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# Conference Report

Special to The Skeptic

By Jim Lippard

## Last of Four Parts

*Editor's note: We are pleased to present this detailed review of the 1992 CSICOP conference prepared by Jim Lippard of The Phoenix Skeptics and reprinted with his kind permission.*

## The Kecksburg Meteor

Robert Young, the education director of the Harrisburg Astronomical Society, reported on the 1965 Kecksburg, Pennsylvania, alleged UFO crash. On December 9 of that year, a brilliant bolide was seen in the sky by tens of thousands of people over nine states and Ontario, Canada. The path was determined by examining photographs and triangulating, and it was determined to have disintegrated 14 kilometers above southwest Ontario, and this result was published in 1967 in a Canadian astronomical journal.

Young has examined 91 eyewitness reports, all of which can be explained by the Ontario fireball. Yet his experience with Fox TV's *Sightings* show was similar to McGaha's experience with *Unsolved Mysteries* (see last month's installment in The Skeptic). Young was on the air for about ten seconds.

Both *Sightings* and the September 19, 1990, *Unsolved Mysteries* based their shows on other information. They looked at Ivan Sanderson's calculations of the motion of the fireball, which (because of errors) showed the fireball changing direction.

They looked at a newspaper headline in the early (county) edition of the December 10 Greensburg Tribune-Review which stated "Unidentified Flying Object Touches Off Probe Near Kecksburg," but omitted the later (city) edition's story about searchers failing to find anything. They reported on five witnesses who claim to have seen a crashed object which was retrieved by the military. Young gave details on each of these five witnesses and their reports: (1) The first reported his story in 1979 on KDKA radio; claimed to have been fire chief of Kecksburg at the time. In fact he was the fire chief in 1964, but not in 1965. (2 and 3) These witnesses were a father and son; the father is deceased. The son

claims the military used their home as a base of operations, but does not claim to have seen any recovered object. Other witnesses dispute the claim about the use of their home. (4) A UFO group's display at a local mall in 1987 resulted in this witness coming forward. He says he saw the recovered object, but can't remember anyone else who was present. (5) This witness showed up during the filming of *Unsolved Mysteries* and claimed to have seen a hieroglyphic-covered object that was recovered.

Young pointed out that the description given by witnesses 4 and 5 of where the object landed match the location where the local newspaper said the search took place but the newspaper account was inaccurate. None of these five witnesses' accounts stand up under scrutiny. On the other hand, 46 people signed a statement which was sent to *Unsolved Mysteries* prior to their show's airing, stating that there was no object which crashed and no recovery of an object by the military. The show failed to mention this statement.<sup>10</sup>

### **Roswell Incident**

The final speaker on the panel was Donald R. Schmitt, a medical illustrator, co-director of the late J. Allen Hynek's Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS), and co-author (with Kevin Randle) of *UFO Crash at Roswell*, which Phil Klass in his introduction called the best of the books on Roswell. Schmitt began by giving his credentials as a skeptic, pointing out that CUFOS debunked the Gulf Breeze sightings, MJ-12, and Gerald Anderson, who has made claims about the Roswell crash. He went on to argue that something peculiar occurred in Roswell, New Mexico, on July 8, 1947.

Schmitt's central evidence was the wire transmissions between Roswell, Ft. Worth, and Washington, D.C., on July 8. An "official press release" was issued on that date, resulting in a news story titled "Flying Disc in Army Possession" at 4:26 p.m., Washington time. By 5:30, it was reported that a reporter in Ft. Worth was allowed to examine debris, which was sent on to Wright field. At 6:30, Major E.M. Kurtan said there was nothing to it, it was a high altitude sounding device, and there was no need to send it on to Wright.

The wire transmission evidence prompted Schmitt to ask: Why did it take two hours to identify the object as a radar device which had been in use for twenty years? (Before the invention of radar, according to Schmitt, the same kind of balloon device was used for visual tracking.) Schmitt argued that what was found at Roswell was no such thing. He eliminated various possible explanations: a V2 launch scheduled for July 3 was cancelled due to a pad fire, there are no Japanese balloon bombs unaccounted for, etc.

Schmitt said he has talked to 150 people who were involved in some way. Of 30 military personnel he has spoken with, he said that none of their military records can now be found. Two witnesses say there was a nurse at the base hospital who observed alien bodies, who was allegedly transferred to another base and then died in a plane crash. Schmitt can't find any record of the plane crash, nor any records supporting the existence of this nurse. Rather than conclude that the witnesses were in error, however, he concludes that there is a cover-up.

