



National Capital Area SKEPTICAL EYE

Vol. 6, No. 3 1992

Political Science

By Chip Denman

"Bringing the Light of Science into Politics"

This is the slogan of a new political party which has recently fulfilled ballot access requirements in the District of Columbia and at least 30 states. According to campaign literature, the party "offers innovative, scientifically proven programs to solve the pressing problems of the nation." The party's candidate for president, physicist Dr. John Hagelin, speaks of "practical, scientifically proven solutions to all the problems we face as a nation." Key issues include improved education, revitalizing inner cities, "retiring the national debt" and "strengthening family values."

No, this is *not* the platform of a new political wing of the National Capital Area Skeptics.

The party is the Natural Law Party of the United States, formed on April 20, 1992, in Fairfield, Iowa--home of Maharishi International University (MIU) and the headquarters of Transcendental Meditation (TM) here in this country. TM is the trademarked name for the variation of Eastern meditation marketed by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, best known as the guru of the Beatles and the Beach Boys. Presidential candidate Hagelin is on leave from his position as chairman of the Department of Physics at MIU. Candidate for vice president Mike Tompkins received his doctorate in the "Science of Creative Intelligence" from Maharishi European Research University in Switzerland. Party Chair Bevan Morris is described in campaign literature as "the world's foremost educator in the area of consciousness and natural law."

A flyer from the Natural Law Party is seductive. In form it resembles any mainstream political advertising. Red, white, and blue and full of gleaming smiles, it tries valiantly to appeal to all of the people, all of the time. The cover shouts about proven solutions and says, "Whether you are Republican, Democrat, or Independent--the Natural Law Party is the intelligent choice." Inside headlines tell us about multi-party support, how they are both "pro-life *and* pro-choice," and how even Thomas Jefferson believed that "natural law" is the source-spring for all our progress and happiness. "The Natural Law Party recommends that the government function in an atmosphere which is free from crime and stress." Wow! Why didn't we think of that before?

After eight pages of pleasant thoughts and invocations of science, in newsprint packed tighter than what you are reading now, the closing two paragraphs finally give us the specifics: Transcendental Meditation is the scientifically proven solution, and the Natural Law Party proposes to establish "coherence-creating" groups of meditators in order to produce the atmosphere of harmony that the nation needs.

NATURAL LAW PARTY

Proven Solutions to America's Problems

Whether you are Republican, Democrat,

The Natural Law Party of the United States of America was formed on April 20, 1992, in Fairfield, Iowa

BRINGING THE LIGHT OF SCIENCE INTO POLITICS
CREATING SUPPORT OF NATURAL LAW FOR THE NATION

NATURAL LAW PARTY
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The First Political Party in the Nation
Based on Sound Scientific Principles
and Scientific Research

Campaign literature advertising
"scientifically proven" politics.

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encourages critical and scientific thinking

serves as an information resource on extraordinary claims

provides extraordinary evidence that skeptics are cool



Letters

More on the Tarot

Editor:

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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I enjoyed Seán O'Neill's article on the Tarot immensely (*Skeptical Eye* 6, 2). But I have two things to add. First, the person who originally associated the Tarot with ancient Egypt was Antoine Court de Gebelin (1725-84), a Protestant pastor, Mason and mesmerist. And ever since occultists have had the trumps decorating the halls of the Great Pyramid and men in priestly robes dealing the deck.

Second, one of the best articles I've seen on the Tarot appeared, strangely enough, in a journal devoted to mysticism and the occult called *Gnosis*: "The Unexamined Tarot," by Chas. S. Clifton (Winter 1991) 18:44-51. While Clifton plays footsy with occultism and mysticism, he always returns to a sensible position. He traces the Tarot pack back to fifteenth-century Italy, to the first known cards, and no farther. He doesn't believe the Tarot much predates the "Visconti-Sforza" deck of the mid-1400s. Also, he notes that they reflect secular classical imagery, with a little religious imagery thrown in--the type of imagery often used in that allegory-ridden world. Here, he agrees with a hunch of Kurt Seligmann's in his *History of Magic* (1948). However, Clifton disagrees that the imagery was used to teach illiterates religious precepts. He believes it reflected an upper-class view of life; the first pack was, in fact, made for aristocrats. Finally, Clifton notes in passing that the Tarot was no more likely to be used for divination than any other card deck. The important thing about the Tarot is that it survived the Age of Reason and is still with us.

Richard A. Dengrove
Alexandria, VA

Is there a yellow mark on your mailing label?

If so, your membership is past-due. NCAS depends on its members to support the free monthly programs as well as the production of the Skeptical Eye. Please help ensure that these resources for critical thinkers continue. A renewal form is on page 15.

The James Randi Fund

Although the suit brought in federal court in Washington by Uri Geller against CSICOP has been thrown out with sanctions against Geller, the portion of the suit against James Randi is still pending. Furthermore, Geller may be about to launch yet another suit. Geller is alleging that Randi made repugnant anti-Semitic statements against him.

Those of us who know Randi well find such allegations incredible and completely out of character. Randi's position against Geller's claims is well known; his arguments are often direct and hard-hitting. But they are not tainted by this kind of ugliness.

Randi needs the support of skeptics everywhere to win these legal battles. CSICOP has a legal fund, but it does not contribute to Randi's fund; they are separate and independent.

The CSICOP Legal Defense Foundation may be contacted at Box 703, Buffalo, NY 14226.

If you wish to help James Randi, you may send contributions to:

**The James Randi Fund
c/o Robert Steiner, CPA
P.O. Box 659
El Cerrito, CA 94530**

The Price of Reason

The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, better known as CSICOP, is continuing the largest fund-raising drive in its history, the Price of Reason Campaign. Phase one covered the \$460,000 cost of the first portion of a new headquarters complex called the Center for Inquiry. The center serves as the headquarters of both CSICOP and the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism (CODESH).

In phase two, the organizations are seeking to raise \$1.5 million to pay for construction of a 25,000-square-foot building to house facilities for magazine production, mailing, and warehousing, as well as a media studio, library, and meeting rooms for conferences and seminars.

The new headquarters allows the two groups to move out of cramped quarters in a deteriorating building in downtown Buffalo to modern offices adjacent to the Amherst campus of the State University of New York at Buffalo.

The third and final phase of the campaign is an endowment fund, with a goal of \$2 million, to be held in trust jointly by CSICOP and CODESH. Income from the endowment will be used for operating expenses and special projects.

All contributions are tax-deductible. And while the campaign is targeting major donors, gifts of any size are needed and will be greatly welcomed. Copies of the "Price of Reason" brochure are available from NCAS and/or CSICOP, and a CSICOP-produced video on the campaign may be borrowed from the NCAS Video Archive. Contributions to the campaign should be mailed to The Price of Reason Campaign, Box 703, Buffalo, NY 14226-0703. □



Prez Sez

The Asimov Seminars

By Chip Denman

Inspect every piece of pseudoscience, and behind it you will find a security blanket, a thumb to suck, a skirt to hold. And what do we have to offer in exchange? Uncertainty! Insecurity!

--Isaac Asimov

When I began giving talks on probability, intuition and uncertainty several years ago, I chose these words to be part of my final call to reason. I never met Isaac, but I admired his ability to identify the facts and make them clear to others. When he died last spring, I was sorry that I never had a chance to thank the man whose words I had quoted so many times.

This past July I was asked to be part of a seminar series that he had nurtured for the past 19 years at the Rensselaerville Institute outside of Albany, New York. I was doubly thrilled since James Randi and Jamy Swiss were to be the rest of the faculty for the four-day workshop.

The Asimov Seminars, as the annual event has come to be known, is almost a family reunion. Participants come from all over the U.S. to swap stories and be challenged by new ideas. Most were repeat visitors; some had tales of Isaac that went back to the beginning 19 years before. Father and son, mother and daughter, and folks from all backgrounds come together every year. A topic that deals in some way with science and society provides the focus. Isaac himself was clearly much of the reason that people returned year after year. This was the first since Isaac's death, but his enthusiasm and inspiration lived on in those who had come to call him a friend.

We three skeptics arrived with little sense of what was expected. Without the encumbrance of experience, we charged in full speed ahead. Even before the first session was called to order, we began challenging their powers of perception and critical thinking. For the next few

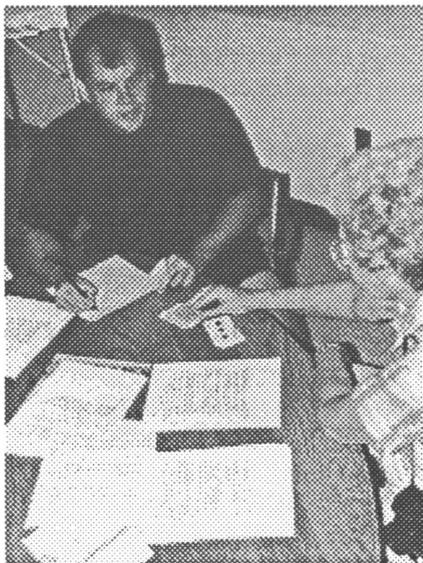
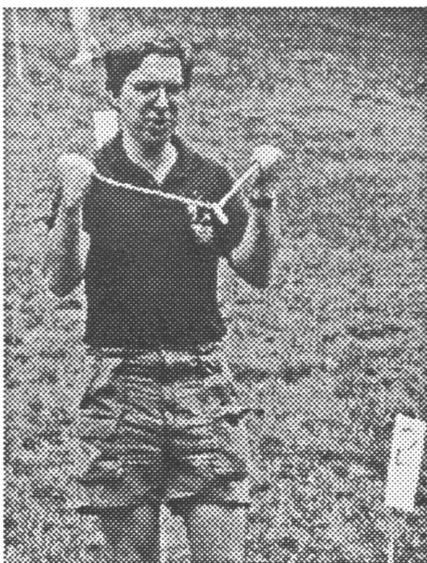
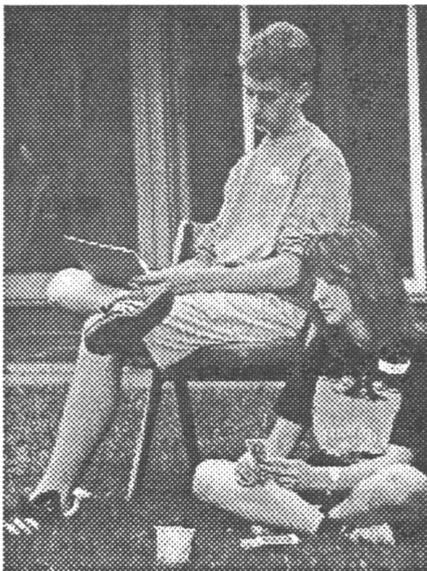
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Prez, from page 3



Above: Denman, Randi and Swiss break into smiles after 4 days of intensive scoffing.

Below: Participants test their psychic powers.



days, we led discussions on science, pseudoscience, and the difficult area in-between. We conducted hands-on demonstrations in dowsing and ESP, with statistical reports by yours truly. We explored the gullibility of the media, the history of psychical investigation, and the nature of scientific inquiry. Each evening one of us gave a formal address, but it was during the less formal daytime sessions that the real excitement of thinking could be felt. And there were *plenty* of late night card tricks, pool games, and tales of Isaac.

Apparently there had been some concern that without Isaac, the spark would not be present. Randi, Jamy and I were blissfully ignorant of concerns and expectations. Later one longtime participant told me that no faculty in the last 15 years had worked so hard and stayed so directly involved with the participants. It was easy with such motivated thinkers, and besides, we didn't know any better.

My own thinking was catalyzed as well. I came away with ideas that I am now using in my class at the University of Maryland. Furthermore, NCAS is now working to offer a weekend retreat designed to sharpen critical thinking skills; the original inspiration came from Steve Shore, but many of my thoughts on that project solidified during those few days in Isaac's shadow. We hope to have the first such session this winter. Stay tuned for further information.

By the time I left Rensselaerville, I felt that I had come to know Isaac somewhat, even in his absence. Since then I've seen many tributes to Isaac's memory, including the Fall '92 *Skeptical Inquirer*. I can think of no better tribute to a skeptic than an extended family who pursue clear, scientific thinking with such devotion and imagination. □

Euroskeptics

By Grace Denman

My arrival in St. Vincent, Italy, for the Euroskeptics Conference was less than auspicious. Chip and I had been traveling through the night from Rome in a railway car with broken air conditioning and cabin mates who did not want the window open. After having our first connection canceled, we caught a train from Turin and arrived at a tiny platform, with a closed station, and no fellow passengers who spoke English. Armed with a hotel brochure, a look of exhaustion, and a few words of French, we were "adopted" by an elderly woman and a bus driver who helped us to reach our hotel just as I despaired that we had wasted the last three days of our first European vacation to come to a skeptics conference. The Hotel Grand Billia ended my fears by proving to be a luxury hotel in the Italian Alps, oozing with the well-worn grace of a bygone era.

My first conversations at the conference were with our friends and fellow North Americans, James Randi, Jim Alcock, and Ray Hyman. Calling these men friends and colleagues is one of the most valuable outcomes of my work with NCAS and the skeptical movement. The evening passed as we dined on the first of many multi-course meals shared with friends and associates during our stay.

The conference began in earnest the next day. Day one represented the second annual Italian skeptics(CICAP) conference. Since I do not speak or understand more than a few words of Italian, and most of those refer to food, I took the opportunity to greet and speak with many members of the widely diverse group. Fortunately for me, the majority of those attending spoke some English. I once again met Premanand, convener of the India Skeptics, who spoke to NCAS during his North American tour several years ago; Amardeo Sarma, convener of the German Skeptics(GWUP); Steno Ferluga, president of CICAP; and Massimo Polidoro who worked constantly to keep the conference running smoothly. According to anecdotal evidence, Randi, Chip, and I were the first North Americans *not* associated with CSICOP who had ever attended a Euroskeptics conference. Everyone seemed pleased that a new path of communication had opened between an American local group and the European groups; electronic mail addresses were shared.

Piero Angela, an Italian television celebrity and fellow skeptic, was a guest of the conference. He hosts a television talk show that regularly features a skeptical look at the issues. His presence guaranteed that the conference would be well covered in the press. He



2nd national conference

Euroskeptics
4th European conference

1992 July 17-18-19

What Is the Experimental Evidence for Paranormal Claims?

Centro Congressi
Grand Hotel Billia
Saint-Vincent
Aosta-Italy

hosted an evening interview with James Randi, translated by Massimo, offering the audience a rare view of two dynamic and entertaining men with a skeptical view of the world.

The Euroskeptics conference began the second day, accompanied by simultaneous Italian/English and English/Italian translations. Chip gave his talk on the Washington-area weeping statue (see the *Skeptical Eye*, vol. 6, no. 2). There had been some concern that the topic was too sensitive for a conference so close to the Vatican, but the talk was well received. Other talks included Ray Hyman, "Parapsychology: Hind-sight Without Foresight"; Jim Alcock, "Psychokinesis: Power of the Mind or Figment of the Imagination?"; Premanand, "Godmen and the Paranormal in India"; and Luigi Garlaschelli, "Chemical Miracles: 'Liquefying Blood'." The conference drew a significant number of women, many more than I have seen at CSICOP conferences. It makes me wonder why the skeptical movement is so male-dominated here in the United States, and how can I help to change that. Despite the fascinating topics, my primary pleasure came from meeting so many interesting people from so many parts of the world and feeling an active part of the world community of skeptics. □



Remote Viewing

Caution:
Exploding Landfill!

By Elena M. Watson

Upon reading a fascinating article in *Smithsonian* magazine commemorating this summer's 300-year anniversary of the Salem witch trials, I decided to devote this column to the subject of witches. Specifically, the accused witches of Virginia; Joan Wright, our "first" witch, and Grace Sherwood, our most famous witch, for whom Witchduck Road is named.

That, however, was before Mount Trashmore blew up. Or rather, after Mount Trashmore did not blow up. You see, it was a hoax; a practical joke. But, I have gotten ahead of myself, so let us back up a bit, to April 1, 1992.

It is 6:30 a.m., and the deejays of WNOR-FM 99, a popular Tidewater rock station, have just announced that the Mount Trashmore landfill is going to explode. The Virginia Beach landmark, which long ago became a public park, is apparently suffering from a buildup of methane gas, according to a University of Virginia seismologist. Both deejays, Henry "The Bull" Del Toro and Tommy Griffiths, are warning Beach residents to beware of "low-flying dirt clods."

For the next hour and a half listeners are repeatedly reminded of the potential explosion and told that "this is not a hoax." The WNOR news staff also have repeated the warnings, which soon escalate to an evacuation notice. Everyone within a seven-mile radius of Mount Trashmore is asked to leave.

As a result of the hoax, the 911 lines were flooded with calls. And many residents of the area did, in fact, flee.

The warnings stopped abruptly at about 8:00 a.m. This was due to a request from the local police, who also lodged a complaint with the Federal Communications Commission, which could result in the loss of the station's license and a fine of up to \$25,000.

The FCC is still investigating the incident. But Del Toro, Griffiths, news director Gigi Young, and program director Buzz Knight were all suspended from WNOR for two weeks without pay.

I myself learned about all this from the newspaper, and from friends, since I am rarely up at that hour. Even if I were, I certainly wouldn't be listening to the radio, particularly FM 99. My initial reaction was to laugh. How could anyone believe that Mount Trashmore was actually going to blow?

That was a bit naive of me--after all, haven't people been flocking to Lake Ridge to see weeping

statues? And methane gas is produced in sanitary landfills, so the premise seems feasible. But the angle the local media focused on was the ethics issue, since FCC rules prohibit the broadcasting of false or misleading information. Apparently, both deejays involved thought their prank was an obvious April Fool's Day joke. And in fairness I should mention that Henry Del Toro is widely known as the local "bad boy" of radio. In other words, he is not a highly credible source.

However, in the media reports I saw, nowhere was the possible validity of the claim discussed. In other words, could Mount Trashmore ever really explode due to a methane buildup? Is this something I should worry about, along with killer bees, killer asteroids, and the hole in the ozone? Not exactly being Mr. Wizard myself, I called the Waste Management Division of the Public Works Department of the City of Virginia Beach. After he stopped laughing, a division spokesman told me that, yes, methane trapped in a pocket underground could explode if covered or blocked by a structure. However, he said it would be impossible for this to happen at Mount Trashmore, because it is all open space and allows methane to escape through the ground, as the gas does naturally. Mount Trashmore also has gas wells, or vents, for this purpose.

What I'm left with, then, is a most unlikely claim, made by a rather unreliable source, on a holiday on which pranks are traditional. And a few lessons about both the media and the public. For one, the media are often less concerned with the potential truth of a claim than with its emotional impact. Likewise, the public at large is often not a very astute judge of extraordinary claims. People tend to react emotionally, trust ambiguous authorities, and have a poor grasp of the science involved. And too often the media simply cater to this mindset.

All of which, ironically, takes me back to Salem, Massachusetts, 300 years ago--a time when some unreliable accusations were made in an emotionally heightened climate. The reality of witchcraft was never examined by the courts, and the words of the accusers were taken as literal truth, even though most witch trials were provoked by village quarrels among neighbors, not by fanatical clergy.

It was the same sort of hearsay and gossip that marked both Joan Wright and Grace Sherwood as witches here in the Old Dominion three centuries ago. Back then we didn't have sanitary landfills to worry about or irreverent radio deejays to rile us up. We got our excitement the old-fashioned way, by ducking witches! Grace, by the way survived, and neither she nor Joan met the same grisly fate as the executed Salem witches.

Elena M. Watson is an NCAS member and the Eye's official Tidewater columnist. □

Political Science, from page 1

A paid advertisement in the *Washington Post* (October 5, 1992) is even slicker. The ad *nowhere* mentions the Transcendental Meditation connection. It does talk about cutting government waste, controlling spiraling health costs, and finding “a proven, cost-effective solution to crime.” Any reasonable person who was unaware of the origin of the Natural Law Party would find this ad very hard to fault.

The Natural Law Party is not just an American invention. Last year more than 300 Natural Law Party candidates, including former stage magician and long-time Transcendental Meditation spokesperson Doug Henning, ran unsuccessfully in the British parliamentary election. The party also has been active in elections in Israel.

A recent article in *Nature* (vol. 359, September 10, 1992) states that one plank in the party platform calls for presidential candidates to demonstrate their worthiness for office by going public with the results of electroencephalogram (EEG) brain scans. Presidential candidate Hagelin claims that he has a specially “ordered” brain, in the top one percent of all tested. It is not clear who did the testing or who the other 99 percent tested might be. And according to brain researchers questioned by *Nature*, EEGs in fact tell nothing about a person’s morals or intelligence.

Another source reports that the platform spells out some other interesting details: Transcendental Meditation would become part of basic training for the military; meditation groups would be set up as part of rehabilitation programs in prisons; tax breaks would be given to colleges that include TM in the curriculum; and TM programs would be introduced into public schools. This sounds remarkably close to establishing a state-sponsored program to promote beliefs that are essentially Eastern mysticism hidden behind a cloak of scientific-looking graphs.

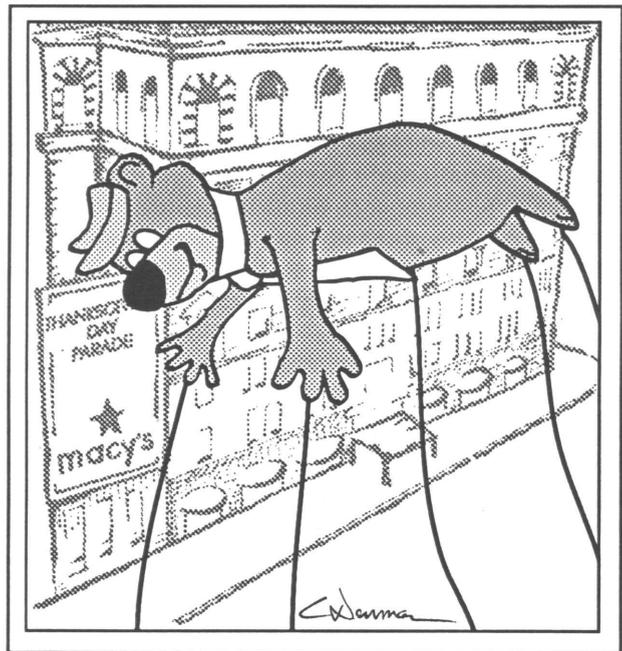
The Natural Law Party promotes a national health care program focused on “prevention-oriented natural medicine” and including the Maharishi Ayur-Veda system. A recent article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (October 2, 1991; related article in *Skeptical Inquirer*, Spring 1992) described the mystical religious practices and questionable herbal

therapies incorporated into Ayur-Veda and called a group of medical promoters to task for misrepresenting their financial affiliations with Maharishi Ayur-Vedic marketers.

Of course, the ultimate answer to any skeptic’s objections to “Natural Law” would be scientific data. For years the promoters of Transcendental Meditation have published documents that claim to offer incontrovertible scientific proof of their doctrine. The Natural Law Party literature alludes to this “proof” to claim the imprimatur of mainstream science. This is the same “proof” that purports to show that advanced meditators can learn “yogic flying”—that is, levitation without visible means of support. What a boon for the Air Force! But, as the article in *Nature* suggests, the support from the scientific community seems almost as invisible.

Note: The Natural Law Party advertises a toll-free number for more information. If you would like to talk with a Natural Law Party representative and to receive their promotional material, you may call 1-800-862-9696. □

The Skeptic Tank



The only NCAS-certified picture of Yogic Flying.

Fields of Dreams

By Joel Parker

Being a new kid on the block at NASA-Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, Maryland, I decided to go to the Engineering Colloquium on Monday, September 28, 1992, on crop circles, presented by Linda Moulton Howe. This seemed like an odd topic to be addressed by engineers, but perhaps, I thought, they would discuss how to build and test better crop circles. Howe's professional title, "consultant: film, video and books," made me a bit dubious, however.

The audience of about 500 people heard an entirely credulous talk discussing the history of the circles and the "cerealogists" who study them. Included were numerous photographs of the designs and videotapes, complete with classical choral soundtracks, that gave me the feeling of watching an episode of "Unsolved Mysteries."

As Howe discussed the appearances and designs of the circles, I was struck by how well it all seemed to fit the hoax scenario: starting with a few simple patterns that may have been made by one group of bored farmhands, then evolving into more complex patterns as the hoaxers got more practice and were egged on by the increased publicity. Then the increased numbers of circles as other groups of hoaxers decided to jump onto the bandwagon.

While appearing to be neutral by saying that she was only interested in documenting the phenomenon, Howe repeatedly stated as an obvious truth that such patterns were too complex (especially the recent "fractal patterns") for human creation. No one, she said, has ever seen humans create a "real" crop circle, in spite of the attentive observations of the cerealogists. From there she came to the "logical" conclusion that these are a product of UFOs, as supported by the hard evidence of a witness's drawing of a space ship.

At the end of the talk Howe jumped all over the paranormal board by claiming the crop circles are connected to livestock mutilations, human abductions by ETs, and the diatonic musical scale via geometric relationships beyond the understanding of humans. She did mention briefly that two people had claimed to have made the crop circles, but she passed it off as obviously absurd.

At the end of the talk, I was prepared for an onslaught of skeptical questions from the audience. Instead, Howe was asked: "When is a good time to see the circles?" and "Where else do they appear?"

My favorite was the question, "Is the wheat from the crop circles harvested and put on the market?" She answered, "Yes, it's out there everywhere"--as if this were part of a greater mystery, or even a conspiracy.

The only skeptical question asked was, "What do you think about the comment that 'Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence'?" Her response was, "Of course," and she added that the evidence she presented is very extraordinary. Well, I couldn't disagree with that!

I came away with the feeling that the crop circles were perhaps extraordinary art, on the scale of Christo, but hardly proof of UFOs meddling with our agriculture. I

learned more about the gullibility of a supposedly educated crowd than about the origin of crop circles. I must admit that I found myself embarrassingly silent, perhaps in shock at the audience's

credulity. I hope there were other skeptics present who were quiet simply because they were similarly stunned.

As I returned to my office, my computer was displaying fractal patterns! Was this a sign? Perhaps I have gone full circle...

Joel Parker is an astronomer in the Laboratory for Astronomy and Solar Physics, NASA-Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, Maryland. □

"Blood-sucking flying vampire women" ...News at 11

Slumdweller in any city face terrible problems born of poverty, but those of Manila have yet another trouble to deal with: vampires. In May, a "manananggal" was said to be terrorizing the slums of the Philippine capital. In Philippine folklore, a "manananggal" is a woman who can cut her body in two; the top half then flies around at night seeking babies to devour, but it has to return to its other half before dawn.

The vampire rumor was widely circulated by the Philippine media, which interviewed self-identified "victims" of the creature. One television crew even invaded the home of an elderly woman to "investigate" rumors that she herself was the vampire--an accusation the terrified woman denied. As proof, the TV reporter pulled out a dried stingray tail and asked her to touch it, since stingray tails are used to ward off manananggals. The woman touched it, thus exonerating herself.

A refreshingly skeptical report by Robert H. Reid of the Associated Press (printed in the *Honolulu Advertiser*, May 8, 1992) focused on how the manananggal story had driven real news--for example, the Philippine presidential election that was about to take place--from the headlines. □

we read this stuff so you won't have to

Censorship and Skepticism

By Steve Shore

First it was *Ulysses*, then *Huck Finn*. Now fairy tales are the victim! The censors are at work again, and this time on our doorstep. In Frederick County, it seems, parents have discovered evil lurking in the children's section of the school library, and they want it out. Complaints have been filed with the county school board alleging that books of fairy tales promote the occult and should be removed from the shelves. The fight centers on Impression Books, a series of 15 volumes published in 1984. The books are designed to get children interested in reading, and they include selections from world literature and many important authors of this century. Unfortunately for the school board, it seems that the series also includes some fairy tales that talk of witches and magic.

In an article in the *Washington Post* (5 June 1992), a particularly offensive passage is reproduced that describes how local children taunt an old woman, Bunya, calling her a witch. It turns out that the kids are right: she is not only a witch but one with a nasty temper who turns them all into frogs. Some local parents have demanded, on the basis of this and other similar stories, that the books be banned.

Lest you get the impression that this is an isolated incident and not worthy of notice, you should be aware that Frederick is the 56th school district in the country to be hit with complaints about the Impression series. Although a court ruling in California last April judged that the series was not intended to promote the occult, that hasn't stopped the locals in Maryland.

The scary part of this is that the campaign has been well orchestrated. It is sponsored by American Family Association, Focus on the Family, and Citizens for Excellence in Education. The *Post* reports that Focus on the Family has not been directly involved in the Frederick complaint, but the group has been supportive of the effort and has openly criticized the series on other occasions. The local parents claim that they have not received help from any national organizations.

To its credit the publisher, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, has said that it "stands behind the series." HBJ owns Academic Press, among other holdings, and is a respected textbook publisher that stands to lose a lot in the face of organized school protests. The organization People for the American Way, which has taken strong stands against censorship in the past, is supporting the series.

What started out as a trivial complaint has esca-

lated into a possible legal fight, by no means the first such battle. In a recent report, People for the American Way stated that the incidence of censorship or attempted censorship of books in libraries and schools has increased substantially (by about 50%) over the past year. The problem used to be isolated, confined to socially offensive material usually dealing with specific ethnic groups or to creation/evolution matters. The allegation that simple fairy tales promote witchcraft and satanism is spreading. It crops up on talk shows and in fundamentalist material with increasing frequency (as you may recall from NCAS's Satanic Panic program).

This is as much a problem for members of NCAS as is the effort to prevent creationists from gaining a foothold in the educational system. There aren't too many areas where skeptics are called to political action, but this is certainly one of them. This is not an issue of a single series. It is about tactics and goals of a determined group of extremists, the same ones who often leave tract literature at museum-sponsored talks on evolution and call talk shows disputing the antiquity of the Earth. As Clarence Darrow once said, "Fanaticism is forever busy, and needs feeding."

Steve Shore is an astrophysicist at NASA-Goddard Flight Center and an NCAS board member. □

It's a Boy! It's a Girl! It's a Hoax!

A blip in the news this past summer was the report of a pregnant man in the Philippines. The man, Edwin Bayron, who called himself "Carlo," was said to be six months pregnant. He was interviewed on the "Today" Show and written up by wire services and the *Washington Post*. Tabloids offered sizable payments to Bayron for the exclusive right to cover the birth, which was to take place in August. According to a debunking follow-up report in the *Post* (June 10, 1992), "reporters who felt the man's swollen belly said they felt movement inside."

Well, so much for eyewitness--or hand witness--testimony. It turns out that Bayron, a 32-year-old homosexual, invented the hoax so that he would be able to marry his 21-year-old lover. He claimed to be a hermaphrodite who had undergone surgery to make him a woman.

The Philippine secretary of health said the government would pay for the birth; incredibly, it seems that no physical examination of Bayron was conducted. Apparently the hospital relied on results of an ultrasound scan and two urine tests, which Bayron successfully faked. The chief gynecologist at the small hospital where Bayron was employed was quoted as saying, "He has fooled all of us for reasons he alone can explain." Bayron has since disappeared. □



A Skeptic's Response

This feature of the Skeptical Eye is designed to provide skeptics with brief, logical answers to questions that may arise in conversation. Do you have a question--or a response--that should be shared with other skeptics? Send it to the Eye.

Chain Letters: Newage Math

By Chip Denman

"With love all things are possible. This paper has been sent to you for good luck. The original is in New England. It has been around the world nine times. You will receive good luck within four days of receiving this letter provided you, in turn, send it on....Please send 20 copies and see what happens in four days."

Chances are you've received a "chain letter" like this before, perhaps from a well-meaning friend. You may even have been tempted to send it on. The copy I recently received came with a cover note that said, "For obvious reasons, I wouldn't dare not pass it on."

It doesn't add up. In fact, if the letter is accurate, you and I and the rest of the world would be buried in copies by now. The math isn't hard to figure.

Consider: 20 copies of the letter are to be sent out within 4 days of receipt. On the first mailing, 20 copies hit the street. Four days later each of those 20 sends copies to 20 erstwhile friends, making for a wave of mail consisting of $20 \times 20 = 400$ pieces. The chart below shows the rest of the month:

Mailing	Day	Number of Copies
1	1	20
2	4	$20 \times 20 = 400$
3	8	$20 \times 20 \times 20 \times 20 = 8000$
4	12	$20^4 = 160,000$
5	16	$20^5 = 3.2$ million
6	20	$20^6 = 64$ million
7	24	$20^7 = 1.3$ billion
8	28	$20^8 = 26$ billion copies!

The 1991 world population was approximately 5.4 billion. This would be 47 copies for every man, woman, and child on earth in less than a month from the beginning of the chain!

The letter I received claims that someone named Constantie Dias received a copy in 1953. He passed on 20 copies and promptly won a \$2 million lottery. The 39 years since then represents 13,870 days or 3,467 waves of mailing. Had the chain remained unbroken, the last wave alone would consist of 20^{3467} pieces for the Postal

Service to shoulder. That's more than my calculator can compute, but a little approximation puts it at more than 10^{4500} , in other words, more than a 1 followed by 4,500 zeroes. "Bulk mail" indeed!

It's hard to conceive of numbers so large, especially since the stars in the sky number only around 10^{22} in all. There would be more letters in the unbroken chain than atoms in the known universe (a mere 10^{79} , give or take a few zillion). And no one to lick the stamps.

We can make a few crude guesses as to how many folks out there are actually perpetuating the letter. For the last few years I've seen some version of this particular letter about twice a year. Taking my personal experience at face value (always a bad idea!), we might guess that the process is at steady state--that is, the total number of copies in the mail is remaining about constant. This would happen if 1 out of every 20 recipients followed the letter's instructions, while the other 19 tossed it straight in the recycling bin. Furthermore, there are roughly 250 million people in the United States, and maybe 150 million of these are old enough and otherwise able to use the mail. My twice-a-year experience would translate to $(2/365) \times 150$ million, or roughly 820,000 recipients on any given day. Putting it all together, it looks like 41,000 people (less than 2 one-hundredths of 1 percent of the U.S. population) generating fresh copies each day could account for the volume I'm seeing.

This particular letter is pretty innocuous. It doesn't ask us to send money, or even to believe in superstitions. All we have to do is copy and mail it and wait for good stuff to happen. "This is true even if you are not superstitious," it promises. It is no more pernicious than the horoscope that appears alongside "Peanuts" and "Calvin and Hobbes," and few people would let it run their lives.

But the same bad math has been used to justify much more costly and insidious schemes, just as "serious" astrologers have defended "real" horoscopes against the evidence. Letters have been circulated that try to sucker dupes into sending money to the head of the pyramid in the hope that eventually--if the chain remains unbroken--the lucky players will more than recoup their stake as they reach the top of the heap and collect the cash from new players. A version that I encountered a couple of years

ago suggested building a music library by sending compact disks rather than cash, but it shared the same shaky pyramid structure. The U.S. Postal Service considers such schemes to be illegal games of chance and will prosecute gamblers for mail fraud. If you receive such a letter, the Post Office asks that you contact your local postmaster.

Similar bad math underlies other "pyramid" investment schemes. One fairly recent version with a distinctly New Age flavor goes by the name "The Airplane Game" and is described in detail by Jeff Greenwald in *The Fringes of Reason*, edited by Ted Schultz. Essentially "players" in the game buy in for \$1,500 to become "passengers." Each is expected to recruit new players, and in so doing advances up the pyramid from "passenger" to "flight attendant" to "copilot" to "pilot," with the group continually growing and dividing into new units. The pilot then collects the investments from the new recruits and exits the pyramid a richer person. According to Greenwald, participants adopt New Age code names, such as "Icarus" and "Morning Star," and use their get-togethers almost like group therapy sessions to share their feelings of empowerment and reflect upon their place in the universe.

The plan may pay off for a few, usually the earliest possible players. But for later entrants to become "pilots" and walk away winners requires an influx of new players, which would need to grow in the same way as the chain letter mailing. The world just isn't large enough to sustain the scheme for very long. Often participants claim they are richer for the experience, even when their airplane crashes.

The Airplane Game appears to have taken flight first in California, but it has landed in the Washington area. In February 1991 campus police at the University of Maryland College Park, investigated a "Plane Game" in which students paid \$125 to join. A similar pyramid scheme had bilked unwary students in 1987. According to campus police, participation in such a scheme is a misdemeanor carrying a fine of up to \$10,000 and a year in jail.

All in all, "pyramid power" is just about as likely to keep your razor blades sharp as it is to make you rich. Meanwhile, better mail your holiday cards today to beat the rush.

Suggested Reading:

Innumeracy by John Allen Paulos is a delightful introduction to the consequences of mathematics. Hill and Wang, New York, 1988.

The Fringes of Reason edited by Ted Schultz includes the discussion on the Airplane Game as well as other wonderfully odd topics too numerous to mention. Harmony Books, New York, 1989.

NCAS president Chip Denman is manager of the Statistics Laboratory in the Computer Science Center, University of Maryland College Park. □

"Light Water" Discovered in Mexico

A small village in Mexico seems to be rivaling the world's most famous healing shrines these days, ever since a local *rico*, or rich man, "discovered" the healing properties of water from a well on his land. Jesus Chahin says he made the discovery by accident, when he witnessed the rapid recovery of a sick dog that drank some of it. The water is claimed to cure everything from AIDS and cancer to obesity.

Chahin makes the water available free to the public, with a 2-1/2 gallon limit per individual (unless you have a powerful *patrón*, in which case you get 10 gallons). According to the *Washington Post* (January 27, 1992), hundreds of thousands of people--many of them sick and lame--have lined up along the dusty road to Tlacote to get their share. They typically stand, and sleep, in line for a couple of days as they await their turn at the faucets.

Many of the pilgrims consider the healing water to be a divine miracle, but Chahin himself says the explanation is strictly scientific. The water gains its power, he says, from its "movements" between one metal tank and another. It also is said to weigh less than ordinary water. Chahin, evidently a man with a sense of humor, predicts that scientists will have to study the so-called light water for "two or three billion years" before they'll understand it.

According to the local state health director, the water from Chahin's well is just like the water in other wells in that area, safe to drink and with no unusual characteristics. Officials have not tried to discourage the flow of pilgrims, since the situation does not violate any laws; they have simply tried to regulate traffic and sanitation. Chahin has set up a triage system that gives priority to people with serious illnesses, such as cancer.

Whatever his motives and rationale, Chahin has certainly brought boom times to Tlacote. As many as 50 charter buses arrive each day, some from towns as far as 1,000 miles away near the U.S. border. Those who arrive by car pay a dollar for parking. Vendors by the side of the road cook hot foods and sell plastic water containers and tents. Even out-of-work laborers earn money by pushing wheelbarrows laden with jugs of "light water" back to pilgrims' cars and buses. □

Judging a science fair for NCAS is somewhat different from serving as a general judge of science fair projects. In this article, veteran science fair judge and NCAS board member Walter Rowe sets forth the criteria for evaluating projects for the NCAS Science Fair Prize. If you're interested in becoming an NCAS science fair judge, call NCAS at the number listed on the masthead.

Judging Science Fair Projects for NCAS

By Walter Rowe

Unlike those who do general judging of science fair projects, NCAS judges evaluating projects for the NCAS Science Fair Prize should concentrate on the ones that deal skeptically with extraordinary claims. Projects that critically examine claims of astrology, biorhythms, crystal power, pyramid power, and the like should receive first priority in judging. NCAS is also interested in projects that examine superstitions or other irrational belief systems. Finally, projects that critically examine extraordinary claims or anomalous phenomena in mainstream science (such as cold fusion) are also candidates for the NCAS prize.

Most science fairs have lists of the science projects that are on exhibit. It is usually worthwhile for NCAS judges to spend a few minutes at the outset reading over the list of projects to identify those most likely to be of interest to our organization. Because the titles of the projects don't always adequately convey the subject matter, it is also a good idea to browse through the exhibit hall after spending time examining the projects you have initially identified as being of possible interest to NCAS.

Within the appropriate subject areas, NCAS judges should evaluate projects according to the following criteria:

***Creative Ability.** Does the project show creativity and originality in the choice of problem, the manner of solving the problem, the analysis and interpretation of the data, the use of off-the-shelf equipment, and the design and construction of novel apparatus?

In judging creative ability, consider how much help the student has obtained from other people. Did the concept for the project come from a textbook suggestion for research or from a teacher or other mentor (perhaps a scientist or engineer with whom the student worked during the summer)? Some seemingly original projects may be knock-offs of material in textbooks or laboratory manuals in newly developed curricula. To gauge originality, ask the student some probing questions about the origin of the concept for the project.

***Scientific Thought.** Has the student stated her problem clearly? Was the problem effectively limited so that a solution was feasible within the time and resource constraints? Were the relevant variables clearly identified? Were the experiments properly controlled? Are the student's conclusions supported by the data? Does she recognize the limitation in quantity and quality of data obtained? Does she understand the

relationship of the project to previous research? Has the project given her ideas for further research in this area? Has the student cited the appropriate scientific literature? Is she aware of other approaches to the problem and other relevant theories?

***Thoroughness.** Did the student meet his original goals? Does the project completely address the problem? Did the project involve replicate experiments? Did the student keep adequate notes? How much time did he spend on the project? Is he familiar with the relevant scientific literature?

***Skill.** Does the student have the skills needed to accomplish the project? For instance, a project may involve skills in laboratory work, computation, observation, design, and so forth. Where was the project done? Did the student work independently or under adult supervision? Where did the equipment come from? Was it built by the student, purchased, or obtained on loan?

***Clarity.** Is the student able to discuss the project coherently? How clear is her written report of the project? Keep in mind that the student may have received help in preparing the written report. How clearly has she presented the data and results? Is the project display clear and self-explanatory?

Discussing Projects with Students

During the course of the judging you will be circulating about the exhibit hall, looking for the projects that interest you. The students will generally be available for questions relating to their projects. Unfortunately, you are likely to see some pseudoscientific projects among the exhibits, since such projects sometimes succeed in making it all the way to regional science fairs. For example, one project at a recent county high school science fair in the Washington area supposedly "proved" that crystals enhance plant growth.

You may decide to ignore such a project altogether. However, if you have a good grasp of the skeptical literature concerning a pseudoscientific claim, you may choose to suggest politely that the student read some of the skeptical literature on the subject. You may also be able to spot flaws in the design of the experiment, which you may politely point out to the student.

Remember, though, that the purpose of the NCAS Science Fair Prize is to encourage a skeptical mode of thinking. For this reason, we do not want to appear dogmatic or closed-minded about extraordinary claims. Students are understandably sensitive to criticisms of their work, so NCAS judges should use sensitivity and tact in discussing projects with students.

NCAS Prize Winners

These were the winners of the 1992 NCAS science fair prizes:

District of Columbia

Jessica Roberts, Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School: "Miracle or Thixotropy?"

Jonathan Mayfield, Taft Junior High School: "What Peripheral Differences Exist Between 20/20 Vision and Visual Impairment?"

(judged by Nelson Davis and Walter Rowe)

Fairfax County

Mike Sawicki, Woodson High School: "Effect of Moon Phase on Number of Crimes Committed"

Jeanne Liu, Lake Braddock High School: "Replication of the St. Januarius Miracle"

Amil Seid-Salehi, Madison High School: "The Effect of Sound Waves on Plants"

(judged by Joe Himes)

Montgomery County

Dorothy Low, T. S. Wooton High School: "The Enhancement of Recall Using Background Music"

Annie Schwartz, Cabin John Middle School: "Do Video Games Make You Aggressive?"

(judges Mike Epstein and Marc Salit)

Prince George's County

Nathan Mote, Calvert Middle School: "You've Got to Play to Win--But Will You?"

(judged by Marvin Zerkowitz and Jim Hebblethwaite)

Prince William County

Natasha Riazi, Gar-Field High School: "Low-Frequency Electromagnetic Radiation"

Jeremy Hicks, Marsteller Middle School: "Do Sunspots Affect the Earth's Weather?"

(judges Richard Leshuk and Walter Rowe)

The winners each received a book (variously, Ken Frazier's *Science Confronts the Paranormal* or *The Hundredth Monkey*, Martin Gardner's *New Age*, or James Randi's *Flim-Flam!*). Walter Rowe had this to say about the judging:

"I would like to share some of the observations of the judges. First, we noted that NCAS-type projects (those that critically examine fringe science or ex-

traordinary claims) are more apt to be found among middle school students' projects. The high school projects tend to be more conventional. On the other hand, the high school projects--although better done in a formal sense--tend to be so conventional as to be boring. It is almost as though the high school students have developed more sophisticated analytical skills at the price of the loss of imagination. This observation can be balanced, however, with the realization that most of what gets published in scientific journals is boring, even to specialists. There are also many stereotyped projects among the exhibits because the students often get their ideas from books of science fair projects.

"We also have seen promising projects compromised by inadequate analysis or interpretation, though it is possible to be too critical. After all, these are students, not professional scientists, and the science teachers aren't scientists either. Most science teachers have never designed or carried out a research project at the master's or doctoral level, nor have they directed real research. As a result, they often are unable to give effective guidance to students in the selection of a topic or in the execution of a project. If there had been enough time, the judges could have provided students with a valuable learning experience by critiquing projects and suggesting ways they might be improved."

As a sobering counterbalance to the prize-winning projects listed above, NCAS judges noted these others among the projects in the District of Columbia science fair: "Melanin--Key to the Universe" and "The Probability of Guessing." The title of the former is self-explanatory; the latter was an attempt to validate dowsing. □

Siberian Faith Healing

A two-page photo essay in the *Washington Post* style section (July 26, 1992; story and photos by staff writer Carol Guzy) extolled the work of a faith healer in the Siberian village of Kalachevo. The healer, Vladimir Merkushev, receives patients in private sessions that he calls "operations," which apparently consist mainly of massage. These are followed by a seance, in which participants may moan, weep, even faint.

The *Post* reporter describes Merkushev engaging in a type of dowsing:

"[He] produced a copper wand that looked like a small divining rod. One by one his clients approached him to have their possessions blessed. A crucifix was proffered. He extended the copper wand. Nothing happened. Then he waved his hands theatrically over it, mumbled a blessing and pointed the wand again at the cross: The wire's forked ends separated perceptibly.

"The crucifix, he declared, 'has been energized.'"

Merkushev claims to be a professional, and he showed the reporter what he said was a "diploma from a 'faith healing institute' in the Crimea." He claims to have inherited his healing gift from his father. □

Don't Miss the Return of Halley's Comet

"Halley's Comet has started coming back to our world! Unexpectedly! Now!" screamed a full-page advertisement in a London magazine (*City Limits*, July 16-23, 1992). It went on to "explain," in all capital letters, that "scientists and astronomers seriously under-estimated the colossal power & force of Halley's explosion in Feb/March 1991! The eruption dislodged Halley's Comet from its usual orbit, forcing it back to earth now!"

Apparently the early return is the prediction of an unnamed astronomer, described only as "Polish like Copernicus" (an interesting credential). The advertisement referred curious or alarmed readers to a group called the Scientific Forecasts Society, "a charitable organisation." □



Past Life Reporting

Science Fraudbusters

NCAS hosted a different kind of program on June 13, 1992, one that addressed fraud within the scientific community rather than extraordinary claims outside of or on the fringes of science. The speakers were scientists Walter Stewart and Ned Feder of the National Institutes of Health, Bethesda. The two men have investigated several cases of scientific fraud, the best known of which involves Nobel physiology and medicine laureate David Baltimore and his former scientific colleague, Teresa Imanishi Kari. Stewart is well known to skeptics as one of the investigators (together with James Randi and *Nature* editor John Maddox) of the notorious French "water memory" homeopathy case.

It was clear to the audience of about 50 people that Stewart and Feder work closely and comfortably together. Their approach is low-key but dynamic, and their deep commitment to their work is evident. They've shouldered a heavy burden in tackling the ugly issue of fraud in science, and have clearly paid a price both emotionally and professionally.

Scientific fraud is often difficult to discern, partly because few scientists care to overturn that particular rock for fear of what may lie underneath. And as Stewart points out, cheating is in essence a secret activity, so "how do you assess it or find out how common it is?"

In one case, a scientist had published well over 100 papers with 47 coauthors, and almost all the papers were tainted with fake data. In an effort to understand how such a situation could have come about, Stewart and Feder studied the characteristics of the coauthors. They found two types of practices, which they called Type A (carelessness and sloppiness) and Type B (an appearance of lack of candor). They found several Type A practices among the coauthors, some of whom were careless, while other were "honorary authors," whose names were put on scientific papers although they had no role in the research.

Stewart and Feder experienced great difficulty in getting their paper on this study published, although it circulated widely as a preprint. It was even referred to in print as the "most famous unpublished manuscript in science." Finally, in 1986 the *New York Times* wrote up the unpublished work.

It was after that article appeared that Stewart and Feder received the initial phone call about the Baltimore case. As Stewart wryly noted, "It doesn't inspire confidence to

hear from someone that everything they're going to tell you is true and accurate, but that everyone else will tell you they're lying."

That case has taken many twists and turns, and continues to unfold.

Stewart and Feder have found that discrepancies between data and the report of the data can result from several causes, including error in reporting, overenthusiasm, incompetence, and fraud. Unfortunately, Stewart notes, "scientists are trained to question nature, not their colleagues. So how do you set up a system that polices science so that when an allegation of misconduct is made, it's handled appropriately?" At present, universities are the first line of investigation. Stewart warns that "if scientists don't tackle these issues with energy, enthusiasm, and will, then others will step in to do it for us."

Surprisingly, Stewart maintained that cheating and misconduct pose no real threat scientifically over the long term, although "they corrupt scientists as a profession in the short and medium term." But scientific research is funded largely by public money--that is, taxpayers' money--so "it's not unreasonable to argue for some public accountability." "We have to find ways of encouraging good, creative science," Stewart concluded. "It's not always easy to identify up front, and it's not always what gets the money."

Secrets of Skeptical Thinking

At a program on September 19, Nuclear Regulatory Agency physicist and NCAS vice president Joe Himes guided the audience through the process of evaluating extraordinary claims. Inviting and receiving enthusias-

tic audience participation, Himes used examples of newspaper reports to demonstrate, first, how to sort out the stories that are worth a closer look and, second, how to investigate them. Tales of extraordinary claims often take on a life of their own, which a member of the audience called the "Hundredth Tabloid" phenomenon, analogous to the "Hundredth Monkey" phenomenon: "as soon as a story appears in 100 tabloids, everyone believes it."

Himes listed several criteria for stories worth a closer look. Such stories should be **strange and subjective**, and **intentionally** so. They should make **explicit or implicit paranormal claims**. Finally, the claims should be **falsifiable**. Himes notes that strange stories that don't meet these criteria make suitable candidates for columns like Chuck Shepherd, John Kohut, and Roland Sweet's "News of the Weird."

To examine stories that meet the criteria, first check **repeatability**--that is, rule out coincidence. Second, consider **objectivity** (what is the simplest explanation?). Third, look for possible **predictions**: what new things should you observe to test the claim? Finally, gather **evidence**, verify its completeness, and collect the simplest data first.

In investigating extraordinary claims, Himes warns skeptics to be alert for personal observations and testimonials that, unless carefully analyzed, are likely to be biased and invalid. Also, watch out for ad hominem arguments, since "there are no infallible authorities, and even nonauthorities may have valid insights." Finally, he says, "beware the tendency to jump to conclusions about the 20th story on a subject because the first 19 were all invalid." □

Time to Renew? Time to Join?

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

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The Last Word

Gauging the Price of Reason

By Lys Ann Shore

As described elsewhere in this issue, CSICOP is engaged in the biggest fund-raising drive of its history, with a goal of nearly \$4 million. If you're a CSICOP donor or a subscriber to the *Skeptical Inquirer*, you've likely already received one or more mailings about the campaign.

Frankly, when I first read about it, I felt uncomfortable. Four million dollars is a lot of money--could so much possibly be needed? Half of the amount is for construction of a new headquarters facility, the Center for Inquiry: was a new building necessary? The center serves as the headquarters for both CSICOP and the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism (CODESH): CSICOP I know and love, but what's this other group all about?

We all stagger under the onslaught of direct-mail solicitations for nonprofit organizations, and it's hard to evaluate each new begging letter fairly on its own terms, especially when we feel torn in different directions. How do you decide whether your limited funds should go for AIDS research, hunger, homelessness, the environment, animal welfare, abortion rights, the arts--or skepticism?

I don't have an easy answer. But I believe that, as skeptics, we should consider the demands carefully and thoughtfully--neither tossing them aside, nor dipping into our pockets without thinking.

And in thinking about the Price of Reason campaign, it's worth remembering that before CSICOP there was no "skeptical movement"; the term didn't even exist. CSICOP gave the skeptical movement a voice, the *Skeptical Inquirer*. And without the example and moral support of CSICOP, it's unlikely that most of the local groups such as NCAS would ever have been formed, let alone flourished. □

In Search of:

NCAS would like to find possible facilities for future events. Can you suggest locations? Rooms of different sizes are sought which could accommodate 75-500. Metro accessibility, parking, audio-visual equipment, and weekend availability are all factors which need to be considered. Please phone Joe Himes at 703-280-2503.

Keep Your Eye Open

Send your articles, letters, and original artwork for future publication in the *Skeptical Eye*. 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", WordPerfect or ASCII). Please be sure to include your name, address, and telephone number. Send all contributions to *Skeptical Eye*, 8006 Valley Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

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