



# Shadow of a Doubt

THE MONTHLY CALENDAR OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA SKEPTICS

May, 2000

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## VOODOO SCIENCE

**Bob Park**

**Professor of Physics**

**University of Maryland, College Park**

A best-selling health guru insists that his brand of spiritual healing is firmly grounded in quantum theory; half the population believes Earth is being visited by space aliens who have mastered faster-than-light travel; and educated people are wearing magnets in their shoes to draw energy from the Earth. Did we set the public up for this? In our eagerness to share speculative new ideas at the frontier of science, have we conveyed the message that the universe is so strange that anything is possible? What can we tell people that will help them judge which claims are science and which are voodoo?

Saturday, May 20, 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.

## MORE ON VODOO SCIENCE

The May NCAS talk is by Bob Park. For more on the topic, see the May 15 Forbes magazine, which contains an article adapted from Dr. Robert L. Park's new book Voodoo Science. It is also on the web: <http://www.forbes.com/forbes/00/0515/6511128a.htm>

## MATH AND THE NEWS

Old-time NCAS members have heard our own Chip Denman speak on the use and misuse of statistics in critical thinking. If such topics interest you, there are two web sites you should visit:

- John Paulos, who wrote the excellent book Innumeracy, has a monthly web column: <http://abcnews.go.com/sections/science/WhosCounting/whoscounting.html>  
The May column discusses why "top 10" lists change so often, even if the population surveyed doesn't (e.g., why are the top 50 beautiful celebrities this year not even on the list last year)
- The Statistical Assessment Service publishes a monthly newsletter that objectively looks at the use and misuse of numbers in newspapers and TV. The newsletter is available online at <http://www.stats.org>.

## **HOW TO RAISE A SKEPTIC**

If you attended the NCAS Weekend two years ago, NCAS member Stephanie Hall conducted a survey on the beliefs of those present. This started her on a quest to study this further. A preliminary version of her research is in IMPROMPTU JOURNAL ISSUE 4: MARCH, 2000, and can be found at the web site:

<http://www.temple.edu/isllc/newfolk/skeptics.html>.

## **RANDI BACK ON THE RADIO**

Professional skeptic and friend of NCAS, James Randi, now has his own weekly radio show at 7pm on Saturdays. In South Florida it is on WINZ/Supertalk 940 (AM), and it can be heard on the Internet as well at <http://www.supertalk940.com>. (Except for the following dates: May 20th, July 1st, and September 9th).