Schmitt claimed that some of the witnesses he has spoken to say that they were threatened by military personnel that their children would be killed if they ever talked about it; children were told they'd never see their parents again if they did. W.W. Brazell, the rancher on whose property debris was found, allegedly told his family that the military had threatened him. Schmitt said he has six deathbed statements, including one of a general, stating that "it was no goddamn weather balloon."

### **Klass Concedes Roswell Cover-up**

After some skeptical questioning by audience members, Phil Klass then addressed the subject. He began, "It may shock some of you to hear what I am about to say. I agree there is a major saucer crash cover-up. We disagree about who is covering it up." He then proceeded to present information which he said had been neglected by proponents of a UFO crash at Roswell. On September 23, 1947, Lieutenant General Nathan Twining, Wright-Patterson base commander, wrote to the chief of staff of the Army Air Force with an assessment of UFOs. In this letter, which is quoted extensively by UFO proponents, Twining stated that "the phenomenon reported is something real and not visionary or fictitious." What they never quote, however, is that he also wrote in the same letter that there is "a lack of physical evidence in the shape of crash-recovered exhibits which would undeniably prove the existence of these objects." This was several months after Roswell, so Klass offered three possible implications of this letter: (1) Twining was lying to Air Force headquarters. (2) Nobody told Twining about the crashed saucer. (3) There was no crashed saucer. Klass enumerated

case after case of documents, many formerly classified Secret or Top Secret, which made similar comments, all after Roswell and authored by people who should have known if flying saucers had crashed there.<sup>11</sup>

After the two concurrent sessions on crashed saucers and qi gong, the new CSICOP video, "Beyond Belief," was premiered. The video, hosted by magician Steve Shaw of Project Alpha fame, addressed the subjects of astrology, fire walking, and the Gulf Breeze UFO. The video will be made available to local groups for their meetings or for public access cable.

### **Awards Banquet**

Three skeptics were honored by CSICOP Saturday evening. The "In Praise of Reason" award was given to Oxford zoologist Richard Dawkins, "in recognition of his distinguished contribution to the use of critical inquiry, scientific evidence and reason, in evaluating claims of knowledge." During his acceptance speech, Dawkins urged scientists to exploit the awe factor as a means of stimulating interest in science over religion. He mentioned how appalled he was to learn that 54% of U.S. charitable contributions go to religious institutions.

The "Distinguished Skeptic" award went to Toronto magician and columnist Henry Gordon, who shared with the audience his numerous frustrations and successes in establishing a regular skeptics column for the Toronto newspapers. According to Gordon, success or failure in this venture depends very much on whether the editor is a critical thinker or is sympathetic to the paranormal.

Finally, the "Responsibility in Journalism" award was given to Andrew Skolnick, associate editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* for his article, "Maharishi Ayur-Veda: Guru's Marketing Scheme Promises the World Eternal 'Perfect Health'" (*JAMA* 266:1741-1750). Skolnick was unable to say anything about his article as a result of a multi-million dollar lawsuit against himself and *JAMA* filed by Ayur-Veda organizations.<sup>13</sup> Skolnick urged skeptics to band together and work towards establishing legal restrictions on SLAPP suits; otherwise such lawsuits will discourage open skeptical discussion and criticism. For this and the award, Skolnick received a standing ovation.

The evening was capped with a demonstration of spoon-bending and mentalist magic by Project Alpha alumnus Steve Shaw. Shaw was one of two teenage conjurers working for James Randi that were hired by investigators at the McDonnell Lab for Psychical Research in St. Louis in 1979. Subsequently, the young conjurers, acting as research subjects, fooled McDonnell scientists into believing that they had genuine psycho kinetic powers. The resulting expos, by Randi (who dubbed his experiment with McDonnell scientists "Project Alpha") convinced parapsychologists that a conjuror should be present at tests of psychic abilities.<sup>14</sup>

Randi himself received an ovation at the CSICOP luncheon for his legal battles with alleged psychic Uri Geller, who has filed a plethora of lawsuits against Randi and CSICOP, so far without success in court.

### **Dinosaur Valley State Park / Dealey Plaza**

On Sunday, after another screening of the CSICOP video and a "conversation session" with some of the CSICOP Executive Council members, the North Texas Skeptics arranged an optional trip to Dinosaur Valley State Park. This trip, guided by Ronnie Hastings, was a visit to the dinosaur tracks at the Paluxy River which have been claimed by creationists as evidence of human beings living contemporary with dinosaurs.<sup>15</sup>

A number of conference attendees, however, chose to visit Dealey Plaza in downtown Dallas, the site of John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963. At Dealey Plaza, one can visit The Sixth Floor, a museum in the former Texas School Book Depository, walk on the grassy knoll and observe the view from behind the wooden fence (where vandals have written "Kenney [sic] was shot from here" in several different places), or talk with any one of several conspiracy theorists hawking tabloids which describe their theories. Our group, visiting the grassy knoll with a conspiracy theorist as our guide, concocted a story involving the use of a drainage pipe behind the fence as a "conspirators' escape tunnel," only to be told by the guide that such a theory had already been proposed. I'm not sure who proposed it, but it may have been another conspiracy theorist who spoke to us. Joe Nickell called his theory the "twelve bullet theory," because this theorist apparently maintained that every postulated marksman was an actual shooter.

### **Notes:**

10. See Robert R. Young, "'Old-Solved Mysteries': The Kecksburg Incident," *Skeptical Inquirer*, 15:281-285.
11. See Philip J. Klass, "Crash of the Crashed-Saucer Claim," *Skeptical Inquirer*, 10:234-241.
12. Awards Banquet: This section was written by Richard Crowe of the Astronomy Department of the University of Hawaii at Hilo and revised by Jim Lippard.
13. For details, see Skolnick's article, letters to *JAMA* in the same issue as his article, and the March 11, 1992, *JAMA*. Skolnick's article is summarized in his "The Maharishi Caper: *JAMA* Hoodwinked (But Just for a While)," *Skeptical Inquirer*, 16:254-259. Skolnick's article was also given a "laurel" by the Columbia Journalism Review's "Darts and Laurels" column, as reported by Kendrick Frazier in the Summer 1992 *SI*.
14. "Project Alpha" is described by Randi in "The Project Alpha Experiment: Part 1. The First Two Years," *Skeptical Inquirer*, vol. 7, no. 4, Summer 1983, pp. 24-33, and in "The Project Alpha Experiment Part 2. Beyond the Laboratory," *Skeptical Inquirer* vol. 8, no. 1, Fall 1983, pp. 36-45. Various aspects of Project Alpha are criticized by Marcello Truzzi in "Reflections on 'Project Alpha': Scientific Experiment or Conjuror's Illusion?" in the *Zetetic Scholar* nos. 12/13, 1987, pp. 73-98.
15. The Paluxy River footprints have been thoroughly debunked and even most creationists now admit that they do not provide evidence of humans and dinosaurs living together. See, for example, the special issue of *Creation/Evolution*: vol. 5, no. 1, 1985, titled "The Paluxy River Footprint Mystery Solved."

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## The third eye

By Pat Reeder

When I began writing this column, way back in the Mesozoic Era, it was my intention to keep up with all of the unscientific, occult nonsense that spewed forth from TV and radio. But frankly, not even I expected that there would be SO MUCH of it! We are drowning in a tidal wave of tabloid trash TV, and I'd have to write a column a day to mop up all the bilge water that they are pumping into our living rooms. For this reason, I have adopted the attitude that I will ignore most tabloid TV shows in the same way that I ignore most supermarket tabloids...unless they feature a space alien with a major political figure on the cover (we all have our weaknesses). After all, you don't need me to tell you that you should put no more stock in *A Current Affair* than you do in *The Weekly World News*.

That said, I'm now going to break my own rule and discuss the February 25 edition of *Hard Copy*...but only because it offered the first ripple of a new, oncoming wave of garbage from Hollywood. On March 12, Paramount Pictures will release a film...nah, make that "a movie"...called *Fire In The Sky*, based on the "true story" (as the ads trumpet) of...brace yourself...Travis Walton's UFO abduction!

*Hard Copy* recounted the timeworn yarn, using lots of special effects-laded footage from the movie to make the story seem all the more "irrefutable." As usual, Travis appeared on camera to mumble that the whole story was really so painful to relive that he hates to tell it. Well, he must have an amazingly high threshold of pain, because he has told it, for a price, to the *National Enquirer*, a book publisher, and a number of tabloid TV shows (as I recall, this was the third time I've seen him recount it on TV in the past year). And now he's sold his whopper to Hollywood. To borrow a phrase from Robert Benchley, he has inflicted this story on the public in every conceivable way except dropping it from airplanes. Instead of *Fire In The Sky*, perhaps the movie should've been called *Money In The Bank*.

