



June 2000  
 Volume 3, Issue 6  
 Publication of the  
**Sacramento**  
**Organization for**  
**Rational Thinking**  
 (SORT)

**Inside This Issue**

- 1** This Month: IS THERE ANYBODY OUT THERE?
- 1** THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF WEIRD
- 2** WHEN WILL THIS NON-SENSE STOP?
- 2** TRAGEDY IN EVERGREEN, COLORADO
- 2** SO LONG, JEFF
- 2** QUICK TAKES FROM THE NEWS
- 3** BOOK NOTES

For past issues, bibliography, links to other skeptics, and more, check out the SORT Website: [www.quiknet.com/~kitray/index1.html](http://www.quiknet.com/~kitray/index1.html)

**SORT's Next Meeting**  
**Wednesday, June 28, 2000**

**7:00 P.M.**

La Sierra Community Center,  
 Room 415  
 5325 Engle Road  
 Carmichael, CA

---

# The **SORTified** NEWS

---

**“Doubt is the beginning of wisdom.”**

—Clarence Darrow

---

**This month at SORT**  
**IS THERE ANYBODY OUT THERE?**

Are we alone in the Universe? Or is there somebody, “something” —any other living thing—out there? It’s a haunting question with profound implications. Can it ever even be answered? Join us at our June SORT meeting as Ray Spangenburg and Kit Moser (who are currently working on a book, *Life on Other Worlds?*) host our discussion and talk about some of the latest information and thinking relevant to this fascinating question.

Come on and join us, then, for free coffee, cookies, soft drinks and conversation.

We’ll be at La Sierra Community Center, 5325 Engle Road in Carmichael, just off Walnut, at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 28, in Room 415.

**THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF WEIRD**

Have you been abducted by aliens? Has it happened more than once? Are you the victim of alien harassment? Is it getting kind of irritating to you? Spoiling your once free-spirited life style? Making it difficult to keep appointments? If so then you might want to contact an individual by the name of Mike Menkin at [www.nwlink.com/~Mmenkin](http://www.nwlink.com/~Mmenkin). Seems that Mike has a solution to your problems. To quote his

recent posting on the Web “This request references reports of alien abductions as reported by Budd Hopkins, David Jacobs and Raymond Fowler. I made a device which may help people abducted by aliens as reported by the above investigators.” According to Mike, “The device works by blocking alien telepathy and mind control.” What is this miracle device? Well, Mike explains that it’s a “thought screen helmet,” consisting of “a leather helmet lined with layers of special conductive plastic, the same material used to prevent static electricity damage to printed circuit boards.” Don’t get too excited, though; it appears that it is still in the experimental stage. Mike continues, “When worn over the head, I believe the device may insulate an abductee from alien telepathic control. Its function is not proven, I realize, but a shield for blocking alien telepathic control is worth trying.” Seems that Mike already has one volunteer trying out his device and “he has not had any memorable alien contact for three months so the device may work.” Mike is currently attempting to contact other volunteers to test out his helmet. As he explains, “My ‘thought screen helmet’ cannot be tested in a laboratory. The only way to test it is for an abductee to wear it for a period of time and determine if the telepathic control of aliens is blocked or neutralized. If the ‘thought screen helmet’ works it will minimize alien activity with a person

and allow that person to resist aliens.” And what does this wonderful boon to all who suffer alien abductions cost? Absolutely nothing, Mike claims. “There are no catches. It’s available to any serious abductee who wants to test it for free, anywhere in the world. Several sizes are available.”

Note: We couldn’t find a date when this was posted so we don’t know if Mike is still working away at trying to help the terrestrially disadvantaged or not, but best of luck to you all, and may the Force cease being with you.

### WHEN WILL THIS NONSENSE STOP?

It just keeps coming down. According to Reuters (June 13, 2000,) “Florsheim Group Inc., the 107-year-old company that shod legions of businessmen in sensible shoes, went New Age on Monday, launching a line of dress and walking shoes with magnetic insoles purported to improve blood circulation and energy.” The report continues quoting David Sanguinette, Florsheim’s chief operating officer, as saying, “With a flexible magnetic sheet strategically placed in the insole of the shoe, men will enjoy the health benefits associated with biomagnetics which have been known to increase circulation, range of motion, energy and vitality.” Doesn’t it make you feel good to know that America’s businessmen are now walking in the shoes of all the other new age dummies?

