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Georgia Skeptics is a non-profit local group which shares a common philosophy with the national organization CSICOP (Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal), and seeks to promote critical thinking and scientific inquiry as the most reliable means to gather knowledge of the world and universe. Like CSICOP, Georgia Skeptics encourages the investigation of paranormal and fringe-science claims from a responsible, scientific point of view, and helps disseminate the results of such inquiries.

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For further information, contact the Georgia Skeptics through the Astronomical Society of the Atlantic BBS at (404) 321-5904, or:

Becky Long, President
2277 Winding Woods Dr.
Tucker, Georgia 30084
(404) 493-6847

Joining the Georgia Skeptics organization is encouraged because membership dues help us to disseminate the results of skeptical inquiries to the public and to hold educational events. Yearly dues are \$17.50 for individual memberships, \$21.00 for families, and \$12.50 for full time students.

AN OBSERVATION OF THE FAMOUS MARFA LIGHTS

By James Long, Georgia Skeptics

On Sunday of Memorial Day weekend, 1990, Jeff and I (both college graduates with engineering degrees) went to the city of Marfa, Texas, to see the well-known Marfa Lights. Several reputable news broadcasts, including the Texas Eight Reporter (a state-wide TV show) are supposed to have mentioned the Lights, but I can't vouch for this.

The Marfa Lights have been reported since the 1880's. Apparently, the majority of the sightings have been along Highway 90, a two lane road leading east from the city. The lights are unique among unexplained phenomena, in that they appear regularly, and can be seen almost any night. According to the descriptions of numerous observers, the lights vary in color, are spherical, are characterized by rapid and erratic movements, and range from the size of a baseball to a basketball. The light is constant, rather than pulsating. Many people claim to have seen the lights up close, and others even claim to have been chased by them.

Numerous scientific hypotheses have been proposed to explain the Marfa Lights, but none fit the data well enough to have gained general acceptance. Most explanations, however, are nonscientific, and range from to extraterrestrial visitors to Apache spirits.

When we arrived in Marfa, the friendly clerk of a rather shabby motor lodge in the city supplied us with directions to the "viewing area". This turned out to be a parking lot on the south side of the road, roughly ten miles east of the city. The Texas Highway Department has installed some fifty feet of parking area and a large permanent highway marker, indicating the viewing site and denoting it as a historic landmark.

The country-side there is an extremely flat plain, estimated at the time to be about 20 miles across (see the picture). Rather abruptly, a ring of mountains (probably about two to three hundred feet high) rise around the edge of the plain. The only vegetation on the plain is scrub brush and small cacti, no more than a couple of feet tall. Although visibility across the plain was unblocked and excellent, there was the major disadvantage of completely losing any sense of distance. Therefore, most distances given here are estimates.

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^ North      =====XXX===== Highway
/\          %%          Viewing stand.
|           %%          /
|           C %%          /
|           h %%%          /
|           i %%          / Estimated to be about
|           n M %%          / twenty miles, maybe less.
|           a n %%          /
|           t t %%%          /
|           i s %%%
|           %%% R - Radio antenna light.
|           %%%
|           %%%
|           %%

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Jeff and I arrived at the viewing site about one hour before sunset. At that time, there were no cars present, except for mine. We had brought along some dinner, and we cooked it, while waiting for darkness. Well before sunset, at least fifteen cars pulled up and parked. A few people brought chairs, and nearly everyone had binoculars. One middle-aged lady parked immediately beside my car, and shortly afterwards joined us in conversation.

The lady said that she had been at the viewing site the night before, as well, and gave us a few pointers on what to watch for. She pointed out where a red antenna tower light would be seen (not visible at all in the day-light), and said that the Lights appeared near the tower, and could be seen dimly moving clockwise along the mountain. She also said that some were visible far to the north-west.

About a half hour after sunset, the tower light became visible in the darkness. A few people began questioning aloud if "that's one of the Lights", but were quickly assured that it was not.

However, within just a few minutes (ten at the most), a bright white (not red like the tower) point of light appeared at the base of the mountains near the tower, and could obviously be seen to move clockwise along the mountains. After about ten seconds, (and already about one third of the way along the mountains) the light disappeared. In less than a minute, another light appeared and repeated the motions of the first.

This turned out to be just the beginning. From then until midnight there was a nearly constant stream of Lights. There were two major patterns visible to the eye. The first pattern was to appear near the southern edge of the mountains (near the tower), and move about halfway to the road and vanish. The second pattern was to appear about two-thirds of the way to the road (or closer), and to stay motionless. With both patterns, however, there was still a wide range of variation. The moving Lights traveled at different speeds (although movement was always easily visible to the eye), whereas the stationary Lights tended to blink on and off at regular intervals, before disappearing.

The Lights themselves appeared about equal in brightness to the tower light (or perhaps somewhat brighter). They never appeared to be anything other than mere points of light. They appeared quite similar to distant car headlights, but were always single to the naked eye. Car headlights eventually were ruled out as a cause, since reports have occurred for over a century. In addition, the map provided to us showed no indication of a road on the near side of the mountain.

The lady beside us provided a great deal of entertainment. She possessed a rather large set of binoculars and kept up a running commentary of the "antics" of the Lights. Comments, such as, "That one there is now rounding the bush!", and "It's coming straight at us!" kept us amused for a great deal of the night. With our binoculars, we still could not distinguish any details at that distance.

Jeff and I had been attending the Texas astronomy party, so I had my

eight-inch diameter Celestron telescope with me. For over an hour, I was too fascinated by the Lights to even remember the telescope, but eventually I brought it out of the car and set it up. With this telescope, the Lights were resolvable into obvious fuzzy round balls, apparently several feet in diameter.

The telescope verified several observations, and provided several more discoveries. The most significant observation was that the lights truly were all the way to the mountains. The view through the telescope allowed each viewer to verify that the lights were passing behind rocks and cliffs ON the mountain side. Indeed, many, but by no means most, of the blinking observed was due to a Light passing behind a rock and being eclipsed by it. The light shed from the Marfa Light was more than enough to illuminate the rock wall behind the light. Rocks to the front were obvious from their silhouettes.

A fascinating discovery from the telescope was that several of the balls were doublets. Often, a single light would appear, and about fifteen to thirty seconds later, a second, identical light appeared right beside the first. Indistinguishable with the naked eye, these balls were obvious pairs through the telescope. These balls would then begin varying in brightness, one going dim while the other brightened, and then the first brightening while the second dimmed. After eight to ten cycles, the balls would usually split up, and separate into two naked eye pairs. This easily ruled out car headlights.

One item I found rather disturbing was that whenever another car arrived (people kept arriving for several hours into the night), the watchers already present acted like tour guides for the occult. The newcomers were quickly treated to a lecture by people that had received the same lecture themselves no more than twenty minutes earlier. To my small dismay, Jeff and I fell quite naturally into the "pro" mode. Having been at the viewing site since before dark, we made a point of describing all we had seen that night. We never, thankfully, went so far as the lady next to us, who eagerly attributed conscious thought to the movements.

About midnight, the lights tapered off and came to a halt. In all, there had been lights nearly constantly visible for about four hours. Rarely was there NOT a light visible, and a good deal of the time, three, four or sometimes five lights were seen at once.

On the ride back to the campsite, we tried to check the distance to the mountains. However, after driving about eight miles, our road turned off to the north. We estimated that we had come less than half way to the mountains.

In short, watching the Lights was fascinating. All of the suggested natural causes were quickly ruled out from their appearances. However, I eventually decided that I really didn't care what caused them. They were pretty to watch, and provided me with my most interesting vacation in years.

