checking at the library to see if the notices appeared in the papers. Over the course of the year this process is taking less and less time and becoming more routine as I learn exactly what to do and become more efficient. In addition, I spend two hours at each executive meeting plus an hour for the round trip drive to and from the meeting, for a total of 43 hours.

Bryan Sellers, Publicity Coordinator.

Investigation Officer's Report

Over the past year no new investigations were undertaken, because no cases were brought to my attention.

On the other hand, I did participate in two new editions of "UFO Update Live" on Warner Cable's Public Access channel. The first show aired in February, 2001 and focused on interviews I had conducted in October, 2000 in Lima, Ohio, during a Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) conference. Although I spent some time with some of the background contributors, I was able to conduct rather lengthy interviews with two MUFON celebrities, Budd Hopkins, well-known alien abduction investigator and author of "Missing Time," and Bruce Macabee, UFO investigator specializing in photo analysis.

My questions to Hopkins concerned his professional qualifications as a hypnotherapist and what strategies he employs to detect deception on the part of alleged abductees. A congenial man, Hopkins explained that he had been trained by recognized professionals, whose names escape me, who would vouch for his integrity as a hypnotherapist. Hopkins then admitted that it is I

difficult to detect deception. He feels that abductee wannabes usually reveal themselves because their memories change more from session to session than do the memories of those who believe they really were abducted.

After establishing Bruce Macabee's professional qualifications as an optical physicist, I directed my questions towards the Gulf Breeze case. Although earnest, Macabee was somewhat evasive during this line of questioning. He answered my queries indirectly by referring to what others had not found out about the case. In particular, I asked about the model UFO found in one of Ed Walters's former houses. Instead of offering an assessment of that development, he engaged in an offhanded, albeit low key, attack on those who do not accept his point of view. Although I twice more tried to get a reaction to the model, he parried my attempts by redirecting the discussion to other cases he'd investigated.

The spring/summer edition of "UFO Update Live" was taped in the lobby of the newest Showcase multiplex in Milford, Ohio, as part of the release of the sci-fi comedy "Evolution." Kenny Young offered a segment on local UFO cases; Ron Schaffner offered critical commentary on recent photos of cryptochminids. My segment was a point-by-point rebuttal of the Fox Channel's Apollo hoax special, a presentation claiming that Apollo's landing on the moon never occurred and was a hoax perpetrated on the public by government officials.

My role as host of these shows allowed me to inject much needed skeptically balanced commentary. All told, I devoted forty hours to these shows. I hope to put together a presentation drawn from these programs for A.R.T. members for the upcoming year.

Terry Endres, Investigations Officer.

Newsletter Editor's Report

This year saw the appearance of volume ten of the "Cincinnati Sceptic." It has not changed from previous years. Six bimonthly issues appeared. All contained 12 pages, except the Oct./Nov. issue, which had 10 pages.

Each issue generally consisted of these parts:

- (1) Short pieces in all or most issues: the motto, comments by bio-astrologer Esmeralda, a limerick, a puzzle with the solution for the previous issue's puzzle.
- (2) Longer, regular pieces: a full report on the presentation at each meeting. These were all written by Dinny Jergens, our most hard working contributor. A thoughtful comments column was contributed by Bill Jensen, Roy Auerbach, or Joe Gastright. Book reviews and occasional editorial comment rounded out the newsletter.
- (3) Various, mostly short, but some longer pieces: news drawn mostly from the Internet, quotes from various sources.
- (4) Reports on executive committee meetings, election results, etc.
- (5) Announcements of the next two upcoming meetings with programs and/or topics.
- (6) A membership application and contribution form.

We are unable to comment on idiocies written, spoken or shown by the local news media. The CS ought to say more about the local scene. Any help would be appreciated. Call me, write a note, send e-mail: let me know about pseudoscience and other nonsense in the local media.

Cost of printing the most recent newsletter: \$171 for the usual 250 copies. Postage has risen to \$36 plus a share of the bulk mail permit.

spent about 130 hours editing the newsletter during the year, plus about 12 hours at executive council meetings. About 30 hours were spent writing reviews, untold additional hours to read the books themselves, for a total of 172 hours. Donna Loughry worked about 60 hours.

Wolf Roder, Newsletter Editor.

Webmaster's Report

The A.R.T. web site is averaging about 7500 requests for documents per month, about 250 requests per day. December 2000 was our low month for this year, undoubtedly because of Christmas. We only had 6200 requests during December.

