



# Shadow of a Doubt

THE MONTHLY CALENDAR OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA SKEPTICS

October, 1998

## Soul Searching

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For countless centuries, the question of survival was relegated to the realm of philosophers and theologians. The scientific revolution at the end of the 19th century brought the hope that the power of the scientific method could be brought to bear on the greatest question of all ... and find an answer. Tied in closely with the rise of Spiritualism, scientific organizations such as the Society for Psychical Research rose to prominence with the expressed purpose of investigating communications with the dead. Individual scientists weighed and photographed dying animals and humans, performing outlandish experiments to establish the existence of the soul. Now, after a century of scientific investigation, we can sift through the evidence and perhaps establish whether science can prove survival, or whether it remains, as it has for thousands of years, in the realm of faith.

Mike Epstein is an Assistant Professor of Chemistry at Hood College in Frederick, Maryland and was formerly vice-president of NCAS. He has a long-time interest in pathological science issues and recently wrote an article for the Journal of Chemical Education on the topic. He also is an associate member of the Parapsychological Association and an academic member of the Academy of Religion and Psychical Research, which has strong ties to the contemporary spiritualist movement.

**Saturday, October 17, 1998, 2:00pm -- 3:30pm**  
**Montgomery County Library - Bethesda Branch**  
**7400 Arlington Road**  
**Bethesda, Maryland**

*Everyone Welcome -- Members and Non-members -- No admission charge*

**Call the NCAS Skeptic Line at 301-587-3827 for further info.**

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## HOW TO KEEP JUNK SCIENCE OUT OF THE COURTROOM

On November 14, the NCAS monthly meeting will feature a representative from the Maryland Judiciary Speakers Bureau on the topic of scientific expert testimony in courts of law.

## TECHNO-THRILLER: CLANCY FALLS VICTIM TO BAD INTELLIGENCE

**WARNING: If you are a Tom Clancy fan and haven't yet read "Rainbow Six," skip this item.** The hallmark of a Tom Clancy novel is the use of emerging high-tech devices by the good guys. In his latest novel, "Rainbow Six," ex-Navy SEAL Tom Clark wipes out a nest of terrorists using the DKL LifeGuard, which can spot people at 500 feet through concrete and steel by the electric impulses of their heart beats. Is this possible? No. The "electronic circuits" aren't even connected. But is it marketable? Very. The LA Police and the Department of Energy paid up to \$14,000 each for some number of these devices. Alas, in a double-blind test at Sandia Labs it did no better than chance. It is, in fact, a dowsing rod with buttons and lights. [From "What's New", September 25, 1998]

## THE POWER OF BELIEF

Tuesday, October 6, 1998 from 10-11 pm, EDT - Why do so many Americans consult astrologers, hunt for ghosts, fear extraterrestrials, try to recall past lives, and seek miracle cures? From the silliest superstitions to the strongest of faiths, belief in things for which we have no evidence can have a huge impact on our minds, bodies and wallets. Join ABC News John Stossel for an hour of remarkable claims and surprising explanations in "The Power of Belief." [CSICOP worked with ABC News in preparing this show.]

## **CALLING ALL SKEPTICS**

NCAS would like to contact other skeptics who may be interested in joining NCAS. Do you belong to any other group that may have members with similar ideals? This could be regional scientific clubs, astronomy groups, or any other such organization. Do they publish a newsletter where we could put a notice about NCAS? If you know of such groups please email us the information at [ncas@ncas.org](mailto:ncas@ncas.org) or send a letter to the NCAS address at the top of this calendar.

## **ARE YOU ONLINE?**

Do you have an internet account and are not part of the [ncas-share](mailto:ncas-share) email list? If you would like to be part of this NCAS email discussion group, send a message to [ncas@ncas.org](mailto:ncas@ncas.org). (Traffic is kept fairly light, so this won't flood your mailbox.)

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*Last Change: November 3, 1998*