



Cincinnati Skeptic

Newsletter of The Association for Rational Thought

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Never attribute to malice that which is adequately explained by stupidity.

-- Hanlon's Razor



The great philosopher Immanuel Kant(1724-1804) meets Joe College
(©University of Chicago Magazine)

May Meeting

On Ohio Creationism and Oddball Letters

The meeting at the Dubliner Restaurant on May 11 was intended as a free-for-all of hot topics in skepticism. Any issue that any member of the audience thought was an important topic could be raised for discussion for the audience. But only two issues were discussed in depth: "intelligent design" (ID) in the public school curriculum and email correspondence in response to blurbs and topics brought up on the ART website.

Wolf Roder, Professor of Geography at the University of Cincinnati, opened the session with a brief discussion about intelligent design. He presented a summary of the current push by Christian creationists to include intelligent design in the public schools science curriculum as an alternative to and in opposition to evolution. Intelligent design is a form of creationist pseudo-science masquerading as legitimate science by using advocates with academic backgrounds who frame their discourses in scientific jargon.

Intelligent design advocates (IDers) do not conduct their own experiments to support their beliefs. Instead, a favorite tactic of the IDers is to mine legitimate science journals for quotes taken out of context that they

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April Meeting

The Nature, Spread, and Purpose of Urban Legends

Introduction

Our April speaker, Justin Masterson, who is the "Legend Hunter" and senior at Miami University, began by telling a story about his experience in fifth grade when his teacher stood an egg on its end on the day of the spring equinox. He was led to believe that this demonstration was proof that an egg could be stood on its end only at the time of the spring equinox. Later, while he was a student in college he learned that an egg could be stood on its end on any day at any time. This was an example for him that what seems to be true at first is often shown to be false upon later investigation.

Justin Masterson described himself as a twenty-two year old student, a video producer, a free-lance folklorist, and a skeptic who is also religious. He is majoring in English literature and in mass communications, is working at WMUB-
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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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**ART Business****Election Results:**

The following slate of officers for the 2002-2003 year was elected by acclamation

President, *Roy Auerbach*;

Vice-President, *Rick Davis*;

Secretary, *Virginia Jergens*;

Treasurer, *Rick Prairie*;

Program Chair, *Brad Bonham*

(assisted by *Rick Davis*, *Roy Auerbach*, and *Lance Moody*),

Recruitment Committee Chair and Membership Secretary, *Brad Bonham*;

Investigations Officer, *Terry Endres*;

Newsletter Editor, *Wolf Roder*;

Publicity Coordinator, *Bryan Sellers*

(assisted by *Diane* and *Bob Streifthau*, who will do publicity in the Dayton area);

Web Master, *David Wall*;

Meeting Organizer, *Randy Weaver*

(assisted by *Lance Moody*, who will mail meeting postcards and *Diane* and *Bob Streifthau*, who will manage back issues of the newsletters and other printed materials at meetings).

There was no nomination for **Media Coordinator**.



Unless you're still using a quill pen, you know that Microsoft Word cares deeply about your writing. Type a longish sentence or a verbless phrase and it warns you with a green underline to make better sense. Use a wrong word and it sounds the alarm with an angry, jagged red underline. Do not despair, though, Word is here; right-click on the offending term and Word will show you what you really meant to write, or had jolly well better write if you know what's good for you.

-- Barbara Holland, "Word's-Eye View of History" *Funny Times* (Feb. 2002) p. 17



After more than a decade, the industry organization *Phonographic Performance Malaysia* has decided to change its name to *Public Performance Malaysia*. The board reports it needs to change the name because people no longer know what a "phonograph" is and read the first word of the name is "pornographic". PPM's chief commented he was tired of people asking why he ran such an unclean company and he is tired of telling complainers to spell carefully while consulting a dictionary before making accusations. (MalaysiaStar)



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

*Strange Creations: Aberrant Ideas
of Human Origins
from Ancient Astronauts to Aquatic
Apes*

by Donna Kossy

(Los Angeles: Feral House, 2001)

Creationists often want us to believe the only alternative to the theory of evolution is their own insistence on “scientific” i.e. Biblical creationism or its alternative, Intelligent Design. Now here comes Donna Kossy with a book length run down on the wide variety of other explanations of biological history, most of them utter crank. She groups these extraordinary ideas by chapter and source. There are extraterrestrial origins or creation by extraterrestrials. Then there is de-evolution, in the beginning humans were perfect, but they devolved down to this in 72,000 years. Many origin cranks are hung up on race, describing non-whites as having been created before Adam by the devil and not really human. The Church of the Creator and Christian Identity religion belong into this category. The “science” of *eugenics*, and German Nazi philosophy drew generously from the same well. Christian creationism, its propagators and antecedents before Darwin are laid out in some detail. Elaine Morgan’s aquatic ape theory is given a chapter. Her ideas accept evolution, but suggest an alternative path to human status. Finally, Kossy examines the *Urantia Book*, and its connection to other cults.

Among the more rational histories is the idea that human evolution went through an aquatic phase, in which our primate ancestors lived and hunted along a lake or ocean shore. The idea was first proposed by a *bona fide* marine biologist, and later taken up by writer Elaine Morgan in her book *Descent of Woman* (1972). The theory takes some aspects that distinguish apes and humans, -- the human diving reflex, fat layers inside the skin, upright walk, loss of fur — and explain them as a consequence of a period of evolution of a small population of apes in a wading and shore line habitat. Unfortunately no evidence for such an evolution or such a population has been found. Moreover, since the book first appeared fossil evidence, e.g. Lucy and the first family have pointed more clearly towards a descent from the trees and a

savanna habitat. That has not stopped the cooks from seizing on the aquatic ape theory for their purposes, and turning an originally not unreasonable idea into a ranting pseudo-science.

The weird anthropology of the *Urantia Book* does not fit easily into any one category. The book itself was supposedly dictated or channeled between 1923 and 1955 by a higher intelligence to a bunch of former Seventh Day Adventists. In some thousand pages the book tells a complex cosmology of gravity bodies, super universes, new mankinds, all of which continue to evolve. The *Urantia Book* is understood by its devotees “as an amendment to the Bible, not a replacement for it.” (p. 216) Kossy comments that it sounds like “what the Bible would have been like if it had been written by lawyers and businessmen, rather than by priests, prophets and poets.” (p. 217)

According to *Urantia* all life, including human life, does not originate spontaneously, it has to be constructed. And, it has to be constructed separately and over again on each world — and it is not clear whether these are planets or some imagined spirit worlds. Evolution on each world is then directed by higher beings, — eg. Adam and Eve, Moses, Jesus — who visit these worlds. Something, however, went wrong on this earth, and the divine powers are struggling to set it right. David Koresh’s Branch Davidians of Waco fame, were apparently influenced by these ideas, some of which were taken over from Seventh Day Adventism.

More directly influenced by *Urantia* were the people looking for “Human Individual Metamorphosis” better known as the Heaven’s Gate cult. These wanted to ascend to a higher world above human, which lead to their joint suicide in 1997. The leading idea was they would be picked up by a spaceship following in the tail of the comet Hale-Bopp.

Strange Creations is a very useful source on a wide variety of pseudo-science ideas, oddball groups, and their writings.

— Wolf Roder

There was an old man of Calcutta
Who coated his tonsils with butta,
Thus converting his snore
From a thunderous roar
To a soft, oleaginous mutta.

Ogden Nash

*The Coming Storm:
Extreme Weather and Our Terrifying Future*
by Bob Reiss
(New York: Hyperion, 2001)

A very striking book about the global climate warming controversy. Bob Reiss clearly accepts that temperature increase has arrived and we have to learn to deal with it. Today, I think he has a majority of knowledgeable scientists on his side. But, there remain hold outs, who doubt the man induced climate warming scenario. One would think this question is purely about fact, and that the best science will eventually decide the issue. The tendency among institutions and corporations is for the socially conservative to line up on the side of refusing to accept the proposition, while the more liberal organizations point with alarm to the coming destruction.

The contending parties do have some agreement. Carbon-dioxide in the atmosphere has increased by about nine percent since monitoring began in 1958. The earth's land areas warmed by one degree Fahrenheit in the twentieth century, though the pace was uneven. The increase in temperature has been accompanied by melting glaciers, including arctic ice sheets, rising sea levels, and longer growing seasons. This in turn has affected the arrivals and departures of migratory bird species.

The last two decades have seen several of the warmest years since at least the twelfth century, that is since the time of the Vikings. Reiss concentrates on this period; he examines the major climate disasters in that period, with the underlying theme: it can only get worse. He reports on the great droughts, the extensive forest and bush fires in Florida and California, the enormous floods on the Mississippi and the Red River of the North, interlinked with the developing climate science of the period. Reiss also examines the great storms of the period which are perhaps less immediately linked to climate change.

Most interesting is Reiss examination of the issues in terms of the Republic of the Maldives. You will find this country in the Indian Ocean southwest of India and Sri Lanka mostly north of the Equator. The Maldives consist of about 2000 small islands, islets, tiny islands, and bare beach rock islands. Most of these islands rise no more than five feet above the water, and the highest point in the country is a mere eight feet above sea level. The Republic has about a quarter of a million inhabitants. Most of the citizens live from either fishing or the tourist trade. The country has become a travel destination as it has lovely warm weather and glorious

beaches. Even a small rise in ocean level would threaten much of the available land area, and the higher estimates of ice melting and ocean rise will make the entire Republic disappear beneath the ocean. Perhaps their government will sue us and other industrial nations for polluting the air with green house gases thereby robbing them of their country?

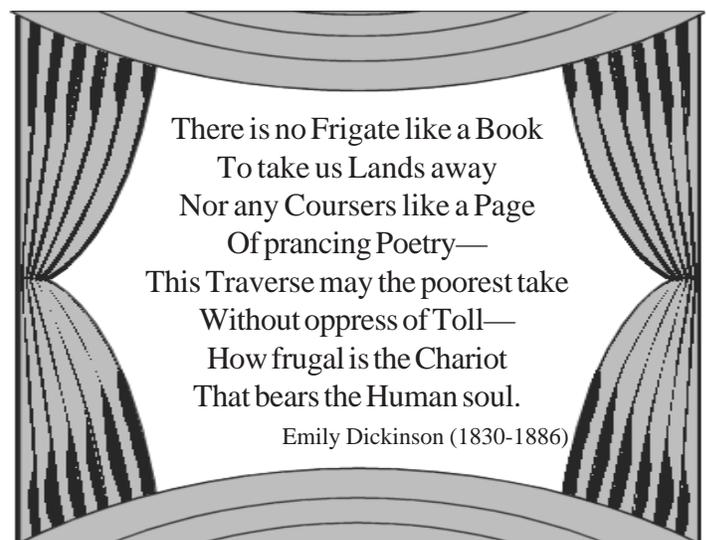
Another thread in Reiss's narrative is the way climate warming has become a football in the US government. Creation of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) was the first Bush administration's way of kicking the ball away: let's wait for the scientists to make sure we really have a problem. When the scientists documented the warming, the government increasingly distanced itself from doing anything. While the rest of the world had at least some agreement at the Kyoto meeting, we dug in our heels, while some Senators insisted on no concessions whatever.

Reiss narrates a similar reaction among corporate executives. Especially the fossil fuel companies have been in the forefront of belittling the problems of global warming. The author, however, shows how over time some of these companies have come around. British Petroleum, perhaps because it is based in a more rational country, was the first to acknowledge the possibility that global warming might be true. They even implemented a plan for mitigating fossil fuel use. Other companies joined the slow creep toward searching for solutions. By 2001 some 28 of the Fortune 500 companies were lobbying the government, not to ignore global warming, but to find ways of reducing green house gases.

Reiss' book is a good, journalistic review of the road to global warming. It is a clear and easy read as well.

— Wolf Roder

Poem In a Box!



Urban Legends from page 1...

FM as an announcer and a news reporter, and has recently become engaged to marry his girlfriend.

For those in the audience who were not familiar with Miami University, Justin described the way to find it from Cincinnati is “to kind of go northwest until you hit the cornfields and keep driving until you see sixty or so Neo-Georgian buildings that all look exactly the same and you see more blonde white girls named Katie than you’ve ever seen in your entire life.”

He continued describing Miami as the cradle of fraternities; it has more Alpha chapters of fraternities than any other university in the United States. He heard an interesting story about one of these chapters which involved a construction site near the fraternity. The members became tired of all the dust and noise being produced at the site and called the police to report that college students dressed as road workers were tearing up the street. Then they walked over to the road crew and told them that college students dressed as police were going to show up and accuse them of being college students. When the police arrived, they became involved in heated arguments and arrested a couple of the road workers before the facts of the incident became clear.

Justin then asked, “Did you spot the urban legends there? How many did you count?” He reported that all three stories he just told are told in about all of the universities around the country. They are urban legends.

After this introduction, Justin said he would like to talk about (1) what are urban legends, (2) how do we study urban legends, (3) why are false urban legends created and how do they spread, and (4) a round-up of favorite urban legends.



Types of Urban Legends

Urban legends are widespread and popular, but they are not necessarily urban and they may be too modern and contemporary to be a legend. But there is no better term for these stories which are passed on from person to person. They may be apocryphal, symbolic, anecdotal, proverbial, linguistic, or conceptual.

An example of an **apocryphal urban legend** is the one stating that the score of the IQ test taken by George W. Bush was the lowest of the scores of IQ tests taken by all of the presidents. This legend

neither explains why the presidents were taking the tests nor which IQ test was being taken. Although this legend conveys the idea that the current president is low in intelligence, its authenticity is highly questionable.

Examples of **symbolic urban legends** included those in which the transmission of AIDS virus was done by contaminated needles which were wedged in movie theater seats or by an “AIDS Mary” who injects the AIDS virus into unsuspecting victims. Justin believes that this type of legends is symbolic of our fears about AIDS and our recognition that AIDS does not just infect homosexuals, promiscuous people, or intravenous drug users.

One of Justin’s favorite **anecdotal urban legends** is the following: “There’s a housewife who lives in the Midwest



here in Cincinnati. She goes out to Las Vegas. It’s her first time sort of getting out to the big city of Las Vegas and she gambles at the slot machines all night. She does pretty well with a hundred bucks or so with quarters, gets on the elevator to go back up to her hotel room to go to bed, and four big huge black men

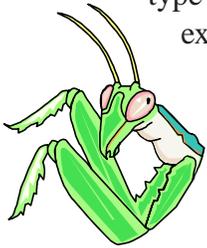
in suits get on the elevator. She starts to get a little nervous and she holds her quarters closer to her. One of the black men says ‘hit the floor ma’am’ and immediately she throws her quarters up and says ‘Take anything you want’ and dives onto the floor. Needless to say the four guys start giggling to themselves and start laughing and one of them explains ‘Hey, listen, we just meant for you to select the floor on the elevator.’ So she looks embarrassed; all the men are still laughing about it when she leaves. Later, the next morning when she gets up, they give her a dozen roses with a hundred dollar bill attached and a note. And it says ‘Thanks for the best laugh I’ve had in years’ signed by Eddie Murphy.’ This is the type of tale that often has a well known person as a participant of the story.

The next story Justin told was an example of a **proverbial urban legend**, which relates to a basic truth or practical precept. It concerns a small congregation who wanted to build a new sanctuary on a small piece of land willed to it by a church member. Unfortunately, the building inspector informed them that the building site at the base of

the mountain was not large enough for both the church and the required parking lot. The pastor told the congregants to pray to God and ask him to move the mountain. The next day a construction contractor met with the pastor to ask him if they could remove a large amount of earth from the base of the mountain to use as fill for a shopping mall which was being constructed. They agreed upon the details of the earth removal and the congregation was able to build the church and the parking lot of the required size. Their prayers had been answered.

Another type of legend described by Justin was the **linguistic urban legend**. Some of these type of legends pertain to acronyms. An example of this type of legend concerns the origin of the obscene word fuck. For example, a knight who wanted to sleep with a woman who was not his wife could do so if he placed a sign on the door stating that he was **fornicating under consent of the king**. Of course, this legend has no historical basis and is bogus.

The **notion/conceptual urban legend** was the final type of legend that was described. Justin's example was that female praying mantises always bite off the heads of males after mating. These type of legends do not have a narrative, a theme, or a plot. Generally, they tend to be accepted as true without question.



A Folklorist Perspective on Urban Legends

The idea that a legend must be false in order to be an urban legend is not true. From the folklorist perspective the important questions about an urban legend are how is it told, in what form is it passed along, and what is the nature of the telling structure. The legends are bits of lore which are passed from person to person without legitimate and authoritative confirmation. An urban legend is never about the personal experience of the person who is telling it. They were mostly spread orally, but are now commonly spread on the internet by e-mail and websites, and by electronic media in programs such as television morning "news" shows and radio talk shows. It is unimportant whether the legend is true or not, whether the teller believes it is true or not, or whether the listener believes it is true or not. All that matters in the telling of an urban legend is that the teller tells the legend as though it is true.

Justin then paused to tell another of his favorite legends--one that nearly everyone would find hard to believe. Scientists were drilling in Siberia and when the drill hole was 14 kilometers deep the drill bit hit an area of no

resistance, an indication that they were in a hollow place in the Earth's crust. When they lowered a thermometer and a microphone down the hole into the hollow place, they measured a temperature of two thousand degrees and they heard people screaming. Obviously they had discovered the location of Hell.

While folklorists study urban legends in a social context, other researchers study them with a veracity perspective, that is, they try to determine the truth of the legend. Truth researchers investigate the specific claims contained in legends and receive more attention from the media and the public. The lack of supporting evidence for claims after thorough research is considered a negation of the claims. Justin said he tended to have both perspectives since he is journalist as well as a folklorist.

Why False Urban Legends Are Created

Urban legends spread easily because they are interesting and entertaining. The forwarding feature on the internet increases the ease and speed in which they are spread.

The most common way legends are created is through confabulation. During the retelling of a story, memory gaps are filled with false details that make sense to the teller. The second most common way is through exaggeration in which the teller intentionally embellishes the legend in order to make it more entertaining. The third most common way is through creation in which the entire story is completely fabricated. The least common way is miscommunication, the making of an error in the telling.

Urban legends can also contain hidden messages. For example, the legend--which concerns the lone woman driver being followed by a male truck driver who keeps flashing his headlights until she pulls over and a man with a knife jumps out her back seat fleeing from the bright headlights of the following truck--has the hidden messages that a woman is not safe alone, that she needs a man, and that she is not intelligent enough to see the danger of her situation. Fear is a hidden message in many urban legends. Malicious legends may be created in order to spread fear against corporations and their products.



Determining what is false and what is true in an urban legend can be difficult. Eventually, believing what is true or false depends on the how much trust you have in the source. Although nearly all print, broadcast, and electronic media are

riddled with urban legends, some media are more careful about checking the veracity of their news reports than others. National Public Radio (NPR) and Public Broadcasting System (PBS) are two of the more reliable broadcasting media. They depend much less on commercial advertizing revenue for their funding and therefore the ratings are not nearly as important in programming decisions.

A Round-up of Favorite Legends

After a period of several minutes when members of the audience asked questions and offered many other urban legends that they recently heard or seen, Justin offered some more of his favorite urban legends. The following are a few of those:

1. More people are alive today than all of those who have lived and died throughout history.
2. The new Coke was marketed in order to increase the sales of the old Coca-Cola.
3. Coca-Cola once contained cocaine. True, in very small amounts, a long time ago
4. Coke will dissolve enamel.
5. George Bush once waved to Stevie Wonder. May be true or he may have been waving to someone near Stevie Wonder.
6. There is a club in Disneyland where you can drink with celebrities.
7. In Boston in 1919 twenty-one people were killed by two million gallons of molasses that spilled from a bursting storage tank. This is actually true.
8. Oil companies are funding terrorists.

The ensuing discussion continued into lunch at the Dubliner Restaurant.

— reported by Bob Streifthau

Not the sharpest knife in the drawer.



Michael Anthony Jacobs is accused of committing a number of robberies in the area of Mesa, Arizona. According to witnesses they didn't go all that well. On the first, he dropped his gun so it broke open. In the second, he had to pause in his getaway to use an asthma inhaler. On the

third, he found his keys locked inside the getaway car. When he managed to drive away, he was pulled over by a police officer for driving at night without his headlights on. He was arrested and charged with the three robberies. He remains a suspect in two others. (AP)

A Puzzle for Thinkers



Two tricky equations?

$$\begin{array}{r}
 A \quad C \\
 +B \quad +D \\
 --- \quad --- \\
 C \quad EA
 \end{array}$$

Each of the five letters represents a different single digit, with EA representing a two-digit number. What is the value of the sum of B+D? Do the digits have a unique solution?

Source: John Allen Paulos, *Who's Counting* (July 2001)
 Copyright © ABC News Internet Ventures

Solution to the puzzle in the last issue:

How to fill two bags with black and white beads to affect chance.

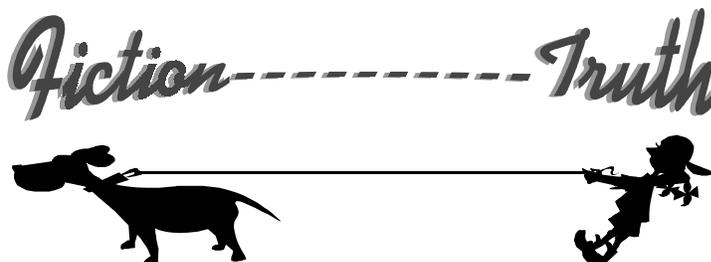
If Charlie puts one white bead into one bag, and the other 99 beads in the other he has these probabilities. Half a chance the dictator will pick the bag with only one white bead, plus 49/99 chances if he picks the other bag, for a total of almost three quarter

How come we believe so much odd stuff?



According to the new Census report, 84.1 percent of Americans age 25 and older have at least a High School diploma, a new record. In this age group, 25.6 percent have graduated from College, also a new high. The state with the highest percentage of HS graduates was South Dakota with 91.8 percent. The lowest was West Virginia at 77.1 percent. Ohio came in with 87.0 percent.

-- Associated Press (19 December 2000)



Ohio Creationism from page 1....

reinterpret and distort to imply leading researchers question the basic processes of evolution. But these researchers are only arguing about the details in evolutionary processes and none of them doubts the basic facts of evolution or gives the slightest credence to intelligent design. No recent scientific discoveries have cast the slightest doubt on evolution by natural selection.

Wolf discussed the present struggle at the Ohio Board of Education to insert intelligent design into the revised

I.D.

Ohio Science Standards for schools and the current status of the hearings on this issue. A recent hearing took the form of a debate between the opposing forces.

Speaking for science and opposing the inclusion of intelligent design were Phillip Krauss, a professor of physics at Case Western University, and Kenneth L. Miller, a biology professor at Brown University. The importance of Miller was enhanced by the fact he is a devout Roman Catholic who accepts evolution and its basic premises without questioning his faith. The intelligent design defenders are unwilling to admit in public whom they consider the "Designer." Privately they admit he is the God of the Bible, and consider those opposing intelligent design are anti-God and anti-religious.

The Santorum Amendment (Senator Rick Santorum, R-Pa) to the *Elementary and Secondary Education Authorization Act* of 2001 had the specific purpose of opening the door to intelligent design and other creationist attacks on evolution. The Amendment did not actually make it into the Act (Public Law 107-110), but was relegated to the *Conference Report* which is an instruction on how the law is to be enforced.

Christian creationists interpret this language to mean that whenever evolution is taught, the opposing view of intelligent design should also be taught. Otherwise, evolution should not be taught. Of course, this implies that these views have equal footing in the scientific community and either view could turn out to be true. However, this is not a scientific debate but rather a political and cultural debate. There is no



debate within the scientific community over the basic premise of evolution, just the details of how it occurred. No article supporting intelligent design or questioning the basic process of evolution has ever been published in any major science journal.

Although the meeting was open to everyone, no one in the audience voiced support for intelligent design. Presumably no creationists attended the meeting to criticize evolution and promote their personal beliefs in intelligent design. Evidently rationalists and skeptics, at least the ones who attend the ART meetings, are only skeptical of creationism in all its forms, including intelligent design, but not skeptical of evolution and related well-established theories of science.

A lively wide-ranging discussion ensued. A lawyer in the audience provided legal insight into this issue and answered several questions from the audience about the consequences of the Santorum Amendment, in the Conference Report, and the Ohio revisions to the law according to the new federal standards. The problems of testing math among students was raised as well. The discussion meandered along a stream of consciousness moving among many interesting thoughts.

In the second part of the meeting, Roy Auerbach presented snippets of some of the interesting and at times incoherent and unintentionally humorous e-mail he receives through the ART website. The most popular topic is religion and evolution. Any blurb criticizing some supernatural or spiritual claim is often met with irrational tirades that skeptics are close minded. But just the reverse is usually true, that those believing in some claim are closed minded to any evidence and logic contradicting the claim. The blurbs and email responses cover a wide range of pseudo-scientific topics running the gamut from ritual magic, Kirlian photography, to astrology, and creationism.

Some responses are lengthy while others terse. Some are ranting while others are reasoned. Some of the readers are outraged because what is on the website clashes with their cherished beliefs while others are complimentary. But as rationalists rather than merely skeptics, the ART perspective is not simply to accept the prevailing cultural



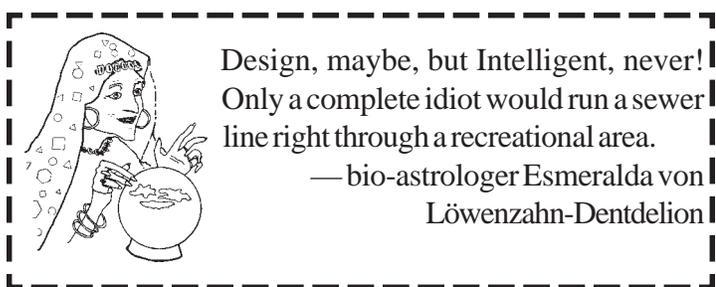
trends or popular belief systems.

As far as responding to the email, Roy said he ignores some of it because it is more of an assertion or attack than a request or question. This is further necessitated because many respondents want to engage in a lengthy dialog or argument. A short statement followed by a short response often leads to a lengthy response. Furthermore, it is often obvious that the e-mailer's mind cannot be changed through facts or rationality. So Roy usually cuts them off after a short repartee. Because of space limitations in this report, I only mention the two below on opposite ends of the spectrum of respondent views on the ART website.

One respondent wrote that the "founding fathers" of the United States were well aware of Darwin's theory of evolution. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were written in the eighteenth century. Charles Darwin's "Origin of the Species" laying out his theory of evolution was not published until 1859. To not know such a basic fact of general knowledge is one example among many that reveal the unending battle the evolutionists must wage against the ignorance and distortions of the creationists.