CROP CIRCLES

By Larry F. Johnson, Georgia Skeptics

It is not often that I stumble on a hilarious gem of New Age credulity in an orderly sequence that unfolds with the grace of a Three Stooges comedy, but this week I hit the jackpot.

I've been cataloging all the information I could pull together on Crop Circles, working up a bibliography on the subject, and developing a list of names of major players in the field (no pun intended).

One name that keeps popping up (notice I resisted the temptation to say "cropping up") is Colin Andrews, who wrote a book with Pat Delgado on the subject. I downloaded a series of articles from a local New Age BBS which included a Reuters dispatch in which Andrews and a team of scientists (whose names and credentials, oddly enough, weren't mentioned) were monitoring a circle being formed amid a profusion of flashing lights. (This article can be downloaded from the Skeptics BBS by those who wish to get the full impact of the wild claims in contrast to the reality.)

The dispatch resembled a Weekly World News article so much that I contacted (and irritated) a Reuters representative to make sure it came off the Reuters wire. He wasn't much help in confirming the dispatch, but the February issue of "New Age Journal" ran an article which cleared up the mystery.

On the morning of July 25, 1990, Andrews and a crew of sixty observers undertook a project called Operation Blackbird equipped with over two million dollars worth of infrared and night viewing camera equipment provided by Nippon-TV. Before sunrise the TV monitor started registering bobbing lights and Andrews announced that they had made a significant scientific discovery. The Reuters article quotes Andrews as making the following statements, which write the book on level-headed analysis.

"We had a situation at approximately 3:30 this morning on monitor -- a number of orange lights taking the approximate form of a triangle and within that triangular form was a second triangle," Andrews said. "We had many lights, following that a whole complex arrangement of lights doing all sorts of funny things. It's a complex situation, we are actually analysing it at this very moment. But there is undoubtedly something here for science." Andrews said the circles could not be a hoax.

When Andrews and a team of reporters converged on the field, they found a crude set of circles left by practical jokers, who also left wooden crosses and Ouija boards. The distinguished scientists with their sophisticated equipment that Andrews had bragged about in the early dispatch had evidently been monitoring the prankster's body heat.

"It was only funny for about ten seconds. Otherwise it was totally irresponsible and set back serious research considerably", lamented an embarrassed Andrews.

(Editor's Note: At a recent CSICOP workshop in Lexington, Kentucky, I had the opportunity to watch a videotape of a BBS broadcast on crop circles, which included the making of a crop circle by a tug of war team. The show's commentator remarked that the group looked "suspiciously practiced" as they quickly trampled out a perfect circle using a rope as a compass. The absence of footprints was easily accomplished by walking in the parallel rows of tractor tracks which always seem to accompany crop circles (and allow easy access to every part of the patterns). When pointedly asked if they had ever before made any crop circles as a hoax, members of the group exchanged grins and knowing glances, then said that such an admission would bring farmers beating on their doors. BL)

UFO FORUM PRESENTS

The following is a portion of the text of a flyer obtained by Larry Johnson at the Sphinx Bookstore in Atlanta, which offers a little of everything on the New Age menu:

U F O F O R U M

presents

THE REALITY OF BIGFOOT & THE UFO CONNECTION

Encounters with Bigfoot
Their Interdimensional, Psychic & Healing Abilities

Their Connection with "Star People"

JACK LAPSERITIS BA, MS

Applied Anthropologist, Social Scientist

Author: THE PSYCHIC SASQUATCH, THE UFO CONNECTION

35 Years of Research in the Tradition of Jane Goodall

Has camped up to 5 months at a time in Sasquatch habitat

COMPREHENSIVE HOLISTIC HEALTH READINGS FOR \$50/hr.

VISIONS OF VIRGIN MARY

Courtesy of Tampa Bay Skeptics Report

A shimmering image that some say resembled the Virgin Mary began to appear on a church wall for about one hour each day, attracting up to 2,000 miracle seekers per day to St. Dominic's Church in Colfax, California, a town of 1,000 inhabitants. As local businesses bustled, and church coffers presumably brimmed over, the last thing the locals wanted was a rational explanation for the "miracle." After physics professor James Phelps, an optics specialist at California State University at Sacramento, postulated that the multicolored vision was likely a natural reflection of sunlight from a light fixture, church officials acknowledged that yes, its hanging light fixtures had just been repaired one day before the image began to appear. Added the son of the church's administrator, "They put wire around the outside of the glass covers and other pieces of metal, various and sundry stuff." But Bishop Francis Quinn of Sacramento said that there were no plans to test Phelps' theory. And parishioner Freda Hoffman, who was assisting at the church, added, "We believe it is the Virgin Mary. We believe in it because we are Catholics."

(The above article is credited to AP/St. Pete. Times, Dec. 9, and appeared in the Spring 1991 issue of the Tampa Bay Skeptics Report.)

KECKSBURG "UFO CRASH"

by Becky Long, Georgia Skeptics

The Spring 1991 issue of Skeptical Inquirer featured an article by Robert R. Young entitled "Old-Solved Mysteries: The Kecksburg Incident". The original UFO sighting report occurred in 1965 and was triggered by a large meteor fireball seen by thousands of people from New York to Idaho. Now, a quarter of a century later, claims of a crashed acorn-shaped saucer are revived, complete with allegations of a government cover-up.

Those desiring more details and documentation on the incident than were provided in the Skeptical Inquirer article can obtain the full 14-page report from Robert Young for \$3.00. His address is 329 South Front St., Harrisburg, PA 17104.

(The above information was provided courtesy of the Skeptics UFO Newsletter, published bimonthly by Philip J. Klass. The subscription rate for this newsletter was formerly \$15 for UFO-Skeptics and \$15,000,000 for UFO-Believers. However, according to Klass, the U.S. Justice Department determined that this rate structure violated the Robinson-Patman Act since it represented "discrimination against the disadvantaged." For those interesting in subscribing to the SUN (or obtaining a \$14,999,985 refund if they previously paid the higher rate), Mr. Klass's address is 404 "N" St. SW, Washington, DC 20024)

BOOK REVIEW: DEADLY BLESSINGS, FAITH HEALING ON TRIAL by Richard J. Brenneman (Prometheus Books, Amherst, NY, \$21.95).

What do a Psychic surgeon, a Christian Scientist Family, and a Psychotherapist have in common? Why are there so many fringe cults in California? What are the roots of the new age? Who is Mary Baker Eddy? And where can you find answers to these questions?

The answer to the first question is: They all had an encounter with the California legal system for alleged unlawful medical practices. The answer to the last question: In Richard J. Brenneman's new book *Deadly Blessings: Faith Healing on Trial*.

In this well-structured, suspenseful book, Mr. Brenneman discusses in detail three specific cases in which individuals are brought to trial for either medical negligence or fraud. In two of the cases, a death occurred. The cases specifically are: The parents of 17-month-old Seth Ian Glaser, who watched their child die of bacterial meningitis while their Christian Science "practitioner" promised that reverence and prayer were all the child needed; Brother Joe (a "psychic surgeon" that was also exposed by the Rocky Mountain Skeptics in the local media in 1986); and Dr. Betty Grover Eisner (the psychotherapist who ran an LSD encounter group, and had a patient die following a bizarre hot tub treatment).

This book follows a style that is a mix between a Mystery (e.g. you don't know the outcome of the trial until the last chapter of the case) and a news column. The cases are well documented, with numerous interviews and a plethora of notes on each case. There is much background, both on the people being charged, as well as members of associated cults/groups. I feel that this was a bit overdone, as the author appeared to me to go to extremes in his documentation, causing sections of the book to run on somewhat, and seem dry. I got a sort of Klass-ian Deja Vu reading this book.

The suspense, however, did keep me into it through the night, and the pleasantly surprising afterthought on "Why California" was delightful.

One other pleasant aspect was the fact that the author did not constantly insert his own opinions and judgments into the issue. From an empirical standpoint, the book was excellent (e.g. factual)

The above article was reprinted from the September/October 1990 issue of the Rocky Mountain Skeptic. John Merritt is a Member of the Board of Directors of RMS and a systems analyst at US West Communications. Rocky Mountain Skeptics are credited in the book for their contribution in the Brother Joe case.

HOAGLAND's MARS UPDATE

Courtesy of Tampa Bay Skeptics Report

Although Tampa Bay Skeptics is still awaiting a response from NASA, Richard Hoagland announced on the February 22 For The People show that, as per a "form letter" being mailed from NASA to those who inquire, what Hoagland calls "their version of Hoagland's Mars" is now being completed, for distribution to PBS stations. Hoagland has expressed concern that NASA's plan may be to re-edit his original presentation and "distort it in such a way that the subject looks silly."

Hoagland claimed discoveries of a "city" (not just a "face") in the Cydonia region of Mars, and a mathematical message contained within the angles of its "monuments" have taken on a new importance in light of the recent war over oil reserves in the Persian Gulf. As Hoagland stated, "We now know that the message of Cydonia has to do with energy, an alternative to oil," relating to the so-called perpetual "N Machine" generator which, as Hoagland had explained on an earlier show, works by "reaching into space-time and converting direct electrical energy from the basic properties of the space-time continuum" through a "gate" to the "4th dimension."

Hoagland has implored his listeners, upon receiving their NASA form letter, to write back asking if NASA plans, on the program, to "test Hoagland's data and his hypothesis." If not, Hoagland cautions, NASA's airing of Hoagland's Mars may turn out to be a "cruel hoax on the American people."

Anyone wishing to purchase the uncut version of the Hoagland's Mars videotape may do so by sending \$24.95 + \$4.00 shipping and handling (Florida residents add \$1.50 tax) to For the People, 3 River St., White Springs, FL 32096.

The above article appeared in the Spring 1991 issue (Volume 3, Number 4) of the Tampa Bay Skeptics Report. For more information on Tampa Bay Skeptics, write 6219 Palma Blvd. #210, St. Petersburg, FL 33715. or call (813) 867-3533.

DENTAL FILLINGS

By Tom Woosnam, Bay Area Skeptics

Did you realize that the fillings in your teeth could result in arthritis, colitis, kidney damage, birth defects and multiple sclerosis? That at least was the suggestion made by MORLEY SAFER in a "60 Minutes" segment aired on December 16, 1990, a suggestion that is not borne out by scientific evidence as reported by ACCURACY IN MEDIA, INC, (AIM) in their January 1991 newsletter.

The basis for the CBS claim is the fact that amalgam fillings, which have been in use for more than a century, are 50 percent mercury (they also contain silver, copper or tin) and mercury is known to be more poisonous than lead or arsenic. Although Safer admitted that "no specific disease has yet been directly linked to mercury from fillings", the parallels drawn

between diseases and the use of amalgam as reported by "60 Minutes" left little doubt as to the conclusion that CBS wished to draw.

As an example of the kind of frantic recovery sufferers can expect to experience, Safer interviewed NANCY YOST of San Jose, California. Yost, a victim of MS, had her five amalgam fillings taken out because she'd worked in the dental industry and had heard reports that some patients had shown improvements after their amalgam fillings had been removed. The morning after the removal of her fillings she threw away the cane she had been relying on to walk and subsequently her voice and ability to dance were restored - small wonder then that after the program was aired dentists around the country were flooded with calls from patients willing to pay \$200 to \$2,000 to have their fillings replaced. One naturally wonders at this point what an expert on MS might say, and indeed "60 Minutes" did contact the National Multiple Sclerosis Society and was offered an interview with DR. STEPHEN REINGOLD, Vice President for Research and Medical Programs. Because the camera crew never showed up, however, the viewing public was unable to hear what Dr. Reingold would have said as he made clear in a protest made to "60 Minutes" executive producer DON HEWITT: "The reality is that there has never been a direct association made between amalgam and MS. Reports of remissions resulting from amalgam removal appear to be anecdotal and cannot be separated from placebo effects or spontaneous changes in disease."

One would have hoped that in the interests of balanced reporting Safer would at least have interviewed patients who showed no improvement in their health after having had their fillings removed, but such hopes were not realized in this program. One might have hoped also that he would mention that health professionals who deal with amalgams every day show no higher incidence of MS than the rest of the population but alas this evidence is not forthcoming. "60 Minutes" did not entirely ignore the defenders of amalgam fillings, however. They showed an interview with DR. R. HEBER SIMMONS, JR., spokesman for the AMERICAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION but much of this time (76 lines vs. 156 lines for the "anti-amalgam" dentists) was spent defending the ADA policy of declaring it unethical for dentists to recommend the replacement of amalgam fillings except for cosmetic reasons. "60 Minutes" turned this into evidence of an infringement of the rights of dentists who want to help patients avoid mercury poisoning.

So, what are the facts as they are known but not reported on the CBS Sunday night show? According to Dr. Simmons, studies show that the daily release of mercury from amalgams is about one percent of what a worker would receive when exposed to mercury in an environment complying with OSHA standards. DR. J. RODWAY MACKERT, professor of dental materials at the SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY OF THE MEDICAL COLLEGE OF GEORGIA writes in an article scheduled for publication in the ADA JOURNAL that the average patient's fillings may give off 1 to 2 micrograms of mercury per day. In contrast the mercury intake from one meal of seafood in one week would be seven times the amount given off by one's amalgam fillings each week! Even Consumer Reports, which took the scare-mongers side during the Alar scandal has noted " . . . dentists who purport to treat health problems by ripping out fillings are putting their own economic interests ahead of their patients' welfare. Amalgams have been used for more than 150 years. Except for a few people with a genuine allergy to mercury (Consumer Union)

knows of no one who's been harmed by them." The San Francisco Examiner quoted one anti-amalgam dentist as saying he had "at least 30 new patients awaiting appointments" following the "60 Minutes" piece. "The television show was wonderful," he said, "I was thrilled." He may have been thrilled but what of the MS sufferers whose hopes were cruelly raised then dashed when they were told the facts? As AIM states perhaps they were " . . . lucky compared to those who contacted not their doctors, but dentists willing to replace their fillings. They will be not only sadder but poorer . . . they should send the bill to CBS."

(TOM WOOSNAM holds the Science Department Chair at the Crystal Springs Uplands School in Hillsborough)

Yves Barbero, editor of BASIS, adds the following:

I contacted WALLACE I. SAMPSON, M.D., one of the founders of BAY AREA SKEPTICS and currently an advisor, after that particular show and asked him if I should run right over to my dentist and have my fillings replaced. He said, "No!" No scientific findings would suggest that there is any merit to the claims of that show. I know Dr. Sampson well and respect his scientific opinions so I saved myself a pile of dough.

Nevertheless, the show was remarkable for some of the questions it raised. Obviously, you can't make a public health policy out of anecdotal events such as the remarkable recovery (if it happened) of Nancy Yost. Still, anecdotal claims (especially if there are a number of them) should be considered for serious investigation. No one seems to have suggested that Yost's recovery might be investigated. I can't help wondering why.

Because something has been in use for 150 years does not mean it's safe nor does it mean it should be immune from investigation. It does mean, however, that there is considerable vested interest in its use.

There are clear economic interests at stake here. The ADA, like many of its sister professional organizations, does three basic things:

- It looks out for the economic interests of its members.
- It issues (and enforces) ethical guidelines.
- It keeps its members scientific by enforcing academic training standards and making sure its members use only accepted procedures.

There's little question that these functions occasionally become blurred and don't always serve the public interest. In the name of science, ethical guidelines might be enforced to serve economic interests. If amalgam was proved dangerous, many dentists would have to put up a lot of time and money for retraining and retooling. Many of ADA's voting members would be out of business.

In addition, I've always been suspicious about the ADA since it endorses

commercial products (but that's an aside).

"60 Minutes" is generally an excellent show but it does occasionally demonstrate bias. It's difficult to pick it out if you're not familiar with the subject matter (as I am not on most medical matters). I have seen it in areas where I have some background (labor, for instance). Still, I think that bias, conscious or unconscious, is more closely related to sensationalism than actual malice. What a shocker it is to discover that a professional organization has thrown one of its members out of work because he gave honest advice to a patient. But suppose it was a sincere physician treating a patient with peach pits for cancer--which of us wouldn't want him defrocked!

As skeptics, we should naturally be suspicious when conclusions are made about a complex medical issue on a fifteen minute news segment, however reputable the news organization is. But we should also be suspicious of spokesmen from professional organizations (with mixed motives) who make pronouncements from on high. YB

(The above article was reprinted with permission from the April 1991 issue of BASIS, Newsletter of Bay Area Skeptics)

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The next regular meeting of Georgia Skeptics will be held on Sunday, May 19, 1991, at the Savoy Dr. "Steak and Ale" (off I-285 at N. Shallowford Rd.) at 5:00 p.m.

The speaker will be Dr. James Mahaffey, Senior Research Scientist at the Georgia Tech Research Institute, who will talk on "Cold Fusion: Determining the Facts". A leader in Georgia Tech's research on the phenomenon, Dr. Mahaffey has authored a book on the subject, has lectured internationally, and recently appeared in a NOVA broadcast on Cold Fusion (where he compared reactions to cold fusion claims to The Shroud of Turin). The talk will cover the history of cold fusion (claims of cold fusion surprisingly go back to German experiments in the 1920's trying to produce helium for hot air balloons), Georgia Tech's involvement in cold fusion research, the status of current research around the world, some theoretical explanations for what might be happening, and lessons which have been learned regarding scientific methodology.

MEETING MINUTES

The last regular meeting of the Georgia Skeptics was held on March 17, 1991, at the Steak and Ale on Savoy Drive. After an informal discussion of current topics of interest, Dr. Robert Almeder, Professor of Philosophy at Georgia State University, spoke on the limits of scientific reasoning in describing the world. Considering the many revolutionary changes which have already occurred in scientific thinking, and will no doubt occur in the

future, Dr. Almeder said it is obvious that humans do not know the ultimate nature of the world. He suggests that belief in science should not preclude dualistic views which don't reduce to pure science, and that skepticism does not require a purely materialistic world view. Dr Almeder proposed that it can be rational to accept views not authorized by science, and illustrated his point with a discussion of the types of "proof" which would be sufficient to convince a skeptic that Georgia Skeptic member Bill Bagnuolo was the reincarnation of Napoleon. Not only was the talk thought-provoking, but Dr. Almeder's clever and humorous analogies made us laugh and thoroughly enjoy ourselves.

Dr. Almeder has authored two books, *Blind Realism: An Essay on Human Knowledge and Natural Science*, and *Death and Personal Survival*.

A special meeting (party) of the Skeptics was held on April 14, 1991, at the home of Angie Jones, who graciously provided two varieties of homemade lasagna and much warm hospitality. Larry Johnson brought his guitar and entertained the group with humorous songs on various topics of interest to skeptics, such as psychobabble, UFO encounters, and trance channeling. The musical interlude was followed by videotapes provided by Kevin O'Melia and Marty Martinez, which spanned a wide range of the bizarre including UFOs, crop circles, cattle mutilations, and the Catholic exorcism which appeared on 20/20. These informal gatherings have proved a great way to get better acquainted.

THE END