

# National Capital Area Skeptics Public Lecture Series

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## NCAS Board Member Jim Giglio Dead Cats in the Science Classroom

Every science teacher has been through it. An enthusiastic student drags an oddball pseudoscientific notion through the classroom door like some kind of dead cat, and wants to take up class time with it. The notions are diverse: ancient astronauts who built the pyramids; the carburetor that lets an automobile run on water; the gadget that makes electricity out of nothing so you can disconnect your house from the power company; the TV star who can talk to the dead; the way NASA faked the Apollo landings; the list goes on and on. Some come from the press, others from the Internet, still more from TV and other media.

The number of odd ideas that are "out there" is truly staggering, and unfortunately it's growing. These notions, like over-ripe deceased felines, are more than a bit smelly and the teacher might want to shove them right back out the door and get on with the planned lesson. But the student is enthusiastic and curious; this can be a "teachable moment," and teachers don't see nearly enough of them. The problem for the teacher is to make productive use of that moment without letting important instructional plans get derailed.

Our January speaker, Jim Giglio, thinks it CAN be done.

Jim is an NCAS board member and former high school science teacher who has seen his share of pseudoscience intrude into the classroom. In this program, he will describe some examples of the "dead cats" that are out there now, using them to illustrate general strategies teachers may find useful in dealing with a wide range of pseudoscientific classroom intruders.

**Saturday January 11, 2-4pm**  
**B-CC Services Center**  
**4805 Edgemoor Lane**  
**Bethesda, Maryland**

The **Bethesda-Chevy Chase Services Center** is located at 4805 Edgemoor Lane in downtown Bethesda, across the street from the Bethesda Metro station. The Center is located in the two-story County office building on the plaza level of the Metropolitan complex, above a County parking garage. Free parking is available in the garage on weekends.



### **National Capital Area Skeptics Public Lecture Series**

**FREE admission - Everyone welcome - members and non-members**

For more information call the 24-hour NCAS Skeptic Line recording at (301) 587-3827

e-mail: [ncas@ncas.org](mailto:ncas@ncas.org)

[www.ncas.org](http://www.ncas.org)



# Shadow of a Doubt

THE MONTHLY CALENDAR OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA SKEPTICS

JANUARY 2003

## Penn and Teller go after Aliens on TV

On January 24 at 11:00 PM SHOWTIME will present the controversial new series PENN & TELLER: BULLSHIT! Master showmen Penn & Teller promise an aggressive, irreverent expose of taboo topics using the duo's trademark humor, knowledge of carnival tricks and con-artistry, as well as hidden cameras and blatant confrontation. Using undercover operatives, scrupulous research and a healthy dose of skepticism, the Vegas headliners and world-famous magicians blow the lid off popular notions about alien abductions, Ouija boards and end of the world predictions. They expose the bogus science behind such widely accepted canards as creationism, the purity of bottled water, global warming, miracle-workers and religious cults. Check out the Preview at:

[http://www.sho.com/screeningroom/play\\_window.cfm?include=ptbs&filename=/ptbs/ptbs\\_trailer&archive=no](http://www.sho.com/screeningroom/play_window.cfm?include=ptbs&filename=/ptbs/ptbs_trailer&archive=no)  
(From PRNewswire).

## Licensing of psychics

The future looked cloudy for dozens of fortune-tellers and psychics in San Francisco on Dec. 19 after legislation was proposed to require them to obtain permits, post their rates and stop tricking their clients. Under the law, the first of its kind for a major U.S. city, fortune-tellers would no longer be allowed to perform such classic curse removals as the knot in the thread, the blood in the glass, or the hair in the grapefruit. (SFGate.com)

## Divine image on street sign

A "No Parking" sign posted to keep the street in front of a South Alpine, TX home clear of unwelcome vehicles has done just the opposite, with many local residents claiming to see the face of Jesus Christ in dark patterning on the sign. Pilgrims and curiosity seekers make the trip to the home nightly to discern the "image" in the sign.



## Jesus inscription a fake

The biblical archaeological world has been excited by the recent discovery of an ossuary (burial box) that says "Jacob, son of Joseph, brother of Joshua" that seems to provide proof of Jesus. (James and Jesus are Latin renditions of the Hebrew Jacob and Joshua.) Rochelle Altman, co-coordinator of IOUDAIOS-L, a virtual community of scholars engaged in on-line discussion of Judaism in the Greco-Roman world, claims the bone-box is original; the first inscription, which is in Aramaic, "Jacob son of Joseph," is authentic. The second half of the inscription, "brother of Jesus," is a poorly executed fake and a later addition. She adds, "The inscription on the 'James' ossuary has been gone over by a professional carver; the words are excised (not incised). Second, it was written by two different people. Part 2 has the characteristics of a later addition [3 centuries later] by someone attempting to imitate an unfamiliar script and write in an unfamiliar language."

## Time to renew?

Check your mailing label – **this means you**. If the renewal date has passed, please send \$30 (for 1 person) or \$40 (for 2 member households) for a one-year renewal to the NCAS address below. Multi-year discounts are available – avoid the annual hassle of renewing by signing up for 2, 5 or lifetime memberships. (See rates on website.)



**National Capital Area Skeptics**  
P.O. Box 8428  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20907

## NCAS Information:

Telephone: 301-587-3827

Email: [ncas@ncas.org](mailto:ncas@ncas.org)

Skeptical Eye submission: [S\\_Eye@ncas.org](mailto:S_Eye@ncas.org)

<http://www.ncas.org/>