

Positively Skeptical: A Way of Knowing

Prof. Marvin Zelkowitz

Skepticism, a concept from the ancient Greeks over 2000 years ago, had its modern rebirth in the mid-20th century. But what is it? Are skeptics, as often portrayed, only a bunch of cynics and curmudgeons eager to rain on everyone's parade? Or is there a more important aspect to being a skeptic? Why is it in your own self-interest to be a skeptic?

Do you believe in global warming? Alternative medicine? Alien abduction? Natural remedies? UFOs? Reincarnation? Spirits? Evolution? Conspiracy theories? Dowsing? To a skeptic, the topic doesn't matter. What is important is the word "believe" at the beginning of the list. Why should you believe any of these concepts? What is the evidence and is it credible? This is the foundation upon which modern skepticism relies.

With the current controversy between Intelligent Design and Evolution and the celebration of Charles Darwin's birthday (Darwin Day – February 12), now is an appropriate time to recognize the role that skepticism should play in our daily lives. In this lecture, the roots of skepticism from the early Greeks, through the Renaissance, up to the present day, will be explored. We will mention current skeptical organizations and show how NCAS fits into this mostly grass-roots structure.

Marvin Zelkowitz is a professor of Computer Science at the University of Maryland in College Park. He has been a member of NCAS for 14 years, was a past president of the organization, and is now on the Board of Directors. His research interests are in the evaluation of new technologies used by the computer industry to produce software. He has been applying skepticism professionally within the academic research community for the past 35 years, validating claims made about those new technologies.

2 - 4 pm, Saturday
February 11, 2006

LOCATION (not our usual venue):
West End Neighborhood Library

1101 24th Street, N.W.
at L Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037
Two short blocks north of Washington Circle.

Parking: Parking is available behind the library. Enter from L Street, N.W.

Nearest Metro Stop: Foggy Bottom station on the Blue/Orange lines.



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
www.ncas.org



Shadow of a Doubt

THE MONTHLY CALENDAR OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA SKEPTICS

FEBRUARY 2006

Board Notes

Members are encouraged to attend and participate in NCAS Board meetings, which will now be held immediately after each monthly NCAS public lecture.

- More than 80 people attended the January 2006 NCAS lecture on Intelligent Design by Rob Boston.
- We adopted a revisable timeline to help Board members coordinate the more than 25 tasks that we all do each month to plan, publicize, and present the NCAS talks.
- We decided to buy an Optoma EP716 video projector for monthly NCAS talks, etc.
- Our introductory bibliography on Intelligent Design is at <http://ncas.org/pdf/id-bibliography.pdf> (under Resources at www.ncas.org).
- We set November, the birth month of NCAS's co-founder and mentor, the late Phil Klass, for a 2006 first annual special program to honor his service in journalism and skepticism.
- We need members to augment our growing publicity efforts by posting NCAS announcements in local libraries, local bulletin boards, etc.
- Please contact the NCAS Board any time by email to ncas@ncas.org or at 301-587-3827. ☞

True Life Story of Adventure, Debunking and Geology!

Robert Wilson discusses his new book, *The Explorer King: Adventure, Science and the Great*

Diamond Hoax, *Clarence King in the Old West*, in a FREE, open-to-the-public event at the Library of Congress.

Library of Congress

February 8, 2006, 12:00 noon - 1:00 pm

West Dining Room, 6th floor, James Madison building, 101 Independence Avenue, SE, Washington, DC ☞

Call for Volunteers to Judge Regional Science Fairs!

NCAS needs volunteers to judge science fairs in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. The following dates and locations have already been announced:

- *March 2-3, 2006*
Clarksville Montgomery County, Austin Peay Campus
- *March 11, 2006*
Ann Arundel County, South River High School
- *March 18, 2006*
Fairfax County, Robinson Secondary School
Prince William County, Grace Metz School

We have not yet found the dates for the District of Columbia, Prince George's County, and Frederick County Science Fairs, but these fairs will probably fall in the March-April time frame.

Those interested please contact Walter F. Rowe, wfrowe@gwu.edu, 703-494-2916. ☞



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