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For past issues, links to other skeptics, and more, check out the SORT Website: <http://home.surewest.net/kitray>
 For more about the co-founders of SORT, see www.spangenburgandmoser.com

FEBRUARY
SORT Meeting
Tuesday, February 27, 2007
7:30 P.M.
 La Sierra Community Center
 Room 800, 5325 Engle Road
 Carmichael, CA
 (See driving directions, p. 3)

The *SORTified* NEWS

“Doubt is the beginning of wisdom.”
 —Clarence Darrow

February 27 Meeting

POINT OF NO RETURN?

Well, we have been asked for a long time by various people of various political convictions to do this one, that is if we can quite get a handle on it. The question of the night then is: Has America crossed the line of no return in its unequal division of wealth and property between rich and poor? Those with power and those without? Is this what the American dream was all about? Is this how democracy and capitalism must inevitably end? Or have the doomsayers exaggerated problems with the nation’s basic soundness both economically and politically? Should democracy and capitalism remain the ideals with which we measure political systems?

Sound like tough going? Well let’s keep our cool and our civility and see how it plays. As usual, free and plentiful soft drinks, coffee and cookies will be on hand throughout the meeting. It’s your chance, all, so let’s hear from you as well as everyone else’s thoughts on the subject. It should as usual make for a fascinating evening of discussion around the

HAPPY BIRTHDAY
 to
SORT and SORTERS!
The SORT Round Table is
10 years old!!
Next SORT Meeting:
February 27, 2007

SORT squared round table.

Hope to see you all there February 27, Room 800, La Sierra Community Center in Carmichael, 7:30 p.m. Help yourself to cookies, decaf, coffee, and soda along with good conversation.

See page 3 for directions.

SO WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN...

. . . you suddenly find yourself caught up at 4 a.m. one morning in a cold sweat, increasingly unbearable abdominal pain and the uneasy recognition that you may be about to go into shock? You don’t call ghostbusters. A quick ambulance ride and a couple of hours later in the surgical

recovery room minus one perforated appendix you are still hallucinating occasionally, drifting in and out as the morphine keeps racing through your body but becoming more aware of your circumstances. If you are a writer you begin to collect sounds, voices, reflections.

Pieces of recollection after six long hospital nights...mostly gathered from the dark halls of after midnight.

There is a frightening empathy in shared pain but we share it not. The crying voice of an elderly woman each night around 3:00 a.m., echoing down the halls. "Oh God! Please God! Please God! Why me? Please God. Please . . ." And the sounds in the night echo humanity's true relationship with its demanding invisible playmate, Listen then also to the young man in the next bed, a kid actually if not in years, arguing with his parents and doctors against yet another operation that will "make him more comfortable." Already missing assorted pieces of his digestive tract and a half a dozen tumors make him unable to do more than lie on his stomach. The private conversation behind a drawn curtain one afternoon when a "visiting minister," a young woman of supreme confidence who could have just as easily been selling real estate speaks to the kid about Heaven. The kid believes in it and knows that he is going there but has a question, or at least an opinion...he doesn't think that you should go there simply by being born again but

by your "good deeds" during your life. Later it turns out that he knows what his parents think he doesn't know...that he is headed toward a hospice and the operation he doesn't want will make it easier for the staff at the hospice to take care of him.

The woman custodian on the morning shift who asks sweetly one morning as she passes your bed if you believe in God. You kind of smile and shrug in a cowardly way. You should believe in God she says, falling silent as a nurse enters the room in the morning bustle. The next morning you keep your curtains closed as the cleanup crews make their rounds. Too much pain to argue. Too little good to try. The kid in the next bed watches.

Another 3:00 a.m. comes and a new loud crying voice, different but somehow just as terrified, just as lost. "No. No! No, God, please!" You hear the story from a night nurse later as you walk the hall. An elderly woman in her eighties will not use a bedpan, refuses. Cannot. It is not something she is emotionally equipped to do. Not something to be done in public, and handled by others. The frightening empathy of shared pain but we share it not.