At the other end of the spectrum, one e-mail respondent wrote: "I really enjoy your Cincinnati Skeptics website. Here I thought I was the only rational human being in the tri-state area!" These and other responses show that our website is being read by many. Most argue with anything on the website that contradicts their personal beliefs, but some such as the above respondent find solace in knowing they are not alone and isolated but that others also reject the rampant irrationality so prevalent in society. The respondents also glaringly reveal that while small battles may be won, the war against ignorance and superstition is never ending.

- reported by Bryan Sellers



Design, maybe, but Intelligent, never!
Only a complete idiot would run a sewer
line right through a recreational area.

— bio-astrologer Esmeralda von
Löwenzahn-Dentdelion



Details of Upcoming Events...



Last Meeting of the 2001-2002 Season!

Date and Day: Sat. June 8, 2002

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

Topic: "Brew Myths" in words and taste.

Speaker: Ed Westemeier

Brew, Brewing and Brewery Myths, a talk and tasting with Ed Westemeier. This ought to be a delight for brain and belly.

PICNIC! August 25, 2002

As every year, the annual picnic will be from 4 to 6+ PM. Neither the date nor the place is cast in concrete at this time. Do watch and wait for your information postcard.

Friday-the-13th

There will be **three, count 'em three, Friday-the-13ths in the 2002-2003 season**, specifically in **September, December and June**. If you are interested in having a **party for fun and bashing** the various common superstitions about black cats, breaking mirrors, spilling salt, walking under ladders and many more now is the time to volunteer. No decisions about when or where or even at all have been made at this time **Anyone interested in participating in a special Program subcommittee to explore how to celebrate and recognize this "lucky" turn of the calendar, contact Brad <<bonham@compuserve.com>>**. If nobody volunteers to help make a party, there will be no party.

There is a use for almost anything . . .

[Under arrest and held without bail] is the operator of the Pacific Family Funeral Home and Pacific Cremation Care in Lake Elsinore, CA, who is accused of similar dastardly deeds. The operator is charged with selling body parts to research laboratories and anatomy classes at medical schools — secret transactions that brought him \$365,000 a year.

— *The Washington Spectator* (15 March 2002) p. 4

**Summer Fun****National Taxpayer Advocate**

Ms. Olson recommended a number of changes; our favorite is her proposal that the IRS be allowed to waive penalties for what she called the “one-time stupid act.” She cited an accountant who cost his client \$10,000 in penalties because he failed to put sufficient postage on a return to get it delivered on time. Requiring a penalty in this kind of case, she said “is not sane.” Where taxes are concerned sanity may be too much to expect, but for offering a refreshing dose of reality, Ms. Olson gets our vote.



— “Twice Stupid” editorial *Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, (14-20 Jan. '02) p. 24

**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....
YEARLY MEMBERSHIPS ARE DUE IN
SEPTEMBER!**

Please Pay/Send In Your
Membership Dues
in September
SEE THE FORM ON PAGE 11.....

Science Book-Club Meetings for 2002

All meetings are held at the downtown Cincinnati Public Library in meeting room 3A on the 3rd floor at 2:30 pm on the 4th Sunday of each month unless otherwise specified.

June 23 - *Asimov's Chronology Of Science And Discovery* by Isaac Asimov

July 28 - *Animal Minds: Beyond Cognition to Consciousness* by Donald R. Griffin

August 25 - *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity* by Roy Porter,

Sept 22 - *The Mismeasure of Man* by Stephen Jay Gould,

Oct 27 - *Extinct Humans* by Ian Tattersall and Jeffrey H. Schwartz

Nov 24 - *E=MC²* by David Bodanis

Dec 15 - Sunday at 2:30 *Seven Daughters of Eve* by Bryan Sykes)



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* bi-monthly. 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....

Last Meeting of the 2001-2002 Season!

Date and Day: Sat. June 8, 2002

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

Join us for a PICNIC!!! - See inside for Details!!!

Next year there will be Friday 13th in September, December, and June.

Help the program committee think about a celebration!

**Mark your Calendars, Watch your mail
& See Inside (p.9) for Details!**