

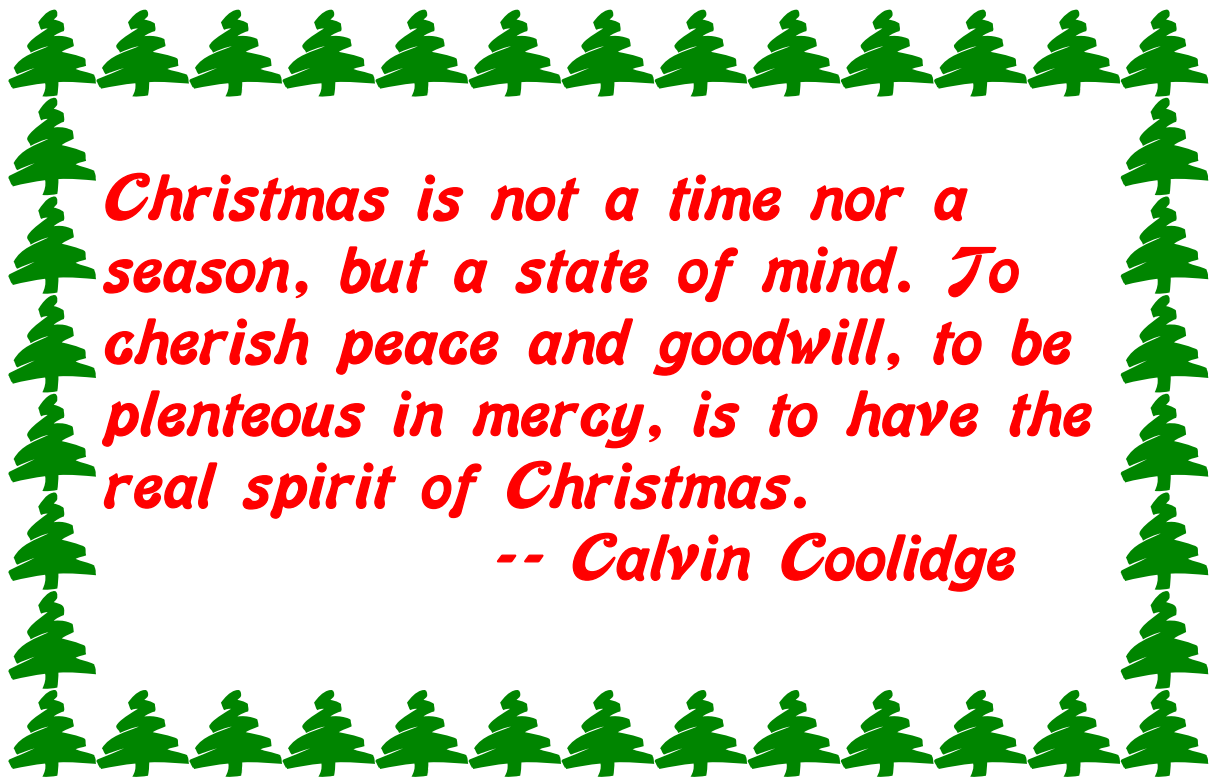
Phactum

The Newsletter of the Philadelphia Association for Critical Thinking
December 2007

editor: Ray Haupt

email: phactpublicity@aol.com

www.phact.org



Christmas is not a time nor a season, but a state of mind. To cherish peace and goodwill, to be plenteous in mercy, is to have the real spirit of Christmas.

-- Calvin Coolidge

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Phactum is, in theory, printed 6 times a year and is the main propaganda organ for the Philadelphia Association for Critical Thinking.

If you are not a subscriber we invite you to become one by sending \$15 for a one year membership to PhACT, \$10 for students.

Send letters of rebuttal, ideas, short essays, poetry, opinion pieces, complaints, and lavish praise to Ray Haupt, Phactum editor, at phactpublicity@aol.com.

PHACT CALENDAR

The **Physics Department of Community College of Philadelphia** hosts meetings of **PhACT** - at 2:00 PM on the third Saturday of most months at Community College of Philadelphia, 17th and Spring Garden Streets, West Building Room W2-48. **Meetings are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.**

Friday, December 21, 2007 - Phact Annual **Winter Solstice Party**. This event is free but is for members only. Location and other details will be communicated outside of this newsletter.

Tuesday, January 15, 2008 - PhACT and FSGP, The Free-thought Society of Greater Philadelphia, will co-host Dr. Michael Shermer, publisher of Skeptic magazine, at a Philadelphia speaking engagement at the Free Library of Philadelphia at 7:00 PM. This event is free. And open to the general public.

Saturday, January 19, 2008 - This meeting is postponed until February 16, 2008.

Saturday, February 16, 2008 - **Paul A. Offit, M.D.**, chief of infectious diseases at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and the Henle Professor of Immunologic and Infectious Diseases at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine will discuss **Vaccine Safety: Science Politics and the Media**. Dr. Offit is an internationally recognized expert in the fields of immunology and virology.

December 3, 2007 at 6:00 PM. The **Philadelphia College of Physicians** co-sponsored with The Philadelphia Academy of Surgery. **Regenerative Medicine and New Approaches to Healthcare in the 21st Century**, **Anthony Atala, MD**, W.H. Boyce Professor and Director, Wake Forest Institute for Regenerative Medicine and Chair, Department of Urology, Wake Forest University School of Medicine. Subscription Cocktail Buffet, 6:00 p.m., fees apply; Program 6:45 p.m.; dessert buffet follows program. To register for the program only, download registration form or register online. This event will be at the **Mutter Museum**, 19 South 22nd Street, Philadelphia PA 19103. The lecture, is free but pre-registration is required. Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 9am-5pm (215) 563-3737 x211

Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2007, 6:30 pm **Regulating the Practice of Medicine.** In the National Constitution Center in Delegate's Restaurant, 525 Arch Street, Independence Mall, Philadelphia. Contact: 215-409-6700. Admission: Free. Reservations required. The Cephalon Speaker Series for Science and the Constitution presents: "Regulating the Practice of Medicine," a conversation about how business and government promote, regulate, pay for and prohibit products in the health care industry.

Wednesday, December 12, 2007, 10:00 to 11:30 am. Hirst Auditorium (Dulles 1), Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, 3400 Spruce Street, Philadelphia PA **Templeton Research Lectureship Program on the Constructive Engagement Between Science and Religion (2005-2008).** In association with the HUP Department of Pastoral Care's SPIRITUALITY, RELIGION, AND HEALTH INTEREST GROUP. **SPIRITUAL HEALING: Relating the Healing Traditions of Religion and Medicine.** The lecturer will be David J. Hufford, PhD, University Professor Emeritus, Penn State.

For questions or to register for this event call 215-614-0332, or go

to www.mindreligion.com and go to the calendar section. This event is FREE and open to the public. Pizza will be served after the lecture.

Thursday, December 13, 2007 at The Franklin Institute, 20th and Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia. **Night Skies in the Observatory.** View the night sky from the best vantage point in town -- The Joel N. Bloom Observatory at The Franklin Institute. Chief Astronomer, Derrick Pitts will be on hand from 6 PM - 9:30 PM to help guide you through the galaxies. PLUS: he'll offer tips on how to select the perfect telescope and other science gifts for that someone special on your holiday shopping list! Admission is FREE for this final Night Skies of 2007.

Friday, December 14, 2007—Delaware Valley Mensa. Monthly Meetings are always open to family, friends, interested others, and the public. See the "Events Calendar" on the Mensa website for more information. After the meeting they adjourn to a local restaurant for some inexpensive food and conversation. The website is <http://dvm.us.mensa.org/>. See page 13 for more information about this event.

Sunday, December 16, 2007—Philadelphia Orchestra - Handel's *Messiah* Sing-along 2pm at Verizon Hall in Center City Philadelphia. Conductor Christopher Warren-Green makes his Philadelphia Orchestra debut leading the Orchestra, the Philadelphia Singers Chorale, and four leading Baroque soloists in Handel's beloved *Messiah*. The Philadelphia Orchestra, Christopher Warren-Green, conductor; Eliana Pretorian, soprano; Christopher Ainslie, countertenor; Mark Tucker, tenor; Stephen Richardson,

PHACT CALENDAR

bass; The Philadelphia Singers Chorale, David Hayes, music director. This event is not free but there are a limited number of tickets available for \$10. If you are a *Messiah* enthusiast this might be a good one to attend. Certainly a good band will play.

January 16, 2008: at **The Franklin Institute**, 20th and Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia. **Lecture by Dr. Spencer Wells: "Together Out of Africa"**. Themed to complement the *Identity* exhibit, and continuing the Out of Africa lecture series, The Franklin Institute welcome Dr. Spencer Wells, Explorer in Residence at National Geographic Society and Director of the Genographic Project. Having conducted the largest anthropological survey on human diversity ever, Dr. Wells and his team have traced all of humanity to its roots in eastern Africa. You are invited to learn more about identity - as Wells explores the mysteries of mankind's identity and gives us a different look at our shared family tree. This program is presented in association with National Geographic Live! *Admission is \$10 - \$5 for members; reservations are required. Call 215-448-1254.*



Calling All Astronomers! Rittenhouse Astronomical Society Monthly Meetings! Bring all of your out-of-this-world questions! Join **The Rittenhouse Astronomical Society** the second Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the Fels Planetarium in the Franklin Institute of Science. The society offers all persons an opportunity to participate in the activities of an astronomical group at the

laymen's level. They aim to spread knowledge, awareness and enjoyment of astronomy and astronomical issues. It is a popular science club that keeps its members up-to-date on the latest developments. No experience is necessary to attend the **FREE** meetings. Come with your astronomy questions!

Website: www.rittenhouseastronomicalsociety.org/

2007 Dates: December 12. The first meeting of 2008 is on January 9. Family Night!

Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia (FSGP) and the **Humanist Association of Greater Philadelphia (HAGP)** co-sponsor a monthly book discussion club. The book club meets on the third Saturday of each month at 7:00 PM at Willow Grove Barnes & Noble, 102 Park Avenue, Willow Grove, Pennsylvania 19090. If you have any questions, please contact the book club moderator, Ian Thomas. Email: ian.thomas101@gmail.com Phone: (610) 368-5915 Cell: (610) 565-4530.

Philadelphia Brights Meetup Group. Meetings are held at the Barnes & Noble Cafe at 1805 Walnut Street, at 7pm on the second Monday of the month.

The PhACT Calendar is open to members and non-members who wish to announce meetings and events of other groups of which they are interested or affiliated. These events should be of some general interest to the Skeptical or Scientific community and should be within a reasonable radius of Philadelphia. Send submissions to the editor at phactpublicity@aol.com. Keep the announcements brief. Space is limited and insertions will be made

Wagner Free Institute of Science

1700 West Montgomery Avenue

Philadelphia, PA 19121

ph 215-763-6529 www.wagnerfreeinstitute.org

Spring 2008 Courses

Mosses, Ferns, and Other Non-Flowering Plants, Professor Karen Snetselaar. Monday, January 14, 2008, beginning at 6:30 PM. 6 Mondays. Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, 100 N. 20th Street (20th and Arch Streets). Flowering plants have been on this earth a relatively short time. This class will survey the evolutionary history of land plants, including the members of these ancient groups that are still around today and are of special interest to gardeners and naturalists. **Preregistration required.**

Big Cats, Little Cats, and Their Genes, Professor Mary Beth Davis. **Wednesday, January 16, 2008**, beginning at 6:30 PM. 7 Wednesdays. Independence Branch of the Free Library, 18 S. 7th Street (7th and Market Streets). This course will begin with the recent DNA studies that elucidated evolutionary relationships between cat species. Most of the course will focus on understanding the genetic basis of specific traits in the domestic cat. **No preregistration required.**

Mesozoic Ruling Reptiles, Professor William Gallagher. **Saturday, January 26, 2008**, beginning at 10:15 AM. 10 Saturdays. University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 33rd and Spruce Streets. This course will study the great reptiles of the Mesozoic era from the early history of the dinosaur to the end of the Mesozoic and the big extinction. **No preregistration required.**

Perching Birds of the World - Passeriform (Songbird) Families, Professor Nathan Rice. **Thursday, January 31, 2008**, beginning at 6:30 PM. 7 Thursdays. The Academy of Natural Sciences, 19th Street and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. This class will focus on songbirds, the largest and most diverse clade of modern birds. Each week we will discuss a series working almost exclusively from the Academy's world-class bird collection. **Preregistration required and limited to 12 students. To preregister, call 215-763-6529, ext. 23, beginning Monday, November 12.**

The Evolution of Ideas about Human Evolution, Professor Monique Scott. **Wednesday, March 26, 2008**, beginning at 6:30 PM. 7 Wednesdays. Independence Branch of the Free Library, 18 S. 7th Street (7th and Market Streets). This class explores how ideas of human evolution and what it means to be human have changed over time. **No preregistration required.**

Invasive Plants in the Philadelphia Area, Professor Alfred E. Schuyler. **Monday, March 31, 2008**, beginning at 6:30 PM. 6 Mondays, 1 Saturday. Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, 100 N. 20th Street (20th and Arch Streets). This course will discuss how invasives differ from non-invasives, negative impacts of invasives from the 18th century to the present day, some notorious invasives and their habitats, and management strategies for reducing or eliminating the negative impacts of invasives. **Preregistration required.**

To preregister, call 215-763-6529, ext. 23, beginning Monday, November 12.

Wagner Institute courses are Free, but **contributions are welcome**. To order a copy of the catalog and a full description of courses, please email info@wagnerfreeinstitute.org or call 215-763-6529, ext. 21.

Submissions to Phactum in the form of letters and articles about topics of interest to skeptics and critical thinkers are always desired for publication in Phactum . Do you have an interest or some pet peeve about science or pseudo-science, medicine, "alternative medicine", fortune telling, the Origin of Life, beauty pageants, the meaning of the Universe, or know that elusive recipe for perfect lasagna? Then by all means take pen in hand and write it down and send it in. Who knows, you might become the next Edward R. Murrow! Original poetry is welcome and we cannot have too many clerihews and limericks.

Send by e-mail to:

Phactpublicity@aol.com

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Homeopathic Medicine

Facing every known cure for pollution
Is Homeopathy's impure solution.
In which traits, kind or cruel
Shapes each molecule,
Despite multiple rounds of dilution.

Letters

Editor: Someone in a "paranormal research" group I belong told me that the segment of Orianna Street below South is haunted. He said there was a massacre of Native Americans there and one of them put a curse on the spot. Further, he said psychics avoid it because one can be "spirited away" to Colonial times if one is there between the hours of about 10:30pm and 2am.

So I mentioned this place to some friends a few weeks ago to see if anyone wanted to go there with me. One did so, and as we approached it he told me he sometimes is psychically sensitive, but only in the company of others who have psychic ability. Out of a

sense of ethical obligation, I told him about the possibility of disappearing into the pre-Revolutionary past there, but not about the massacre.

When we got to the middle of the street, he closed his eyes and walked up and down it some distance to see what he would "see" with his eyes closed. He said he saw what looked like human figures in Colonial garb, walking around oblivious to us. He speculated that they weren't ghosts, but people of a different period that was visible to him there. I saw nothing out of the ordinary, with eyes either open or closed.

After we'd left this street, we found a place to sit down and tried some thought sending on each other. I wasn't impressed with the results,

but he thought I had definite psychic ability.

Only after this exercise did I tell him about the massacre at the spot we had visited. I pointed out that what he'd thought he'd seen -- people in period (European-American) dress, but no massacre or Native people -- was consistent with what I'd told him before our visit there, but not with the lore of that place in its entirety. Notwithstanding this, he continued to speculate that he was sensitive to seeing other time periods that evening.

It's worth noting here the oft-cited finding that people who say they've had psychic experiences or abilities are usually found to have more "fantasy-prone" personalities than those who don't. I must confess, however, that I don't know the criteria used to characterize someone as fantasy-prone in the first place.

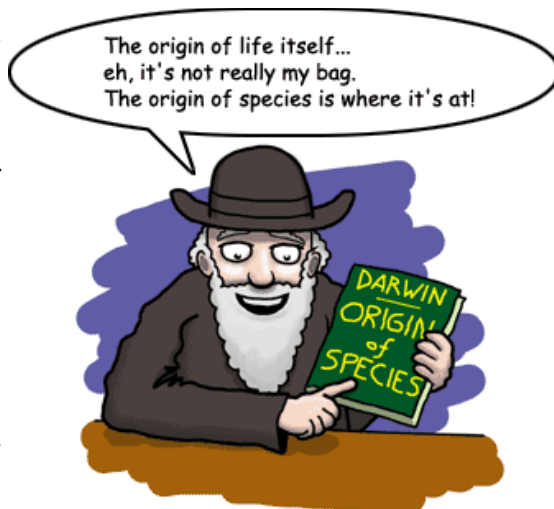
Eric Hamell
Philadelphia

Editor: I hope readers are familiar with the literary reference. I am inspired by Elaine Brody's letter in the November Phactum to submit the following:

Miss Brody, in her prime,
Writes clerihews that rhyme,
But since her name's Elaine, not Jean,
She's not a clerihew machine.

Tom Napier
North Wales, PA

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Various Ruminations

Collected/written by Ray Haupt, editor
(with help from others)

Evolution

Further back in this edition of Phactum there is an ad for the Mensa General Membership Meeting to be held on December 14, 2007. If you have any interest in fossils and evolution than by all means make a point to attend this meeting. The speaker is Dr. Ted Daeschler, Associate Curator, Department of Vertebrate Zoology, with the Academy of Natural Sciences here in Philadelphia. Ted was a PhACT speaker earlier this year and he has an exciting tale to tell about his part in the discovery of Tiktaalik roseae, a lobe finned fish from the Devonian period, about 375 million years ago. Tiktaalik was special, not just another old fossil. It had many anatomical features of fish but also many features of amphibians. It is considered a “transitional species”.

Tiktaalik was discovered by Ted and his team at Ellesmere Island in Nunavut, Canada, far north of the Arctic Circle during the summer of 2004.

Do yourself a favor and attend this Mensa meeting and perhaps if you are sufficiently inspired you will make a donation to the Academy of Natural Sciences earmarked to send Ted back into the wilderness to find more old bones. It is the Christmas giving season after all. \$50,000 would be a nice



donation, which was about the cost of the 2004 expedition. That is cheap when compared to some scientific experiments such as Hubble and nuclear accelerators.. Smaller donations are welcome too, and perhaps next time the expedition will be equipped with warmer tents.

Still more Evolution, plus the End of the World

I happened to hear a radio preacher named Harold Camping early in November who was discussing the seven days of Creation as set forth in the Holy Bible. Scientists, he asserted, based their conclusions about Evolution on guesswork, not on solid evidence as found in the Bible.

Camping had predicted many years ago that the End of the World would occur on September 6, 1994. In case you missed it, it didn't happen, but Camping is undeterred and is busy re-computing. He insists now that 1994 was the right date but you have to add seven years to it. He therefore predicted that Jesus, a Libra born October 4, 0007, would return to Earth on October 20, 2001. Look forward now for World Doom in 2011. Interestingly, Charleton Heston, a.k.a. Moses, was born on October 4th.

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The mathematically challenged Camping has determined, with solid evidence of course, that the world began in the year 11013 BC but he gives no precise day or hour.

Now the cosmic question is: how can Tiktaalik possibly be 375 million years old? You have an opportunity to learn that at the Mensa meeting from a scientist, Dr. Ted Daeschler, who did in fact did use educated guesswork to find Tiktaalik.

Clerihews

Who among Phactum readers has the audacity to write a “William of Orange” clerihew?

Winners Stampede at the Keno Lounge

A few months ago on a trip to Nevada and California, I happened to stumble upon Keno, a casino game that seems to be played more in restaurants and bars than on gaming floors.

Keno is a slow moving affair where every 5 minutes the house draws 20 numbers from a non-renewable pool of 80 numbers and displays the numbers on screens called *keno boards*. The objective is for the

gambler to guess some of the picked numbers in no particular order. The player marks a *keno ticket* indicating his guess of 1 to 15 numbers which are known as *spots*. *Spots* that are correctly guessed are known as a *catch*. The ticket is taken by a *keno runner* to the *keno booth* where the gamblers selections are recorded. Bets are usually \$1, \$2, or \$5 and players may specify that the ticket be played from 1 to 1000 times. When the play expires the player has up to a year to redeem his winnings. The basic game is really quite simple although there are many complex elaborations which do nothing to enhance the gambler's odds.

Suppose then that a gambler decides to play a "*1 spot game*". What are his odds to win and what is his reward? Since the house picks 20 out of a pool of 80 numbers and the gambler picks 1 *spot* the odds are $1 \cdot 20 / 80 = 0.25$. Payoffs may vary from casino to casino but what I encountered was a \$3.00 payoff for playing a 1-spot. The financial expectation per game for the gambler is therefore \$0.75; hardly a way to gain riches.

Computation of keno odds gets a lot more complicated beyond *1-spot play*. Suppose the gambler decides to "*play a 6-spot*", what then? Computation of the odds in this situation is known as a "hypergeometric distribution" and rest assured the arithmetic is as unhappy as it sounds. Fortunately, through the wonders of the internet, I have found a table of probabilities for all keno possibilities and the gambler's dismal prospects

Play 6 Spots			
Catch	Probability	Payout	Expectation
0	0.1666	0	
1	0.3635	0	
2	0.3083	0	
3	0.1298	\$1	\$0.13
4	0.0285	\$3	\$0.09
5	0.003096	\$100	\$0.31
6	0.000129	\$1495	\$0.19

for "*play 6-spot*" as shown in the table.

The highest prize in the \$1 column for regular keno is \$50,000 and it can be first found in the "*play 11 spots*" game where all one must do is *catch 11 spots*. The idea is simple, the odds a mere $1.6030e-008$, or in other words, 0.000000016030 or about 62,000,000 to 1. And get a load of this: the gamblers expectation is a whopping \$0.0008 giving a whole new meaning to futile chance.

Fortunately for the *keno runners* it is customary for the losers, as well as the winners, to tip.

Cappuccino Foam

Al Erpel sent in this little item from the Daily Mail, November 24, 2007. It looks like a lot of fun for the kids. See page 8.

New regulations on licensing of homeopathy

One need not dig deeply on the internet to discover that Prince Charles is an enthusiast for homeopathy. I rather get a kick out of the Royal Family, they are good tabloid reading, but the matter of regulation of medicine is a bit more important than Royal Affairs and better left to scientists than untrained duffers no matter their social strata. But duffers, thanks largely to politicians and vested interests, do often manage to get their own way, but the ultimate price can be very high indeed.

On 1st September 2006, new regulations came into force that permit homeopathic products to make medical claims but exempt them from providing any scientific evidence that they are effective. This is the first time in its history that the regulation of medicines has moved away from science and from clear, meaningful information for the public. What is more, it happened without parliamentary time or public debate.

Sense About Science, a United Kingdom science organization, reported this information on their website (<http://www.senseaboutscience.org>) and by October had presented many reports to Parliament on this matter. Hopefully Sense About Science and their allies will prevail, but the madness that is Homeopathy is world wide, which leads into a related story that was reported in James Randi's weekly commentary "Swift". I took the liberty to include that item verbatim.

QUACKERY ACCEPTED DOWN UNDER

From reader Dean Malandris comes this dreadful story. The Sydney Morning Herald reported that New South Wales Coroner Mary Jerram has found that, in her opinion, there is sufficient evidence for their Director of Public Prosecutions to consider bringing charges against the parents of a baby who died after they treated her with homeopathic remedies. Nine-month-old Gloria Thomas died in May 2002 in Sydney Children's Hospital of sepsis, or bacterial infections. The child was severely malnourished, and had very serious eczema. The inquest was told that the cracks in her skin caused the baby severe pain and were a potential source of the bacteria that eventually killed

her.

Her parents, Thomas Sam – a homeopath – and Information Technology professional Manju Samuel, treated her with homeopathic remedies rather than with her medically-prescribed pharmaceuticals. Coroner Jerram said the evidence showed that the parents caused Gloria's death and that their negligence warranted criminal punishment.

Nonsense. The responsibility lies elsewhere. I ask: Is the practice of homeopathy accepted by Australian health authorities? Are homeopaths allowed to practice in Australia as professionals? Are homeopathic preparations legally sold in stores in Australia? Is homeopathy legally advertised via the media in Australia? If the answers to any of these questions are "yes," then the practice of homeopathy is not illegal in that country, and Thomas Sam – obviously convinced that homeopathy is effective, certainly was within his rights to administer what he believed was appropriate medical care to his daughter, and was doing what he thought was proper and correct!

Yes, the sad fact is that the parents were very wrong, perhaps stupid, and naïve, and that is what led to the death of the little child, but I do not believe that being wrong, or stupid, or naïve, is in violation of the law. Obviously, I am not addressing the question of whether the parents are culpable for neglecting to administer the medically-prescribed substances that might have saved the life of Gloria Thomas; that is beyond my expertise. I am suggesting that the fact that homeopathy is not considered – by the Australian

authorities – to be a serious danger to human life because it can replace proven, evidence-based medical treatment – is a mistake, a lacuna in thinking that should be addressed, in Australia and around the world.

Homeopathy is a very insidious notion; it appears to be possibly beneficial at best, and innocuous at worst. It is neither. It is quackery in its most virulent form.

Coroner Jerram said, as if to recommend a procedure for at least trying to remedy this situation: I recommend the NSW Department of Health consider introducing a mandatory system of registration for persons practicing or wishing to practice homeopathy.

Registration of quacks? As what, Ms. Jerram? Dangerous persons? Harmless eccentrics? Fun-seeking crackpots? Why not simply look into the abysmal record of homeopathy – the actual facts, the evidence, and not the endless anecdotes and "testimonials" so preferred by these amateurs – and issue a statement that tells Australians what total, mystical, pseudoscientific claptrap homeopathy really is, and warn them against using it for anything but amusement? Or would that not be politically correct?

Ask Gloria Thomas...

You can subscribe to Swift at <http://www.randi.org>. It is free although donations are welcome, and there is no better source of information about what is going on in the world of Critical Thinking.

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Whipped Ocean

Near Sidney Australia

The Daily Mail, November 24, 2007

It was as if someone had poured tons of coffee and milk into the ocean, then switched on a giant blender. Suddenly the shoreline north of Sydney was transformed into the Cappuccino Coast. Foam swallowed an entire beach and half the nearby buildings, including the local lifeguards' centre, in a freak display of nature at Yamba in New South Wales. One minute a group of teenage surfers were waiting to catch a



Boy in the bubble bath: Tom Woods, 12, emerges from the clouds of foam after deciding that surfing was not an option

wave, the next they were swallowed up in a giant bubble bath. The foam was so light that they could puff it out of their hands and watch it float away.

It stretched for 30 miles out into the Pacific in a phenomenon not seen at the beach for more than three decades. Scientists explain that the foam is created by impurities in the ocean, such as salts, chemicals, dead plants, decomposed fish and excretions from seaweed. All are churned up together by powerful currents which cause the water to form bubbles. These bubbles stick to each other as they are carried below the surface by the current towards the shore. As a wave starts to form on the surface, the motion of the water causes the bubbles to swirl upwards and, massed together, they become foam.

The foam 'surfs' towards shore until the wave 'crashes', tossing the foam into the air.

Whitewash: The foam was so thick it came all the way up to the surf club 'It's the same effect you get when you whip up a milk shake in a blender,' explains a marine expert. 'The more powerful the swirl, the more foam you create on the surface and the lighter it becomes.'

In this case, storms off the New South Wales Coast and north of Queensland had created a huge disturbance in the ocean, hitting a stretch of water where there was a particularly high amount of the substances which form into bubbles. As for 12-year-old beach goer Tom Woods, who has been surfing since he was two, riding a wave was out of the question. 'Me and my mates just spent the afternoon leaping about in that stuff,' he said. 'It was quite cool to touch and it was really weird. It was like clouds of air - you could hardly feel it.'

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Children play among all the foam which has been whipped up by cyclonic conditions.

Not in Our Classrooms: Why Intelligent Design is Wrong for Our Schools
 edited by Eugenie C. Scott and Glenn Branch

ISBN 0-807-03278-6

Beacon Press, October 2006

Paperback, 171 pages, US \$14.00

More than eighty years after the Scopes trial, creationism is alive and well. Through local school boards, sympathetic politicians, and well-funded organizations, a strong movement has developed to encourage the teaching of the latest incarnation of creationism--intelligent design--as a scientifically credible theory alongside evolution in science classes. Although intelligent design suffered a serious defeat in the recent *Kitzmiller v. Dover* trial, its proponents are bound to continue their assault on evolution education. Now, in *Not in Our Classrooms*, parents and teachers, as well as other concerned citizens, have a much-needed tool to use in the argument against teaching intelligent design as science.

Where did the concept of intelligent design originate? How does it connect with, and conflict with, various religious beliefs? Should we "teach the controversy" in our science classrooms? In clear and lively essays, a team of experts answers these questions and many more, describing the history of the intelligent design movement and the lack of scientific support for its claims. Most importantly, the contributors--authorities on the scientific, legal, educational, and theological problems of intelligent design--speak specifically to teachers and parents about the need to defend the integrity of science education by keeping intelligent design out of science curriculums. A concluding chapter offers concrete advice for those seeking to defend the teaching of evolution in their own communities.

Not in Our Classrooms is essential reading for anyone concerned about defending the teaching of evolution, uncompromised by religiously motivated pseudoscience, in the classrooms of our public schools.

Wagner Free Institute of Science

1700 West Montgomery Avenue

Philadelphia, PA 19121

ph 215-763-6529 www.wagnerfreeinstitute.org

The Wagner Institute's nineteenth century exhibit hall – a soaring three-story space – houses an extraordinary collection of natural history specimens including mounted birds and mammals, fossils, rocks and minerals, insects, shells, dinosaur bones, and the first American saber-toothed tiger, discovered on a museum-sponsored expedition to Florida in 1886. Gathered largely by founder William Wagner and Institute curators and faculty during the nineteenth century, the collections are displayed in cherry-wood and glass cabinets dating from the 1880s and maintain their original "systematic" scheme, providing a rare view of a Victorian science museum.

Highlights include William Wagner's personal mineral collection – one of the oldest in the country –



and his fossil collection, representing many important European and American localities and collecting sites of the nineteenth century. The mounted skeletons, skulls and skins represent species from around the globe, including many that are now endangered. The extensive regional entomology collection is notable for its arrangement, which includes the original handwritten curator's labels.

Originally assembled to teach science, the specimens are arranged for study. The exhibit is one of the largest systematically arranged collections on display in the country and remains in active use as a key educational tool of the Institute's free science programs. It also serves as a resource for scholarly research.

A Global Warming Nobel Peace Prize?

By Albert Z. Conner

The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Al Gore and the UN IPCC panel was a travesty. Neither recipient has made the slightest contribution to world peace. Neither has contributed to "improving fraternity between nations", or "abolition of standing armies", or "promotion of peace congresses". These are the Nobel guidelines.

Al Gore is a self-serving, scientifically illiterate politician who is using alarmist global warming stories in much the same way that Senator Joseph McCarthy used the exaggerated threat of communism in the 1950s. The IPCC panel, composed of Government-appointed scientists and non-scientists, has issued a series of controversial reports that attempt to convince the world that global warming is a man-made phenomenon caused by an increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere that threatens the world's ecology. This conclusion has been accepted by many governments and the world-wide media. Since the publication of these reports, literally thousands of comments from expert scientists criticizing the accuracy and validity of the reports have been received by the panel. These comments have been ignored or rejected by the panel. In addition, a petition containing the verified signatures of 17000 qualified scientists who seriously object to the conclusions of the reports is currently in circulation.

Many dissenting climatologists have been vilified

and attacked by the believers who label them as "deniers" with all the Holocaust connotations of that word. Rather than debating the scientific merits of the case, the believers have resorted to personal attacks impugning the integrity of the objectors and suggesting that they are pawns of the industrial/energy complex.

The infamous Kyoto Protocol, created as a result of the UN Environmental Program, if ratified, would create an enormous financial burden on the world's governments. Even without ratification, billions of dollars are being spent on research intended to address climate

change with the aim of reducing or capturing carbon dioxide emissions. A great many scientists believe that carbon dioxide is not the problem. Carbon dioxide is not a pollutant. It is an essential component of the Earth's atmosphere. It is a minor greenhouse gas compared to clouds and water vapor. Current computer models of the Earth's climate are notoriously inaccurate in predicting the long-term effects of

these gases or accounting for the effects of solar cycles and cosmic rays.

Be prepared. Al Gore's Alliance for Climate Protection is planning a \$100million media blitz in the near future. A large group of qualified scientists do not support his Inconvenient Truth. No. Al, the debate is not over!

Albert Z. Conner is a retired analytical chemist with more than 20 years experience in the fields of epidemiology, toxicology, statistics, and government regulatory practices. Mr. Conner is living in Delaware, a state where high government officials have been at times hostile toward dissenting climate scientists.

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"We may not appreciate the fact; but a fact nevertheless it remains: we are living in a Golden Age, the most gilded Golden Age of human history—not only of past history, but of future history. For, as Sir Charles Darwin and many others before him have pointed out, we are living like drunken sailors, like the irresponsible heirs of a millionaire uncle. At an ever accelerating rate we are now squandering the capital of metallic ores and fossil fuels accumulated in the earth's crust during hundreds of millions of years. How long can this spending spree go on? Estimates vary. But all are agreed that within a few centuries or at most a few millennia, Man will have run through his capital and will be compelled to live, for the remaining nine thousand nine hundred and seventy or eighty centuries of his career as Homo sapiens, strictly on income. Sir Charles is of the opinion that Man will successfully make the transition from rich ores to poor ores and even sea water, from coal, oil, uranium and thorium to solar energy and alcohol derived from plants. About as much energy as is now available can be derived from the new sources—but with a far greater expense in man hours, a much larger capital investment in machinery. And the same holds true of the raw materials on which industrial civilization depends. By doing a great deal more work than they are doing now, men will contrive to extract the diluted dregs of the planet's metallic wealth or will fabricate non-metallic substitutes for the elements they have completely used up. In such an event, some human beings will still live fairly well, but not in the style to which we, the squanderers of planetary capital, are accustomed." — **Aldous Leonard Huxley (1894–1963)**

“My Car drives itself to the Casino”

By Gary Lange, Ph.D.

I have often heard this capricious phrase from clients in the early stages of recovery: “I don’t know how I ended up there; my car must have driven itself to the casino!” Denying the power of the obsession/addiction often leads the problem gambler to almost believe their vehi-



Gambler’s transportation from Home to the Casino

cle has mysterious powers and acts on its own. Those who want to quit gambling can attend Gamblers Anonymous, psychotherapy, attend supportive groups, and take medication, but still are amazed how easily they can find themselves inside of a casino and placing a bet. Staying away from all gambling environments is a major first step in recovery.

In therapy, I initially join the “recovering” gambler in behavioral contracts, which involve commitments, and specific plans for safety. For example, a client may agree to this kind of an agreement: “I commit to you my therapist or sponsor, that I will drive this specific route to the pharmacy, this route to the supermarket and then directly home. I expect to be home by 4:30 at which time I’ll call you.” While this scenario seems incredibly simplistic, it seems more crucial, in my experience, for gamblers than other addicts and alcoholics. Since Pathological Gambling is an Impulse Control Disorder, monitoring these impulses and setting up safe plans is often necessary. Being able to trust another, make commitments and get “through” visceral urges are important steps in recovery.

To accept one’s powerlessness (as in GA’s first step) and begin relying on a greater Power (Steps 2 and 3) are prodigious steps for many problem gamblers.

Abstinence is a major factor in assisting gamblers to get rested, nourished and more prepared to deal with anger, guilt and sadness. The floods of these feelings may need careful monitoring. As appropriate, family members can help decrease the chances of further financial losses and contracts for safety. Spouses, parents and friends tend to be very slow to trust especially since the gambling has often been so deeply concealed.

Over time, many recovering gamblers are particularly friendly, generous, and quite willing to “carry the



Gambler’s transportation from the Casino to Home

message to other problem gamblers who still suffer.” They even come to humorously accept that their car is just an inanimate object that only goes where it is driven, just as they only go where THEY are driven!

Gary Lange, Ph.D. is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and Certified Gambling Counselor. Located in Rancho Mirage, California. Dr. Lange is a Professor of Psychology at California State University, San Bernardino. He is currently writing a book for treating families of gamblers.

There is a very easy way to return from a casino with a small fortune: go there with a large one.

Jack Yelton

Strange places - Rosicrucian HQ

By Eric Krieg and Jeff Clarke

Long before readings about this place in "Weird Pennsylvania", Jeff and Eric had heard stories of strange structures and goings on at the 70 acres of the world Rosicrucian headquarters. Under cover of darkness, we parked about a km away and bushwhacked using moonlight and the lay of the land to navigate into the back of the site. Much of the compound is lit by spot lights.

We saw a number of pyramids including one maybe 6m high and a number of statues of angels, kids and goddesses. Much of the grounds were well manicured including pathways, streams, ponds, little bridges and buildings of unknown function. We ran through the shadows, not from fear of being caught but out of not wanting to cause real fear of the unknown on the part of any legitimate residents who could have been up at that early hour. While getting ready to sprint through an open area, I told Jeff, "If we are challenged by a coven of robed figures, I'll just proclaim, 'as it was foretold in the past, WE ARE THE CHOSEN ONES! - now take us to the virgins'".

Jeff was worried our presence would be betrayed by my head lamp and occasional flash pictures. Following a wooded trail to a more remote open grassy area, I had a premonition it must have some ceremonial purpose and sure enough we found a plaque declaring it "the sacred grove" and mentioning something about "Solomon's prayer". We then found a spooky bronze 1m wide ground emblem which appears to have English spelling of Greek and Hebrew words. . Some of the Greek words reminded me of secret expressions from my college fraternity that all you uninitiated are never to hear. After taking in all we could from the more remote back side and with first light arriving, we surged out to the main road to pass for normal runners. Strangely along the road, vehicles started pulling out and from near buildings and appearing to track us. A quick sprint into another parcel of woods left us never



to know if that was a coincidence. We don't plan to return and can't claim to have solved any mysteries, but it was a neat trip.

A brief history/summary of the Rosicrucians.

"The first Rosicrucian Fraternity was formed in Germany in 1614 from various associations of people from groups like the Hermetists, Gnostics, Pythagoreans, Magi, Platonists, Alchemists, and Paracelsians."

Like many cult-like groups, they claim some lineage back to the Egyptian empire. They became officially the Fraternity Rosae Crucis in 1614."

The Rosicrucians existed in America prior to the revolution. In 1774, the great Council of Three (the Fraternity's ultimate governing body) was supposedly comprised of Benjamin Franklin, George Clymer and Thomas Paine. Thomas Paine was later succeeded by Lafayette, who, like Benjamin Franklin, was a member of the Paris Rosicrucian lodge "Humanidad". The American branch split off when Reuben Clymer, an MD, became an influential member and bought the current site. The first buildings (still there) were built starting in 1910.. It appears that the current supreme leader is able to select his successor while still living and doesn't give up the title until he dies. The current SGM (since '83) is Gerald Poesnecker, a chiropractor.

There was an interesting case in the PA Court of Common Pleas in 1990 where 4 other leaders took control and deposed Poesnecker, saying that he had mismanaged the Rosicrucian's assets and challenged his appointment as Supreme Grand Master, saying it had not followed the their "organic law". They replaced him with another chiropractor, Paul Ricchio, but Poesnecker took them to court and was re-instated.

Jeff Clarke and Eric Krieg are running buddies with a penchant for getting off the beaten track to explore unusual places in the Delaware Valley. So far the big dogs in their adventurous meanderings have been reasonably friendly.

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I support the aims of PhACT and would like to join/rejoin for the next year. The annual membership is \$15 and \$10 for students. I have enclosed a check payable to **PhACT**.

□
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 □ **639 W. Ellet Street** □
 □ **Philadelphia, PA 19119** □
 □

Membership dues of \$ _____ enclosed to pay for _____ years of membership.

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Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

_____ E_mail _____

Mensa General Membership Meeting

Friday, December 14th, 2007 at 8:00 PM
 at the Police Administration Building,
 750 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA.

Great Steps in Evolution: New Fossil Discovery Provides a Link Between Fish and Limbed Vertebrates

We came from where? How did we end up here? You are related to whom? (No! Really? Get out of town!) Similar questions have plagued humans from the beginning of recorded history. At one time, individuals were defined by their given ancestry. Maybe only the quest for knowledge about what follows death, is as universal as the quest for knowledge concerning our past. Our speaker, **Dr. Ted Daeschler**, Associate Curator, Department of Vertebrate Zoology, with the Academy of Natural Sciences, has carried his quest a bit further than most. He has discovered a new fossil which links the gap between fish and limbed vertebrates



This meeting is DVM's only activity specifically open to the public, so feel free to invite your friends and relatives and pet fossils..

P.S.: Don't let traffic on the Schuylkill Expressway interfere with attending. Consider taking SEPTA and exiting at Market Street East / Gallery, it is only a two block walk to the Police Administration Building.

P.S.S.: Bring a picture of your great great great . . . grandparents and see if there is any resemblance.

PHACT

Phila. Assoc. for Critical Thinking
639 W. Ellet Street
Philadelphia, PA 19119



Galileo Galilei
(1564 –1642)



"I WANTED TO DO SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR YOU THIS CHRISTMAS, SO I HAD MY OLD BOCCE BALLS MADE INTO EARRINGS. I KNEW IT WOULD LEAVE YOU SPEECHLESS."