

The Great Moon Hoax of 1835, a New Take



Richard Dengrove

In 1835, the *New York Sun* announced that Sir John Herschel, the greatest astronomer in the world, claimed to see intelligent life on the Moon. However, while most of us have heard of the Hoax, popular accounts leave the most important questions unanswered. Who was the colorful figure who created the Great Moon Hoax? What was the milieu in which it could be published? Why did people believe the hoax? Also important is how they believed it. This talk hopes to answer these questions.

Richard Dengrove is a librarian in the Agriculture Department and a member of NCAS. Since 1984, he has been active in amateur writing, both as part of clubs (amateur press associations) and in personal publications, like his JOMP, JR (A science-fiction fanzine). Also, he has published in others' publications, like Guy Lillian's *Challenger*; and, every once in a long while, ones that paid. In recent years, he has researched any topic that he took a fancy to. The subjects have ranged from the sublime to the ridiculous; from explorers, the occult and

the belief in extraterrestrials to the Newton apple tree and the propeller beanie. In the NCAS newsletter, the *Skeptical Eye*, he has published articles on the early skeptic Reginald Scot (1991-92 and 2000), on manuals of magic and success books (1993), on Gerald Gardner who founded Wicca (1993-94), on Sir Isaac Newton and magic (1999), on 17th Century parodies of astrologers (2000), on the pre-Marlowe Faust (2001), on early believers in extraterrestrials (2002, 2004), and on the sources of the grey alien (2004).

2 - 4 pm, Saturday
December 10, 2005

Montgomery County Library
Bethesda Branch
7400 Arlington Road
Bethesda, Maryland
(A short walk from the Bethesda Metro station)



National Capital Area Skeptics Public Lecture Series

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(301) 587-3827
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Shadow of a Doubt

THE MONTHLY CALENDAR OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA SKEPTICS

DECEMBER 2005

NCAS Board Notes

- **Intelligent Design:** As members of our NCAS-SHARE email list already know, on November 9, the NCAS president, together with some of the Board and other members, attended on short notice a public showing at the Howard County Central Library in Columbia, MD, of the Intelligent Design promotional video “Unlocking the Mysteries of Life,” by the Columbia Presbyterian Church. During discussion after the video, we spoke out responsibly and effectively about the fallacies of ID, especially that it is not science, and should not be taught in public science classes. You can get a copy of the ID bibliography that NCAS hurriedly compiled and handed out that night at www.ncas.org/pdf/id-bibliography.pdf
- Please advise NCAS quickly of any **Intelligent Design**-related events in the local area.
- The *Skeptical Eye* newsletter has been mailed.
- The **NCAS Board met on November 12**, after the monthly NCAS public forum at the Bethesda Library. Some NCAS members also attended. We discussed suggestions for member involvement projects, in anticipation of the results of the *NCAS Member Questionnaire*.
- We are looking for **members who can help post NCAS general and monthly program announcements** in local libraries and on cable TV calendar channels, *etc.*

- We **welcome your comments** and assistance any time to ncas@ncas.org or 301-587-3827
- There will be **no NCAS Board meeting in December.** ☹

James Randi in Las Vegas

The Amaz!ng Meeting 4: “Science in Politics and the Politics of Science”

James “The Amazing” Randi invites you to exciting and decadent Las Vegas, January 26 to 29, 2006, at the Stardust Resort and Casino on The Strip, as The James Randi Educational Foundation hosts “The Amaz!ng Meeting 4.” The theme this time: “Science In Politics & the Politics of Science.” A varied list of exciting speakers and the usual “extra” attractions will entertain, edify, and educate you: James “The Amazing” Randi, Murray Gell-Mann, Nadine Strossen, the Mythbusters, Penn & Teller, Mac King, **our own Jamy Ian Swiss and Chip Denman**, Phil Plait, Julia Sweeney, Michael Shermer, and many others. Standard registration is \$375. Details at 954-467-1112 or <http://www.tam4.com/letter.htm> ☹

Time to Renew!

Check your mailing label. If the renewal date has passed, please send to the NCAS address below \$30 (for 1 person) or \$40 (for 2-member households) for a 1-year renewal, or you will be dropped as a member. ☹



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