

Subject: October Electronic Shadow of a Doubt

## OCTOBER PRESENTATION

NEW Location this year: Chevy Chase, MD, Library  
8005 Connecticut Avenue, next to the firehouse  
[ 1 mile inside the Beltway at MD exit 33 -- 1/4 mile  
north of East-West Highway ]

2 PM SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15

Free and open to the public

### THE CHALLENGER ACCIDENT AND QUANTITATIVE LITERACY: A CHALLENGE FOR THE SCHOOLS

DR. LEE R. ABRAMSON

In its investigation of the Challenger accident, the Rogers Commission concluded that a faulty data analysis was a key contributor to the decision to launch in subfreezing temperatures - a decision which led to the deaths of seven astronauts and the expenditure of years of effort and billions of dollars. At the heart of the faulty data analysis was a basic error in graphical data plotting, made by the highly educated and trained engineers and scientists in the shuttle program.

In recent years, mathematics educators and statisticians have developed a new curriculum to introduce Quantitative Literacy (QL) into the schools. For data analysis, the QL curriculum is based on a few simple but effective graphical techniques such as stem-and-leaf and box plots. An NSF-funded project has as its goal the introduction of these techniques into the middle and high school science curriculum.

This talk will illustrate these QL techniques and discuss efforts to introduce QL into local schools.

Dr. Abramson is a Senior Research Statistician at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. For the past seven years, he has been working to promote QL in the schools through the American Statistical Association and as a school volunteer.

\*\*\* OTHER NOTES \*\*\*

It's another great movie night at the Denmans'...

Grace & Chip Denman invite NCAS members and guests for a pre-Halloween movie night at their home in Silver Spring at 8 pm, Friday, October 14. We're planning to show "Curse of the Demon" (1957) starring Dana Andrews as an ultra-skeptical investigator

confronted by demons, satanic cults, and forces of evil. There's only room for 20 or so. Please leave a message on the NCAS line (301-587-3827) by Wednesday, Oct. 12, if you'd like to come; we'll get back to you with directions. We'll supply the popcorn and sodas...bring anything else you'd like.

### Special Spooky Notice from PBS...

On Wednesday, October 19, at 9 pm PBS' "The American Experience" is presenting "Telegrams From the Dead," a documentary film about spiritualism in 19th century America. (The producer met with skeptics James Randi, Jamy Swiss, and Chip Denman during the planning of this film, but we still don't know what to expect!)

### Special Event at the Smithsonian...

Penn & Teller will be talking about anything they feel like in a special evening event on December 6. This is not an NCAS event, but we will try to provide NCAS members with registration information as soon as it is available. Check the NCAS Telephone Hotline or let your computer commune with ours... see numbers below.

### And Another Special Event for Halloween [with special thanks to Chris Norloff]

The ghosts at Point Lookout State Park, Maryland, have invited NCAS to a joint meeting on Saturday, October 29. Since they are often hard to see, Park Rangers will help locate the ghosts during a 40-minute tour and program. Some people claim to have recorded voices still haunting a land that pirates once roamed and Confederate soldiers later cursed while imprisoned there. (Low-quality recorders are best, we are warned. No problem here.) We intend to return the favor and invite the ghosts to join us for a great seafood dinner. Tour tickets are \$2; entrees at the nearby Evans Seafood Restaurant are \$12-\$20, or \$25 for all-you-can-eat.

Now here's the deal: We should meet at the Park at about 6:30 PM for the tour. (Point Lookout is about a 1"-hour drive from the Beltway, south on MD 5.) Because tickets are expected to go fast after they go on sale October 11, we need a headcount as soon as possible. Though forever skeptical, we'll trust you for the 2 bucks and pick up the tickets. Buy your dinner from the menu. Call the Hotline or the BBS now to reserve a ticket; let us know if you need, or can offer, a ride.

NCAS HOTLINE (301) 587-3827 (RECORDED MESSAGES)

NCAS ELECTRONIC BBS (703) 280-1446  
(2400 8N1 Press Return at Connect)