The blurbs section remains the most popular section of the site. Nearly half of all page requests were for blurbs. The most popular blurbs were, in order:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 Spontaneous human combustion | 9 Philadelphia experiment |
| 2 Vindication of Stanton | 10 Satanic ritual abuse |
| 3 Anthroposophy | 11 Bermuda triangle |
| 4 Faith healing | 12 Darwin's deathbed |
| 5 Loch Ness monster | 13 Psychic fairs |
| 6 Snake handling | 14 Dahmer |
| 7 Lincoln "cannots" | 15 Godless Constitution of the USA |
| 8 Butterfly Metamorphosis | 16 Crop circles |

Measured by the amount of data downloaded, the newsletters are the most popular portion of the site. However, some of the newsletters are in Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF). The PDF files are comparatively large, so only a few PDF downloads are needed to dwarf the amount of data transferred for more typical portions of our site.

After the blurbs, the most popular sections are the links, followed by the meetings area and then the newsletters.

I also looked at the search terms people used in searching our site. I suspect that many searches were unsuccessful, as many people apparently either can't type or can't spell. (e.g., "moon" spelled as "mooon") The most common sorts of searches seemed to be for pseudoscience, ghosts, monsters and psychics. I suspect that the person looking for pictures of accident victims either misunderstood the nature of our site, or had an odd way of trying to find information on spontaneous human combustion. I'm not sure what the person searching for "Research about Digital Technology" expected to find.

The SANE (Skeptical Area Network Effort) e-mail list now has 48 members, and is averaging about two or three messages per day. This may be misleading, however, since often there are days with no messages at all. The list is no longer hosted by egroups.com, since that company has been acquired by Yahoo. The web address for the SANE group is <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sane>.

I only added a few newsletters to the web site this year, so I've really done little to the site but routine maintenance. I kept a few records of the times I spent a significant amount of time on A.R.T. work, and I estimate the total number of hours I've spent on the web site and SANE at slightly less than 50 hours. This does not include the odd tidbit of time spent on SANE, which I did not track, but I doubt that those moments would add up to much time. But I'll give myself the benefit of a doubt and estimate total time at about 50 hours.

David Wall, Webmaster.



Membership Duration
And Dues.....

All memberships start in August, coordinated with our fiscal year, from 1 August to 31 July of the next year. This will allow us to mail renewal requests only once a year in the fall.

Reminder.....
PLEASE PAY/SEND
IN YOUR
MEMBERSHIP DUES
NOW!
SEE THE FORM ON PAGE 11.....



Poem In a Box!

A prophetic quatrain.
John Dryden (1631-1700)

Then, America's Prey,
after heaven's own heart,
His vigorous warmth did,
variously, impart
To wives and interns;
and, wide as his command,
Scatter'd his maker's image
through the land.

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 626-794-1300; skepticmag@aol.com and www.skeptic.com, .

JREF: the James Randi Educational Foundation publishes the *Swift Newsletter*. 201 SE Davie Blvd. Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316-1815. phone: (954) 467-1112, fax: (954)467-1660, www.randi.org

A.R.T. meets on the second Saturday of each month September through June, 10:00 AM 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 Lance Moody (513) 336-9834 or visit our website.

Address Changes and Corrections, Membership Questions: Nurit Bowman (513) 731-0642 E-mail: nuritb@netscape.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; 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

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What is a skeptic?

Modern skepticism is a response to the torrent of paranormal and pseudoscientific claims that pervade our lives. The stories of ghosts, flying saucers, miracle cures, lake monsters and many other fringe beliefs often go unchallenged. Skeptics provide the challenge.

While many of us are not scientists, we embrace the scientific method as mankind's best invention for seeking knowledge. Skeptics are not cynics. We don't simply reject every unusual idea. We do know extraordinary claims demand extraordinary evidence. We insist on the evidence.

Cincinnati Skeptics, The Association for Rational Thought, meet to discuss such claims. We debate the merits; we skewer dogmatism. We have fun.

The truth is out there. And skeptics are looking for it.

Preview Of Coming Attractions....

First Meeting of the 2001-2002 Season!

Date and Day: Sat. September 8, 2001

Time: 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM -- program -->12:15PM - 2:00 PM Lunch

Second Meeting of the 2001-2002 Season!

Date and Day: Sat. October 13, 2001

Time: 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM -- program -->12:15PM - 2:00 PM Lunch

**Mark your Calendars,
Watch your mail for Details!!!**