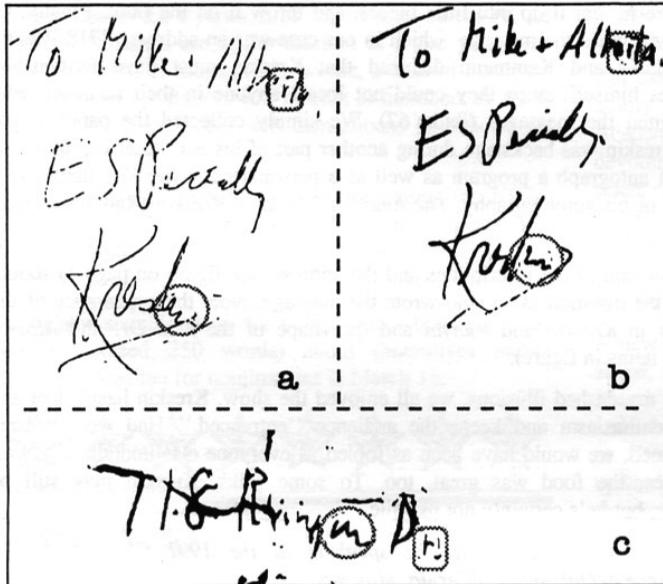




National Capital Area SKEPTICAL EYE

Winter 1990-91

Vol. 5, No. 1



Circled elements reveal similarities in book and program inscriptions by Kreskin (a and b) and secret message address (c).

Skeptics Visit the Not-So-Amazing World of Kreskin

By Mike Epstein

I hate to admit it, but Kreskin was responsible for my interest in the paranormal. As a youngster, I remember watching him on the "Tonight" show and feeling sure that his psychic abilities were real. It was shocking then, some twenty years later, to read in *The Psychology of the Psychic* (D. Marks and R. Kammann, Prometheus Books, 1980) how his "psychic abilities" were taken apart, bit by bit, by the authors.

But last August "fate" took a hand, and four of us (three skeptics and a fellow traveler) had the opportunity to view the Amazing One at the Hayloft Dinner Theater in Manassas, Va. We arrived with a skeptical attitude, but also with a hope, at least on my part, that he wouldn't totally dash my childhood illusions.

Unfortunately, he did. I had already read the script to his act (*ibid.*, 59-72), which has apparently not changed significantly in a decade. I

Ruminations of a Skeptical Physician

By Alfred Baer, MD

Medicine is a science. Science only accepts facts--not opinions, intuitions, traditional beliefs, or superstitions. Facts are arrived at by rigorous experiments or statistical analysis of a large number of cases. They are always subject to revision as a result of better evidence.

The practice of medicine is applied science. Its success hinges on the practitioner's familiarity with the scientific facts and their appropriate application. Every biological phenomenon has a range of variability, often wide, sometimes narrow. Therefore, a statistical dimension enters into each diagnostic test and every healing act. There is no 100 percent predictability of outcome, and only faith healers and their ilk will guarantee results. They do well with the large number of people who suffer from aches and pains that are transient and improve with time regardless of treatment. Many of these individuals do not feel well because they are unhappy, depressed, or simply lonely.

Every patient has a preconceived notion, secret or articulated, of what may be wrong. These notions often have their roots in cultural superstitions which are not always appreciated by physicians of other origins. This concern is of overriding importance with people from less developed societies and explains the success of "witch doctors" who understand these patients' psyches. Faith healers, naturopaths, and so forth play the same role in our society.

Historically speaking, medicine was not much more than hand-holding until the end of the last century, when specific medications and, later, antibiotics made their appearance. For want of anything better, cruel and often lethal forms of therapy were used, such as blood-letting to the point of exsanguination (which killed George

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- encourages critical and scientific thinking
- serves as an information resource on extraordinary claims
- provides extraordinary evidence that skeptics are cool

Signed articles represent the opinions of their authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of NCAS. Unsigned articles are the responsibility of the NCAS Newsletter Committee. Only articles clearly marked as such represent positions of the NCAS Board of Directors.

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Kreskin, from page 1

won't go into details, but we were able to foretell his predictions (i.e., the "circle-triangle" and "37"), and we even observed him secretly pocketing messages written by the audience. As the act continued, we decided to make our evening more interesting by solving directly one of Kreskin's riddles which Marks and Kammann had been able to solve only indirectly. Kreskin collects messages from the audience written on small pieces of paper, which he places on his writing board. He then has someone pick one of the messages, memorize it, tear it up into little pieces, and throw it on the floor. Finally, he correctly divines the message, which in our case was an address, "718 Runyin Dr." Marks and Kammann deduced that Kreskin must have written the messages himself, since they could not locate anyone in their audience who had written the messages (ibid., 67). We simply collected the paper scraps when Kreskin was backstage during another part of his act. After the show we had him autograph a program as well as a personal copy (no less than a first edition) of his autobiography, *The Amazing World of Kreskin* (Random House, 1973).

A comparison of the inscriptions and the address (see figure on page 1) should answer the question as to who wrote the message. Note the appearance of the word *in* in *Kreskin* and *Runyin* and the shape of the *r* in *Dr.* and *Alberta* (circled items in figure).

Despite my dashed illusions, we all enjoyed the show. Kreskin hasn't lost any of his enthusiasm and keeps the audience "entranced." Had we not been forewarned, we would have been as fooled as everyone else undoubtedly was. And, yes, the food was great, too. To some folks, Kreskin may still be amazing, but he's certainly not psychic.

Editor's note: Kreskin will be speaking at the 1991 CSICOP Annual Conference in Oakland, California, May 3-5. □

NCAS Predicts for 1991...Claims 6 out of 7 Accurate!

① James Randi will confess, "I am Elvis!"

② January 27 "Hypnosis and Past Lives," Seán O'Neil. 12:30 pm at Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library.

③ February NCAS Business and SIG Reorganization Meeting.

Also in '91...

④ NCAS Movie Nights

⑤ How the Media Report the Unusual

⑥ 1st Annual NCAS UFO Fly-Off and Summer Picnic

⑦ "Satanic Panic" -- skeptical look at devil cults

And much more...Call the Skeptic's Line at 301-587-3827 for the latest information.

"It is wrong to think of science as a mechanical record of facts, and it is wrong to think of the arts as remote and private fancies. What makes each human, what makes them universal, is the stamp of the creative mind."

---J. Bronowski

NCAS Skeptical Eye/Winter 1990-91



A Political Career Is in Your Stars....

Nominate yourself or another member to run for the Board of Directors.

As specified in the Bylaws, 8 of the 16 seats on the NCAS Board of Directors are up for election to a two year term. Over the course of the next few weeks, a slate of nominees will be drawn up. Ballots will be sent to members in April. The newly elected Board will then choose its officers for the coming year.

Please call or write concerning your nomination to: NCAS Election Committee, 8006 Valley Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910, 301-587-3827.

Candidates should submit for publication a brief statement (not to exceed 250 words) about themselves and/or platform. Deadline for nominations is March 15.



Big Mac Attack?

Mysterious lights swooped and circled in the northern Virginia sky on the night of Sunday, November 11, 1990, prompting numerous calls to police from worried citizens. Observers described the lights as "blob-shaped" and moving "rapidly along a circular track"; the lights then sped to the center of the circle, where they merged into a large bright spot.

The next morning, the *Washington Post* ran a story under the headline: "Martians Swoop in for a Burger and Fries." *Post* staff writer Martin Weil revealed that these strange phenomena did indeed have a controlling intelligence behind them: local McDonald's restaurants were using high-powered searchlights as part of a fast-food promotion. And as luck would have it, northern Virginia's sky that night was largely covered by altocumulus clouds at elevations of 8500 to 10,000 feet, which reflected the searchlights and caused the "sightings." □

MOVING?

Don't leave NCAS behind! Send the mailing label from this issue of the *NCAS Skeptical Eye*, plus your new address to: Grace Denman, 8006 Valley Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

President's Column

Magical Thinking in the Magic Kingdom

By Chip Denman

Recently I visited a land of magical thinking more consistent in vision than Shirley MacLaine's astral plane. A short vacation in Disney World in Orlando, Florida was a great way to recharge my sense of the fantastic.

But the Disney organization has always prided itself on its ability to promote science as well as fantasy, winning Academy Awards for documentaries on wildlife and even devoting the EPCOT theme park to the appreciation of science, technology, and the cultures of the world. So while Sorcerer's Apprentice wands and ghosts in the Haunted Mansion are great fun, I was surprised and disturbed to find goofy--as opposed to Goofy--stuff for sale in a Disney shop.

A new addition to the Disney experience is a collection of shops, restaurants and night clubs known as "Pleasure Island." One evening we discovered a shop selling quartz and other pretty rocks (available here in DC at the Museum of Natural History gift shop for less than a buck) for upwards of \$15. Tourist shop prices aside, I cringed to hear the proprietress earnestly explaining the mystic powers and health benefits associated with her rocks.

Shaking our heads, we wandered out and encountered a smiling Disney representative who asked for our opinions of the Pleasure Island. It felt very good to be able to register our concerns with a mouse-eared official.

But our real satisfaction came when we visited their Comedy Warehouse, a club featuring a troupe of improvisation actors. A regular feature of the show is a charades-like bit where one actor tries to guess a phrase that the rest of the cast is acting out. When they called to the audience to come up with an unusual phrase or saying, I jumped up quickly. And so I watched with great delight for the next 15 minutes while a capacity house of over 300 hooted and hollered as the Disney players acted out "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence!"

I felt much better then.

Rarely do any of us have such a cathartic opportunity to express a skeptical opinion. In fact, such a show really makes little impact. But all of us can have an impact in less showy ways whenever we encounter goofy stuff. We can all register complaints with the right officials. The letter we wrote after the vacation will be read by someone. If enough skeptics speak up, the changes will happen. The

continued on page 12

A Skeptic's Response

This is an occasional feature of the *Skeptical Eye* designed to provide skeptics with brief, logical answers to questions that may arise in conversation. Has someone--a friend, a coworker, or a family member--ever raised a question of this sort that you found yourself hard pressed to answer? If so, send the question to this column.

Hypnosis and Past Lives

By Seán O'Neill

In the popular media, we often read about people recalling past lives while under hypnosis. These accounts are frequently dramatic ones that place the hypnotized individual at exciting historical events. What is the factual basis of such accounts?

Reputable hypnotists and hypnotherapists have long worked to elevate hypnosis beyond its circus side-show associations. Today, having dealt with the view that hypnosis is primarily useful for making people think they're chickens in stage shows and having them make fools of themselves in parlor performances, we are confronted with beliefs that hypnosis is a gateway to reincarnation or an ominous way of letting Satan take over one's mind. This is cause for some degree of alarm within the profession.

Examining hypnosis and past-life regression involves answering two questions. The first, of course, deals with whether there is any reason to believe that past lives are a fact; we must presuppose the existence of the destination before we can ask whether hypnosis is an effective vehicle for the journey. Most people do not routinely tune into past lives, so it seems plausible that some arcane technique is needed to have this experience. A claim that past lives could be visited by standing on one's head seems less likely, but really is every bit as probable as regression through hypnosis.

There is disagreement today about the exact nature of the trance state. Some researchers believe that it represents an altered state of consciousness, something utterly different from being either asleep or awake. Some subscribe to the existence of the unconscious mind as an actuality, and not a hypothetical construct, which implies that we can only access this powerful force in oblique ways, for example, through dreams and hypnotic induction. Still other scientists think that there is strong evidence that hypnosis represents a state of relaxation and focused attention, and not a state

apart from the usual potential of the unconsciousness that we all experience when we are tension free and pleasantly alert. In none of these views is there a belief that hypnosis represents more than the normal functioning of the human mind or that it constitutes some paranormal conduit to other realities. Hypnosis is a built-in ability which can be improved with practice, rather like running a foot race: anyone can do it, anyone can improve at it, and some people seem better at it than others. There is evidence that hypnosis provides increased access to memories, imagination, and suggestions that are in accord with the wishes of the individual (contrary to widespread belief, no one

violates his or her values or desires when hypnotized). Typically, hypnotized subjects doubt that they have really been in hypnosis; the expectation that they will lose control of their minds or "blank out" is not fulfilled.

In saying that hypnosis enhances memory, it is important to note that the trance also increases *confabulation*, or the tendency to unknowingly generate imaginative material to fill in gaps in the recollection. Thus, not all memories retrieved represent actual occurrences. Instead, they may reflect fantasy, interwoven with real events. This phenomenon has necessitated caution in hypnotizing witnesses in criminal investigations, and provides a means of understanding the amazing historical detail reported in cases of past-life regression with

people who are evidently not intentionally lying.

Hypnosis is indeed a key to the storehouse of the mind, but at this point its use seems limited to those items stored or imagined in this lifetime.

Seán O'Neill is a psychotherapist and registered hypnotherapist who has been using hypnosis in his private practice since 1981. In 1988 he published an article on this topic in the *Journal of Hypnotherapy*. He will discuss hypnosis further at the Tysons-Pimmett Regional Library on Sunday, January 27 at 12:30 pm.

For further reading on hypnosis, check out the reading list on page 12.---Editor □



Totally Unscientific NCAS Membership Survey

RETURN survey to: NCAS, 8006 Valley St., Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Please take a moment to fill out and return this survey as soon as possible. We'd like to hear your views about the direction of NCAS, and the kinds of programs, activities, and volunteer opportunities that interest you. We encourage long, thoughtful answers (attach as many pages as needed), but short ones are just fine.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Day Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

FAX: _____

Electronic Mail (Network/Address): _____

Occupation: _____

1) When and why did you join NCAS?

2) How has your experience as a member so far compared with your expectations when you joined?

3) Please list the skeptical issues that most interest you, indicating your current level of experience in each topic: beginner, well informed, expert.

4) How many NCAS public programs have you been able to attend in the past year?

Unscientific Survey

5) What kinds of public programs should NCAS present in the future?

6) Please list names of possible speakers for these programs.

7) Please give your comments, positive or critical, on the public programs offered so far by NCAS (whether or not you attended each one).

8) Please describe what you see to be the strengths and weaknesses of the NCAS newsletter, *The Skeptical Eye*. What kinds of material would you like to see in future issues?

9) Should NCAS host any purely social activities for members and their guests?

Unscientific Survey

10) How can NCAS best support members' study, discussion, and involvement in skeptical issues? NCAS had originally intended to set up "special interest groups" (SIGs) to look into key issues, such as UFOs, creationism, astrology, etc. But the first SIGs discovered that it was hard to find a chairperson, a regular meeting place, and a core of members willing to attend monthly group meetings. What kind of group do you think would work best: SIGs, informal discussion groups, one-time seminars, or another type of group?

11) NCAS is planning several new projects that need volunteers. Which of the following projects might you be interested in volunteering for? (Please check all that apply.)

- Writing newsletter articles _____
- News Watch (newspaper clipping, video and audio program recording) _____
- NCAS audio and video programs _____
- Organizing NCAS public programs, meetings, and conferences _____
- Other (please list): _____

12) Do you have special skills or resources that might assist NCAS in its programs and daily operations? (Please check all that apply.)

- Clerical and computer skills _____
- Computer equipment _____
- Language skills, including Braille and American Sign Language _____
- Art and music skills _____
- Print publishing experience/capability _____
- Audio/video production and duplication experience/capability _____
- Access to special libraries, archives, databases _____
- Other skills and resources (please list): _____

13) Are there any other comments you wish to add? Remember, NCAS welcomes your letters.

staple

place
stamp
here

NCAS Unscientific Survey
8006 Valley Street
Silver Spring, MD 20910

fold



NCAS Team Airs Skeptical Views on Radio Call-in Show

By Lys Ann Shore

Popular and respected talk-show host Mike Cuthbert, formerly of Washington radio station WAMU, will be missed by local skeptics. In the months preceding his October departure for a new job with a Boston station, Cuthbert built a cordial rapport with NCAS. Chip Denman and Jamy Ian Swiss were guests on Cuthbert's evening call-in show on July 27 and again in September during the station's fall fund-raising appeal.

Both times, Cuthbert followed his usual format, discussing issues with his guests for the first part of the hour before inviting calls from listeners. In the July show, the discussion ranged from faith healing and the challenges offered to psychics by NCAS and by James "the Amazing" Randi to questions of the nature of belief and the scientific method.

The two NCAS spokesmen operated as an experienced team: Chip, a statistician, fielded scientific and organizational questions, while Jamy, a professional magician, handled matters of debunking. The tone of the show was lighthearted, but several shrewd questions were posed and discussed.

Cuthbert related an amusing anecdote about an experience of his own, when he fabricated a cold reading, which to his surprise turned out to be quite accurate. How could this be explained, he wanted to know. Chip responded, "The universe is large enough, and there are enough people out there making guesses and dreaming dreams, that lots of unlikely things are bound to happen."

Several callers brought up the question of whether scientific categories of discussion are simply inappropriate to claims of psychic phenomena. One caller, a psychologist, lamented the show's "distressing scientism," maintaining that "science is a limited view on limited phenomena in the world." He told Cuthbert, "I think that you and your guests are not truly open to the potential existence" of the phenomena examined by parapsychologists. In return, Cuthbert brought the discussion around to the "distressing anti-scientism" that is so prevalent in the United States today.

Another caller said, "I have respect for your guests, because they're saying that to judge something openly and to question it is not a bad thing, and I hear people getting upset with that." She went on to point out that, even if fraudulent, psychic claims do influence people, making them deeply uncomfortable, particularly if a "psychic" reveals information that a person thinks is private.

Cuthbert himself came out strongly against the prevalence of "psychics" on radio, calling them "the great examples

of talk-radio programs by the callers rather than by the listeners," since the only people interested in such programs are the callers who are talking, and hearing, about themselves, while the rest of the listening audience yawns and tunes out.

In conclusion, Cuthbert said it seems to him that skeptics "band together to prevent the fatigue that comes from fighting through all this stuff as individuals...because at this late stage in the development of humankind, we can't give up and turn to the astrology page in the newspaper to tell us what's going to happen." Or as Jamy put it, "The price of fact and truth and accuracy is eternal vigilance."

The final hour of the July 27 program, devoted to "open phones," showed the interest that Chip and Jamy's segment had aroused, as many callers phoned in to pursue topics from the earlier discussion. This interest led Cuthbert to invite the pair back in September. Soon after, Cuthbert himself left for Boston. New England skeptics, take note--you've got a live one! □

Other Cool Stuff...

There are many talks and other events around Washington that may be of interest to skeptical thinkers. If you hear of future events with sufficient lead time (at least two months, preferably three), please send word to the editor of this newsletter, at the NCAS address: 8006 Valley St., Silver Spring, MD 20910. Remember to include all essential information, including a contact name or telephone number.

The following will be taking place at the University of Maryland at College Park:

Physics Is Phun on-going free public lecture series sponsored by the University of Maryland Physics Department. Doors open 7:00 pm, Program 7:30-8:45. Physics Dept. Lecture Halls. Phone (301) 405-5994.

• "Going in Circles with Physics" Thursday March 21, Friday March 22, and Saturday March 23. The physics of rotation, including tops and other toys.

• "The Physics IQ Test" Thursday May 9, Friday May 10, and Saturday May 11. A collection of intriguing physics conundrums for which the assembled throngs have the opportunity to predict the results.

"Evolution of Human Behavior" Richard Dawkins, Dept. of Zoology, Oxford University. March 6, 3:30 pm. Art/Sociology Auditorium (2203). Phone (301) 405-4258.

"Evolution of Darwinian Thought" Philip Kitcher, Dept. of Philosophy, University of California, San Diego. April 4, 3:30 pm. Art/Sociology Auditorium (2203). Phone (301) 405-4258.

Also in Washington...American Association for the Advancement of Science Annual Meeting, February 15-19. Call AAAS at (202)326-6640. □

A Look at Our Scientific Future: *Judging a Science Fair for NCAS*

By Mike Epstein

I've always felt that judging a science fair gives one a feeling for the status of education in science—a matter of serious concern today. It also provides an opportunity to experience the future without precognition or a channeling medium. Last March, Nelson Davis, Jr., and I glimpsed the future when we judged the District of Columbia science fair at Woodson High School on behalf of NCAS.

NCAS has an active program on education in skepticism under the direction of Dr. Walter Rowe, a professor at George Washington University. The program's objective is to provide recognition for projects that capture the essence of NCAS/CSICOP concerns for critical thinking and investigation. Projects should challenge or probe conventional wisdom, unfounded claims, and uncritical thinking, or should demonstrate the validity of the unorthodox.

An initial look at project titles at the Washington fair showed great promise. There were studies of superstition, psychokinesis, pyramid power, ESP, and the effect of music on plants. Surely at least one of these would exhibit critical thinking.

The project on superstition involved a ten-question survey of classmates, who were asked if they believed in ghosts, were afraid to have a black cat cross their path, and so forth. To the student's surprise, almost 75 percent of the respondents were classified as "not superstitious." Unfortunately, the student had defined that category as consisting of everyone who answered yes to fewer than six questions. Yet one might think that answering just one such question in the affirmative would indicate that the person was superstitious. We moved on to the next exhibit.

The projects on psychokinesis and ESP were similar in design. The students did not inquire whether the phenomena existed; they investigated who exhibited the phenomena best (i.e., men or women) and based their conclusions on a very limited number of trials. Next!

The exhibit on pyramid power looked interesting. Inside two hollow plexiglass pyramids were apples in varying states of decomposition. The written conclusion was "pyramid power prevents decomposition of the pyramid." Great! we thought. A clever project proving pyramid power doesn't work. Well, not quite: The conclusion was a typographical error, and pyramid should have read apple. One pyramid had a hole in it, while the other had been sealed and "evacuated." Since the apple in the open pyramid was "less" decomposed than the one in the "evacuated" pyramid, it was "obvious" that the pyramid "protected" the former from decay. What wasn't considered was whether the "evacuated" pyramid stayed

evacuated very long, which was highly unlikely. And how many of you have noticed which rots faster, fruit stored in a closed plastic bag or fruit kept in the open air? On to the next.

Here, we thought, was a reasonable idea: to play classical and rock/heavy metal music to plants and see which one grew better. Of course, it was the plant that listened to the classical music. Yet what kind of music did the student prefer listening to? Rock and heavy metal... Fortunately, music was only one of several parameters that this student investigated, and the others were done fairly well.

Do we see some common elements here? You bet! The students didn't investigate whether the phenomena exist, they assumed the phenomena exist. But the students weren't solely to blame, since their projects reflected the knowledge available to them. In the January 1989 issue of the *Skeptical Eye* (p. 11), Walter Rowe reviewed the literature in the George Washington University library and found that there was an overwhelming surplus of "fringe literature." Mix that disturbing finding in with television fare such as "Unsolved Mysteries," add a pinch of fringe writings in magazines and newspapers, and you'll have the results we observed. Did we find a winner? We did, indeed: an excellent project that investigated similarities and differences in twins using different types of twins (fraternal and identical) as well as controls (non-twin brothers and sisters). Both physical and mental tests were used in the characterization.

Would you like to become involved in the NCAS Science Fair Program? Call NCAS to volunteer: 301-587-3827. □



Medicine, from page 1

Washington), or ice-cold baths for typhoid fever. As a reaction against these extreme methods, "therapeutic nihilism" came into vogue. Homeopathy, which used water containing ingredients so dilute as to be imperceptible, was far less harmful than most of the treatments then current. In those days, "orthodox" medicine was not a true science, as it relied on uncontrolled impressions and dogma. Nevertheless, great discoveries were made based on faulty premises. For example, aspirin, a derivative of willow bark, was found to be helpful in treating rheumatic fever. The discovery was made by an English physician who reasoned that diseases encountered in certain regions are often cured by the plants growing in the same place. Rheumatic fever, he postulated, is a disease of marshy land, and willow is abundant in marshes, therefore, let's try willow bark extract!

Misconceptions abound among the public. People gobble up vitamins in the hope that they will combat fatigue, colds, and "low blood." In actuality, they are needed most by those least able to afford them—the malnourished, alcoholics, and addicts. In healthy people, they produce nothing more than "expensive urine." Some forms of therapy, which are not approved for use in this country, are exported. For example, large quantities of walrus tusks and seal penis bones leave Alaska for use as aphrodisiacs elsewhere.

Many people either are loath to take medications or demand inappropriate drugs. Responsible physicians will prescribe a drug only if its benefits outweigh its risks. This explains the reluctance to yield to patients' pressure to order potentially dangerous medications for inconsequential and clearly self-limited disorders.

Many "unorthodox" (i.e., not supported by any scientific evidence) customs persist, such as the wearing of amulets to ward off evil spirits or copper bracelets to prevent arthritis. Acupuncture has many followers and a long tradition in Asia, and western researchers have given it some credibility

by demonstrating the role of endorphins (opium-like substances produced in the body). Acupuncturists stress the need for accurate placement of the needles at very specific points on the body. In an interesting experiment it was shown that deliberate misplacement of the needles gave equally successful results in suggestible individuals. However, both "misplaced" and standard acupuncture were equally ineffectual in more skeptical individuals.

At the present time in our society the economic aspects of medicine are of overwhelming importance. As more expensive and sophisticated technology appears, the public demands its use; these demands (as well as the possible consequences of not heeding them) sometimes overshadow the clinical judgment and experience of practitioners. It is now possible to prove most diagnoses, which not very long ago were just educated guesses. But in all too many instances, expensive gadgetry is used to disprove the existence of conditions for which there is a very low probability in the first place.

The future course of medical research is very exciting. Already there are indications that genetic predispositions make people susceptible or resistant to certain infections. It seems, for example, that some individuals cannot be infected with the influenza virus, whereas some forms of arthritis demand a very specific genetic make-up plus an exogenous factor for their appearance. There are strong indications that even cancer will yield to gene manipulation.

We are on the threshold of being able to recognize and modify the genes involved in some disorders. Unfortunately, the obstacles to medical research are multiplying. Grants are increasingly difficult to obtain, animal research is encountering a new anti-scientific militancy, and fetal tissues cannot be used because of the opposition of the anti-abortionists.

Thus medicine, which has made gigantic progress during the life-time of even the youngest physician, is now struggling with the increasingly powerful forces of obscurantism. Medicine has become, to some extent, the victim of its own technological advances. □

Time to Renew? Time to Join?

Check the date printed on the mailing label on this issue. If you are looking into the past, then it is time to renew your membership in NCAS.

Yes, I want to _____ join NCAS. _____ renew my membership.

Single: _____ @ \$20 Double (2 persons at same mailing address) _____ @ \$30 Full-time Student* _____ @ \$10

Make checks payable to NCAS

and mail to :

Grace Denman

8006 Valley Street

Silver Spring, MD 20910

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

*Students: List Institution Attending

President's Column, from page 3

EPCOT motto is "If we can dream it, we can do it." I'm dreaming of a cool, skeptical world.

Postscript: Speaking of fantasy land in Orlando, the word is now official. A few weeks ago magician and long-time TM representative Doug Henning issued a press release announcing his plans for "Vedaland," a multi-million dollar Transcendental Meditation theme park. A few years ago Henning retired from stage performance to study levitation techniques with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Last year Henning placed ads in magic publications to sell his professional equipment. \$20 million have been spent to acquire 450 acres in the Orlando area, with a half billion dollars anticipated for the project. □

The Last Word

Put It on Paper (or on Disk)

By Lys Ann Shore

As the new editor of the *Skeptical Eye*, I invite all NCAS members to contribute short pieces for publication in future issues of the *Eye*. Possible topics could include tips for debunking various pseudosciences, updates on developments in paranormal claims, information on coverage of paranormal claims by the local media, news of upcoming events of interest to NCAS members, or other relevant subjects. Contributions should be short (500-1000 words maximum, or two to four double-spaced pages) and typed, not handwritten. If you use a computer, please send hard copy along with your floppy disk (5.25" or 3.5" floppy, WordPerfect or ASCII files). Please be sure to include your name, address, and telephone number! Your article cannot be accepted without that information. Because of space limitations, all contributions are subject to editing. Diatribes, temper tantrums, and proselytizing pieces will be returned with thanks, but informative, thoughtful, and witty items will be welcome. Send contributions to the National Capital Area Skeptics, 8006 Valley St., Silver Spring, MD 20910. If you'd like to discuss an idea for a possible article, call the NCAS number: 301-587-3827. □

NCAS Member Update

This issue marks a transition for *Skeptical Eye*, as we welcome Lys Ann Shore as our new editor. Readers of *Skeptical Inquirer* may recognize Lys Ann's by-line, including her recent coverage of the CSICOP Conference here in Washington.

Look for new features and new ideas in future issues of *Skeptical Eye*--and make sure you send us your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions in the enclosed unscientific survey. *Skeptical Eye* is a successful newsletter entirely because of the enthusiasm and efforts of the members who have volunteered their time to make it happen.

By the same token, as a totally volunteer effort, the newsletter's production schedule has slipped. For this I apologize. Every effort is being made to get back on track.

During the past 18 months NCAS has put considerable energy into establishing itself as a resource for the media and the public. NCAS is now recognized as a responsible source of information, quoted in the *Washington Post*, *Washingtonian Magazine*, *Washington City Paper*, and the *Journal Newspapers*. NCAS spokespeople have made radio appearances on the "Mike Cuthbert Show" (WAMU-FM), "AAAS Science Update" (syndicated), WWDC, WQRX, and Voice of America. In coming months, Lys Ann and the rest of the *Skeptical Eye* crew will be putting great effort toward improving the newsletter as an important source of information (and occasionally entertainment) for NCAS members. I invite you to be part of this already extraordinary process. □

--Chip Denman

Further Reading on Hypnosis, from page 4

The following books provide an overview of the three main approaches to hypnosis.

Collected Papers of Milton S. Erickson. 3 vols. New York: Irvington, 1980.

Barber, Theodore X., Nicholas P. Spanos, and John F. Chaves. *Hypnosis, Imagination and Human Potentialities*. New York: Pergamon, 1979.

Hilgard, Ernest R. *Experience of Hypnosis*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968. □

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