Six days on IV and pain killers and the sounds of ice cubes in unbelievably large wet glasses passing by on rattling trays and evoking the true beauty of the profoundly material. Fragments of breaking news stories about the death of Anna Nicole Smith drift

The Sacramento Organization for Rational Thinking (SORT). . .

- Is dedicated to the promotion of rational thinking in all areas of life.
- Upholds the superiority of science over the mystical.
- Promotes and supports all efforts of intelligent communication that provide a counterpoint to the strong waves of anti-rationalism, irrationalism, and mysticism sweeping the world today.

Toward these ends we . . .

- Host a monthly discussion group.
- Publish a monthly newsletter.
- Host special events, talks, and presentations.
- Host a web page.

While SORT began with and still continues to be concerned with the promotion of critical thinking in areas dealing with the pseudo-scientific, the paranormal, the mystical, and the fraudulent, we strongly promote critical thinking in *all* areas of human thought and endeavor.

The core of SORT activities is our discussion group. The art of intelligent conversation is not dead. We at SORT believe that rational conversation--the meeting of minds, the free exchange of ideas and the provocative stimulation of critical questions--is one of the most civilized and enlightening of all human activities.

SORT discussion topics have ranged from UFOs to the Holocaust, from "alternative medicine" to the problems in communicating science to the public, from classic and recent cons and scams to the teaching of critical thinking. Our discussions are hosted by one of the SORT founders, and participants are by no means limited to experts (although they may include experts) but are made up of intelligent and questioning people concerned with the topic of the evening.

from the semi-darkened rooms of the non-sleepers. Fox Television News creeps like a slowly growing monster threatening the few private corners as we strive to own our own environment.

If you strain hard you can almost hear sounds from the outside, in the far away night streets...the freedom of darkness away from the prison cell each hospital room has become. Sartre smiles.

And the days pass.

Note: Our apologies for the brevity of this month's SORTified News. We hope to be back in gear with the next issue!

BOARD OF ADVISERS

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About the Founders

Ray Spangenburg and Kit Moser are a husband-and-wife writing team specializing in science and technology. They are coauthors of more than 50 books and over 100 articles, including publication in the *Skeptical Inquirer*, and they are former coeditors of the *Bay Area Skeptics Information Sheet (BASIS)*.

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GETTING TO LA SIERRA COMMUNITY CENTER

From Highway 50: Take the Watt Avenue exit and head north. Turn right on Marconi, by the Raley's store. Travel east on Marconi to Walnut and turn left. Travel north on Walnut to Engle and turn right. Turn left at La Sierra Community Center. Follow the road past the main parking lot and along the east side of the building. Room 800 is in the second building on the left (just past the open, grassy area). Park, look for the SORT sign, and come on in!

From I-80: Take the Madison exit and head east. Turn right on Garfield and head south. Turn right on Gibbons and left at La Sierra Community Center. Follow the road along the east side of the building. Room 800 is in the last building before the open, grassy area. Park, look for the SORT sign, and come on in!

RATIONAL COMMUNITY CALENDAR

February 27: Sacramento Organization for Rational Thinking (SORT)

Topic: “Land of Rich and Poor: Point of No Return?”

Time: Tuesday, 7:30–9:00 p.m. (social period until 9:30)

Place: La Sierra Community Center, Room 800, 5325 Engle Road, Carmichael
Everyone is welcome and all meetings are free.

March 11: Atheists and Other Freethinkers (AOF)

Speaker: To be announced. Check <http://aofonline.org/events> and <http://aofonline.org/generalmeetings> for more details.

Time: Second Sunday, 1:30–4:30 p.m. (Please note new time.)

Location: Sierra 2 Community Center, Room 10, 2791 24th Street (So. of Broadway). The public is welcome.



**Sacramento Organization
for Rational Thinking
P.O. Box 2215
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*Educating Ourselves
and Educating Others*

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED