

Shadow of a Doubt - The Electronic Edition

National Capital Area Skeptics  
8006 Valley Street  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
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The Monthly Calendar of the National Capital Area Skeptics -  
January 1995

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FEATURE PRESENTATION - A MULTIMEDIA EVENT!!!!

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## EXPLODING PLANETS AND NON-EXPLODING UNIVERSES

Dr. Tom Van Flandern, Meta Research

People often tend toward excessive credulity or excessive skepticism in their thinking. The teaching of critical thinking to students would greatly aid in introducing a more scientific perspective into society at large. However, such courses are seldom taught. One of the chief reasons is that mainstream science does not itself use the precepts of the Scientific Method with full rigor. The apparent reason is that many favored paradigms would not survive such critical scrutiny. This point will be illustrated with two examples, both involving fundamental precepts in the field of astronomy. One is the exploded planet hypothesis, which could potentially replace a host of competing standard models for the origins of the small bodies in the solar system. The other is the big bang theory, the basis of the current paradigm in the field of cosmology. By strict application of the Scientific Method, this and many other fundamental paradigms in astronomy are surviving long past their time. This vested interest in currently popular paradigms gives astronomers in the present instances, and all scientists in the general case, a conflict of interest in teaching the strict application of the Scientific Method. As a direct result, we have a lack of critical thinking and the survival of excess credulity throughout society.

About our January speaker: Tom received his Ph.D. degree in Astronomy from Yale University in 1969. He spent 20 years at the US Naval Observatory, where he became the Chief of the Celestial Mechanics Branch. Tom has since formed a Washington D.C.-based organization, Meta Research, to foster research into ideas not otherwise supported solely because they conflict with mainstream theories in Astronomy. He is also a Research Associate at the University of Maryland. Tom's 1993 book, *Dark Matter, Missing Planets and New Comets* (North Atlantic Books) is critical of many standard models in astronomy, such as the Oort Cloud, the Dirty Snowball, and the big Bang theory.

Tom led the Eclipse Edge Expedition to view the Nov 3, 1994 total solar eclipse from northern Chile. He has been honored by a prize from the Gravity Research Foundation; served on the Council of American Astronomical Society's Division on Dynamical Astronomy; taught astronomy at the University of South Florida and at the Navy Department; been a consultant to NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab; and done several spots for public television's Project Universe series.

To be held at:  
2 p.m. Saturday, Jan 21  
Chevy Chase Library  
8005 Connecticut Ave, 1 mile inside the Beltway at Md Exit 33  
... 1/4 mile north of East-West Highway

Free and open to the public

Call the NCAS Skeptic Line at 301-587-3827 for further information

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## FUTURE EVENTS

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Coming  
on  
March 18

Dr. Robert Park will be presenting "Pigs Don't Have Wings: Scientists Who Fool Themselves". Dr. Park is a physicist and well known in the skeptic community for his What's New column for the American Physical Society (APS). He will be participating in an invited session at the upcoming March APS meeting titled "Alternative Science: Foolish, Fraudulent and Phobic" featuring (besides himself) James Randi and Hal Lewis. At the Chevy Chase Library, 2 p.m.

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Have you signed up for the February NCAS workshop, Why & Why Not: Science, Skepticism and Critical Thinking, A Workshop for Parents and Teachers? To be held in Front Royal, VA, on February 18-19, 1995. Registration forms are in the mail to NCAS members. For more information, call the skeptic telephone line at (301) 587-3827.

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Of interest to NCAS members:

21st Annual Meeting of the National Center for Homeopathy, April 7-10, 1995 at the Baltimore Marriott Inner Harbor Hotel, Baltimore MD. For more info contact the National Center for Homeopathy, 801 N. Fairfax St. Suite 306, Alexandria, VA 22314,

phone (703) 548-7790.

Conference on Personal Survival of Bodily Death, May 21-23, 1995  
at Cedar Crest College, Allentown, PA. For more info contact  
the Academy of Religion and Psychical Research, PO Box 614,  
Bloomfield, CT 06002-0614, phone (203) 242-4593.