*Hard Copy's* presentation of Walton's story was completely one-sided, making no effort whatsoever to recount any of the many gaping holes in it, nor to examine Walton's many and varied motivations for making it all up. The only effort toward balance was one sentence: "Many people have tried to poke holes in Travis Walton's story, pointing out, for example, that less than a month after the incident, he sold his story to the national media." But even that was slanted in his favor. Why not tell the whole truth: that he sold it to the *NATIONAL ENQUIRER*?

If you want to read a real investigation of Walton, complete with tons of damning evidence against him, check out Phil

Klass' excellent book, *UFOs: The Public Deceived*. You certainly won't get any tough investigations from *Hard Copy*, and judging from the clips of the upcoming movie, the best that can be expected from it is that the special effects and makeup will be almost as hilarious as the ones in the *Communion* movie.



Speaking of real investigations, kudos to ABC's *PrimeTime Live*, for their terrific undercover expose of psychic 900-Lines. The show managed to get an operative hired as a "psychic" (apparently, anyone can learn to be a telephone psychic in three days), and armed with miniature cameras, which are becoming one of our most powerful weapons against con men, we saw how the psychic hotlines really work.

Bored, unemployed actor/waiters toss Tarot cards and keep the callers on the line as long as possible...but they use oven timers to make sure they don't go over 30 minutes. They don't want the bill to be more than \$100 or so, because they might scare people away from future calls. You might remember how I ridiculed Dionne Warwick for hosting a "Psychic Friends" infomercial a few months back. She was invited to appear on *PrimeTime*, but declined...surely the first time she's declined an invitation to be on network television! Why didn't her psychic friends warn her about the damage to her career that her endorsement of them could cause? And being psychic, how were they taken in by an undercover reporter anyway?

If anyone questions why we skeptics get so worked up about this stuff, consider one scene from *PrimeTime*: having established that most of the callers were poor and unemployed, the producers then showed an office manager laughing that calls would soon be pouring in to the psychic line because the "AFDC checks are in the mail!" Consider what "AFDC" stands for: "Aid to Families with Dependent Children."

And the money is going to psychic hotlines. Chew on that one for awhile.



Sure, I know: "Print is dead" (Harold Ramis said that in *Ghostbusters*, which I caught recently on cable TV). Still, I just can't help recommending a few books this month, for those who still read. There is nothing so surprising and delightful as finding an unexpected skeptical viewpoint in a non-Prometheus book...it's like finding a pearl in an oyster dinner!

First, check out *I'm Dysfunctional, You're Dysfunctional: The Recovery Movement And Other Self-Help Fashions*, by Wendy Kaminer. Kaminer does an excellent job of criticizing the 12-step program mentality that is turning America into a nation of "helpless victims," putting their fates in the hands of a higher power. One chapter, entitled "Stop Making Sense: New Age," is devoted entirely to drawing comparisons between pop psychobabble and such New Age pursuits as channeling and Shirley McLaine seminars, both of which require an abandonment of that horrible ol' "linear reasoning" and a whole new vocabulary of meaningless techno-jargon. It's incisive, biting, and occasionally hilarious. Check it out.

The Occult section at Half-Price Books on Northwest Highway had several copies of *The Fringes of Reason: A Whole Earth Catalog*, so hurry and get yours before they're gone! It's a wonderfully entertaining compendium of wacko beliefs, complete with histories and bibliographies on UFOs, parapsychology, spontaneous combustion, religious cults, and more...including CSICOP!

Best of all, it includes a reprint of an article by Jerome Clark from a 1987 *Omni Magazine*, painting CSICOP as a wild body of berserk nay-sayers, wielding their monolithic power over the media to quash and silence all the voices that disagree with them! I can't tell you how good I felt after I read that! I had no idea we were that powerful, or that these people were so afraid of us! To celebrate, I went right out, ordered a milkshake, and just to show off my monolithic thought-controlling power, I oppressed the waitress into agreeing with me that Travis Walton is a big, money-grubbing fibber! Yow! I feel GOOD!! (

Incidentally, while you're in the Half-Price Books Occult section, look for the most inadvertently hilarious book title

I've seen in years: *The Only Astrology Guide You'll Ever Need!*)