### TRAGEDY IN EVERGREEN, COLORADO

Not so amusing is a story out of Evergreen, Colorado where 10 year old Candice Newmaker died off asphyxiation as a result of “rebirthing therapy.” According to an AP report, “Five people

have been charged with child abuse as a result of the April 18 session.” The therapist in charge of the session and the child’s adoptive mother were among those arrested. During the session the girl was completely wrapped in a blanket twisted tight at both ends. It was supposed to represent the womb. Meanwhile, the so-called therapists “pushed up against her with pillows” while urging her to fight her way out. According to investigators, the “treatment” was supposed to help her heal from past trauma by becoming “reborn.” The 10-year-old child died struggling, crying, and in her own vomit. She was being “treated” for “reactive attachment disorder” in which “children resist forming loving relationships and become unmanageable and violent.”

According to the AP, the small mountain town of Evergreen has become an unofficial center for the “treatment” of such disorders.

### SO LONG, JEFF

On another sad note this month, cartoonist Jeff McNally died at the age of 52. Jeff, who has delighted the editors of this newsletter for years with his “Shoe” cartoon strip featuring the adventures of a cranky newspaper editor and his staff who just happen to be birds (all too familiar to a couple of ex-journalists) had been fighting lymphoma for the last year. So long, Jeff. We will miss you.

### QUICK TAKES FROM THE NEWS

From *Newsweek*, May 1, 2000 comes a report that states, “An overwhelming majority of Americans believe that God performs miracles.” According to the magazine, “nearly half say they have personally seen or experienced

### 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.

SORT began with and continues to maintain concern with the promotion of critical thinking in areas dealing with the pseudo-scientific, the paranormal, the mystical, and the fraudulent, and 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.

one.” *Newsweek* says, “Eighty-four percent of Americans said that God performs miracles” and “seventy-nine percent say they believe that the miracles described in the Bible actually took place.”

From Reuters, June 2, 2000, comes a report that experts are becoming worried that “false fears about the dangers of vaccines could encourage parents to leave children unvaccinated.” Reuters quotes Dr. Bruce Gellin, executive director of the National Network for Immunization Information as saying, “Patients now come into doctors’ offices with print-outs from the Internet about the supposed harm caused by a certain vaccine, believing that the information is fact.”

And from the AP comes a report that 105 patients at a Belgian clinic apparently had severely damaged their kidneys by taking a Chinese herb in a weight-loss preparation. The report also said that 18 cases of cancer had apparently been traced to the preparation. According to the AP report, “The FDA announced .. it is stopping the importation of herbs in the *Aristolochia* family because they had caused kidney failure in Belgium and Britain, were they were being used to treat a skin condition.”

## BOOK NOTES

Rambling around the bookstores this month, we notice that Robert Park’s new book *Voodoo Science*

has finally hit the West coast. It has been getting great reviews and we recommend it heartily. You can find it at both Borders Books and Barnes & Noble. While we are on the subject of Park, you can find his article “The Alchemists of Energy” reprinted in full at <http://www.forbes.com/forbes/00/0515>

On a less optimistic note, Tower Books on Watt Avenue appears to be continuing its march into the trendy with its continually refreshed New Age section that takes up a big, healthy corner in the store and its pitiful science section that barely fills a couple of shelves and sees very few new additions. We also note that Borders Books in Roseville apparently has found it necessary to add a new sign to its Astronomy book section. The sign now reads “ASTRONOMY NOT ASTROLOGY.”

Incidentally, while we were at Borders in Roseville we came across an all-too-frequent sight, a couple in their late 20s sitting on the floor in the New Age section, their baby in a stroller nearby, while they collected a stack of astrology books around them. The upshot, as overheard, was that they were apparently trying to decide upon their choice of lawyers by comparing the “traits” of the two that they were considering by their astrological signs! We’ve been seeing quite a lot of this kind of a thing lately. At least it was a lawyer they were trying to decide on, not a physician.

### BOARD OF ADVISORS:

**Juliana Manoliu**  
Electronics Engineer

**Terry Sandbek**  
Psychologist

**Robert Sheaffer**  
UFO Specialist, Author

**Bob Steiner**  
Magician, Author, Bunco Expert

**Lauress Wise**  
Mathematical Psychologist

### About the Founding Members:

Ray Spangenburg and Kit Moser are a husband-and-wife writing team specializing in science and technology. They are co-authors of 29 books and over 100 articles, including publication in the *Skeptical Inquirer*, and they are former co-editors of the *Bay Area Skeptics Information Sheet (BASIS)*.

### For more information, contact:

**SORT (Sacramento Organization for Rational Thinking)**  
Phone (916) 978-0321  
Email [kitray@quiknet.com](mailto:kitray@quiknet.com)  
P.O. Box 2147  
Carmichael, CA 95609-2147

© 2000 by Ray Spangenburg and Kit Moser  
All rights reserved.

**SORT**

*“Educating ourselves  
and educating others”*

**Sacramento Organization  
for Rational Thinking  
P.O. Box 2147  
Carmichael, CA 95609-2147**

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED