



Shadow of a Doubt

THE MONTHLY CALENDAR OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA SKEPTICS

March, 2000

From Tabloids to Textbooks:

How Americans Learn About Science

Bruce A. Fuchs

Concern about the state of science education in the United State is, once again, very high. Dr. Fuchs will argue that the problem, with both adult Americans and students, is not one of interest but rather of how science is traditionally taught. He believes that while the economic, educational, and political obstacles to improving science literacy will be difficult to overcome it is essential that we do so. Dr. Fuchs plans to present data from a wide variety of sources to support his viewpoint and invite the participants to engage in an open exchange of ideas.

Dr. Bruce A. Fuchs -- an immunologist who did research on the interaction between the brain and the immune system-- is currently the Director of the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) Office of Science Education. Prior to coming to NIH, Dr. Fuchs was an active researcher and teacher at the Medical College of Virginia, with grant support from both the National Institute of Mental Health and the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Dr. Fuchs has organized and participated in numerous science education outreach efforts directed at students, teachers, and the public. He believes that scientists should play a more active role in communicating their research progress and findings with the community. Dr. Fuchs has organized numerous "Mini-Med School" and "Science in the Cinema" programs for the public and the Congress since his arrival in Washington.

Saturday, March 11, 2000, 2pm-3:30pm

Bethesda Public Library

7400 Arlington Road

Bethesda, Maryland

Everyone welcome - members and non-members

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

TRAINING PSYCHICS

According to the New York Times this morning [January 28], New York City's Human Resources Administration has been recruiting and training welfare recipients to work as telephone psychics. The minimum starting salary is \$10 per hour plus bonuses, and you can work at home. [From Bob Park's "What's New" column. NYC dropped that program that same day once the word got out what they were doing.]

MORE ALIENS IN NASA

Videotapes from space shuttle missions have persuaded some to claim that NASA astronauts have encountered alien visitors. On the space shuttle mission STS-48 in September 1991, a TV onboard Discovery spotted moving white dots suddenly changing direction when a flash of light appeared. Although nearby debris frequently appears on shuttle videos, the combination of flares, streaks and changing directions grabbed imaginations. Comments from James Oberg with more information on the topic are from his commentary on the ABC news web site or his own web site at:

<http://www.abcnews.go.com/sections/science/DailyNews/ufo990217.html>

<http://www.jamesoberg.com>

TEXAS A&M RESEARCHERS FORM PET-CLONING COMPANY.

It began when the anonymous owner of an aging border collie named Missy gave A&M \$2.3M to clone her. A&M hasn't come up with Missy II yet, but why turn away hoards of other deep-pocket owners wanting pets copied? So the A&M researchers have formed (groan) Genetic Savings and Clone. [From Bob Park's "What's New" - February 18, 2000.]

CONFERENCE ON INTELLIGENT DESIGN--A CRITICAL APPRAISAL

"Intelligent design" is the current term for "creationism" as an attempt to make it less religious and more scientific sounding. All we have so far is the date (June 22-24, 2000) and the location (Concordia University, Wisconsin). We'll try and get more information by the time of the next "Shadow".

UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE CENTER FOR INQUIRY--INTERNATIONAL

The Center for Inquiry--International, 1015 Sweet Home Rd. Amherst, NY 14226. To order tickets, call 716-636-1425:

Dr. Robert Park, Professor of Physics, University of Maryland, College Park, Director of the American Physical Society, Washington D.C. -- 8PM Monday, March 27 \$5 admission. Parks, author of the forthcoming book Voodoo Science, speaks on the explosion of junk science in courtrooms, the media, and American life.

Dave Thomas, Consulting Editor, Skeptical Inquirer -- 8PM Saturday, April 15 \$5 admission. The Albuquerque-based physicist has published on many skeptical topics. Most recently in the Nov/Dec. 1997 issue of Skeptical Inquirer, Thomas showed that mathematical techniques used to dredge "secret messages" from scripture in The Bible Code can elicit similar messages from any random text. Dave will share an overview of his latest skeptical inquiries.