Finally, we come to *The Way Things Ought To Be*, by radio/TV talk show host Rush Limbaugh. Whether you love or hate Limbaugh's conservative political beliefs, you should be happy as a skeptic that this book has been a number one bestseller for 21 weeks at this writing, and has sold over 2 million copies. That means a lot of people will read Rush's chapter on radical environmentalism, which contains an impassioned attack on "junk science," which is propelled more by political agendas or a desire for funding than by real research. The chapter recounts numerous examples of people such as Paul Ehrlich making doomsday predictions that were reported unquestioningly by the national media, and turned out to be completely wrong...yet these people are still held up to America as "experts."

To quote Limbaugh, "I don't claim to be an expert on any science, but I do know enough to ask commonsense questions and not to swallow everything that's presented to me...I refuse to let scientific elitism prevent me from asking commonsense questions that are skeptical of their 'findings.' You shouldn't let them stop you from challenging their conclusions either." Regardless of your politics, it's hard not to agree that that really IS the "way it ought to be."

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Finally, a couple of quick stories from the Associated Press...

Former horse trainer Alan Marcus has started a phone service that offers horoscopes for pets. Here's a sample: "Virgo cats must beware of overextending themselves" (ever see a cat overextend himself?). Marcus hopes to get his pet horoscopes on TV and into the newspapers...where they can be placed on the bottoms of bird cages and enjoyed by parrots and canaries, too. And the Rev. Thane E. Ford of Pensacola wants to do for church what McDonald's did for food (Make it bland and boring? Possibly. Read on...). Rev. Ford thinks people don't like church because it takes too long. So he's offering a Compact Mini 22-Minute Worship Service. In just 22-minutes, you get a mini-sermon, two hymns, a Scripture reading, a prayer, and you're out-the-door! No word yet on whether you get change back from the dollar you put in the collection plate.

I hope this doesn't catch on in Catholic churches. I'd hate to see the priests get rid of Communion wafers and start asking the parishioners, "You want fries with that?"

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## Healthy skepticism

### Medical "Pathies"

By **Tim Gorski, M.D.**

(Last in a Series)

#### Osteopathy

Andrew T. Still gave osteopathy its start in the 19th Century. Still, like his Methodist minister father, practiced medicine largely as a self-taught see-and-do profession. With this kind of religious background, and after watching helplessly as three of his own children died of spinal meningitis, Still went into the magnetic healing business. Later, he developed an interest in bonesetting and gained a reputation as a "lightning bonesetter." From this he went on to becoming convinced of the benefits of spinal manipulation therapy, which he claimed could cure heart disease and other illnesses besides those of a musculoskeletal nature.

Still's osteopathy incorporated obvious religious elements. He regarded it as "God's law" and theorized the divine

infusion into human beings of "the highest known order of force (electricity)" which, "when it plays freely all through your system, you feel well. Shut it off in one place and congestion may result; in this case a medical doctor, by dosing you with drugs, would increase this congestion until it resulted in decay. ...Not so with an Osteopath. He removes the obstruction, lets the life-giving current have full play, and the man is restored to health." Still taught that obstruction of the flow of this force is the cause of all disease and that, excepting osteopaths, physicians were treating only effects that manifested as different diseases.<sup>1</sup>

Daniel David Palmer, the founder of chiropractic, evidently borrowed freely from the ideas of Still. His name was said to have appeared in Still's guest book in the early 1890s and Palmer is said to have been directly instructed by an osteopath. But whereas chiropractic remains to this day strongly wedded to its "one cause" theory of disease and the notion that spinal manipulation can effectively treat every disorder, osteopathy was almost immediately directed back towards the mainstream. This was because, soon after Still opened his American School of Osteopathy in Kirksville, Missouri, a visiting Scottish physician, seeing some promise in Still's methods, agreed to become an instructor in the newly founded school. Smith saw to it that the faculty soon included a number of members who were highly trained in the scientific and medical knowledge of the day. Still objected to such "medicalization" of his system, but he never seriously challenged it, probably in large part because it enabled graduates of his school to obtain their medical licenses. And with this auspicious beginning, the passage of time saw osteopathy's gradual accommodation with and eventual acceptance of the use of medication, of surgery, and other theories of disease causation. By the 1950s, Still's metaphysical notions had almost entirely withered away, to the extent that a study committee of the American Medical Association (AMA) was able to say that "modern osteopathic education teaches the acceptance and recognition of all etiological factors and all pathological manifestations of disease as well as the utilization of all diagnostic and therapeutic procedures taught in schools of medicine."<sup>2</sup>

As a result, the main difficulty with osteopathy today is that it is in something of an identity crisis. About the only thing that distinguishes osteopathic training is the continued inclusion in the curriculum of spinal manipulation, which does appear to have a place in the management of certain musculoskeletal disorders. But many osteopaths go on to make little or no use of this practice. Meanwhile, Medical Doctor physicians who have an interest in manipulative techniques can learn them. There is even an Academy of Manual Medicine, just as there are professional societies for other aspects of the contemporary practice of scientific medicine.

#### @SUBHEAD = Allopathy Double-talk

Allopathy, as it turns out, was another invention of homeopath Samuel Hahnemann, being his term for all medical theories and practices which didn't fit into his like cures like superstition. (Whereas "homeo" means "same," "allo" means "other.") Today, allopathy is sometimes applied to the kind of medicine learned and practiced by M.D. degree physicians, although many of them may not know it. Often it's an innocent usage by D.O. degree physicians who are trying to distinguish themselves from the M.D.s. But because most physicians with either degree are practicing the same sort of medicine, the term allopathy is of no more use than that of osteopathy, except as a sort of anachronism.

More often, allopathy is a term used by quacks to smear their opposition. There are several advantages in their doing so. One is that it appears to ally them with osteopaths, even though most D.O.s, like most M.D.s, are practicing legitimate medicine. Another reason is that quacks wish to portray their enemy as an exclusive medical sectarian establishment, for the public will understandably let them get away with failing to address objections to their methods that can be cast as the jealous and idiosyncratic disapproval of self-interested competition.

Finally, and most importantly, quacks need very much to avoid facing up to the fact that their detractors are defending an honest and open scientific approach. And above all, quacks need their victims to believe that their methods are an "alternative," not to the continually evolving facts and reason of medical science, but to some nebulous (and nefarious) scheme of "allopathic," "orthodox," and/or "traditional" medicine.

Medical "-pathies" have a vestigial use as identifiers of outworn and outdated ideas about health and disease from medicine's prescientific infancy. They are irrelevant when it comes to modern medical science.

#### Notes:

1. A.T. Still, *Autobiography of Andrew T. Still*, pp. 235, 289-290, self-published, Kirksville, Mo., 1897, cited in Fuller,

Robert C., *Alternative Medicine and American Religious Life*, Oxford University Press, 1989.

2. "Report of the Committee for the study of relations between Osteopathy and Medicine," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 152:734, cited in Fuller.

*This information is provided by the D/FW Council Against Health Fraud. For more information, or to report suspected health fraud, please contact the Council at Box 202577, Arlington, TX 76007, or call metro 214-263-8989.*

*Dr. Gorski is a practicing physician, chairman of the D/FW Council Against Health Fraud and an NTS Technical Advisor.*

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## Elections

**By Mike Sullivan**

The members of the North Texas Skeptics held their annual business meeting and election of Directors on January 23, 1993. Members present were able to nominate and vote for the seven Board of Director seats; once the Directors were seated, they appointed the officers for the group.

The NTS members elected to the Board of Directors for 1993 are Laura Ainsworth, John Blanton, Ron Hastings, John Park, Pat Reeder, Mike Sullivan, and Joe Voelkering.

The new board approved a motion to commission a new Director Emeritus position to honor individuals who have provided outstanding service to the group and wish to continue their association with North Texas Skeptics in a less active role. The first person named to the Director Emeritus position is John Thomas, one of the original founders of the group, a past president, the official spokesmen for NTS, and a technical advisor.

The board appointed the following persons to official positions for 1993: Joe Voelkering, President; Pat Reeder, Vice-President; Mark Meyer, Treasurer; John Blanton, Secretary. Non-official positions of Newsletter Editor and Associate Newsletter Editor will continue with Mike Sullivan and Keith Blanton serving, respectively.

During the business discussion at the meeting, members proposed the idea of establishing a North Texas Skeptic's "hotline" for use by members, the media and the public. The proposed telephone answering system could be used to inform members of meeting news, direct media inquiries to qualified individuals, and record requests for information about the group phoned in by the public. The group agreed to investigate the costs and capabilities of commercially-available voice mail systems for this purpose and recommend an implementation plan.

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