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

SORT's First Picnic
Sunday,
June 24, 2001
7:00 P.M.

Potluck/BBQ in Roseville
 See directions in newsletter

The **SORTified NEWS**

“Doubt is the beginning of wisdom.”

—Clarence Darrow

June 24, 2001: First SORT Picnic! **GOOD EATS, GOOD COMPANY**

Don't forget the first SORT potluck and barbecue this Sunday! And thank you, Ron and Pauline, for thinking up this great event and making it happen.

Be sure to email Ron or Pauline, if you can, to let them know you plan to come and what you plan to bring. (See email addresses in next column.) Hope to see you all there!

Here's the scoop on how it will work:

Message from barbecue/ potluck hosts Pauline Swezey and Ron Fredrickson:

Save the date **Sunday, June 24** , for the first SORT barbecue and potluck. Plan to come about **3 p.m.** This will be a chance to get to know others in the group. And with the broad range of interests evident at monthly meetings there should be some interesting exchanges.

We're planning hamburgers and brats, to be provided by Ron and Pauline. What we will need from those attending is **salads, desserts, and hors d'oeuvres. BYOB.** We'll make this a true potluck, and see what happens.

This event will replace the regular last Wednesday meeting for June.

Bring your spouse, significant other or whatever. And, yes, we would like to know who is planning to come so we will have an idea on the hamburger/bratwurst count.

Regular meetings of
 SORT

Will be back on July 25!

NOTE:

Remember the picnic replaces our usual last-Wednesday-of-the-month meeting time for this month only. We will be returning to our regular meeting schedule in July—July 25th at 7:00 p.m. Look for the meeting announcement in the July newsletter!

THIS JUST IN

Word just came in this morning as we are getting ready to put the newsletter to bed that Connell Watkins, the so-called “re-birthing” therapist, has been sentenced to 16 years in prison for her involvement in the death of 10-year-old Candace Newmaker. Watkins and her assistant Julie Ponder were found guilty on April 20 of “reckless child abuse resulting in death.” The discredited “rebirthing” therapy unfortunately though continues throughout the United States. During the trial of Watkins and Ponder, jurors witnessed a frightening 70-minute videotape of the session that resulted in young Newmaker's death. During the session, which involved the child being bound head to toe in a flannel sheet to simulate conditions of her birth, the jurors heard young Newmaker frantically begging for air and crying out that she was dying. Despite the child's frantic pleas, the “therapy” continued. Young Newmaker smothered in her own vomit. Watkins might have received a maximum sentence of 48 years but, according to the trial judge, “The crime itself was horrifying. However, there was no evidence at the trial that the defendant wanted to harm Candace Newmaker.”

Ponder is due for sentencing next.

AND A FINAL WORD (HOPEFULLY) ON THE “MONKEY MAN”

And, from New Delhi, India comes word that the “Monkey Man” who has been terrorizing scores of people in the capital city and has been blamed for the deaths of three people, doesn't exist. Last month's so-called “reign of terror” that shook up

New Delhi and produced scores of lurid headlines has been called by New Delhi investigators nothing more than “mass hysteria.” The monster, described variously as “a monkey-like creature with metallic claws” and “a cat with tawny, glowing eyes,” supposedly had chased and attacked dozens of people, forcing three to fall from buildings to their death. According to a report from CNN online and the Reuters news agency, “Forensic experts and psychiatrists conducted detailed examinations of victims of the attacks and had also visited the locations of the attacks.” The so-called “creature,” also described by some of its attempted victims as “half-man, half-beast,” was labeled as a “mere figment of the imagination of emotionally weak people.” According to the *Times* of India, “In most of the cases, the injuries were found to be too superficial to arrive at any conclusion.” And “most of the wounds could have been self-inflicted.” It was also found that “many victims changed their statements on several occasions. Psychiatrists concluded that most of them were hysterical and could not be relied on.” The three people who fell from buildings had apparently been caught up in the hysteria and were convinced that the creature was pursuing them. Concluding their careful examination the investigators and experts blamed sensational newspaper and media coverage of the “Monkey Man” for much of the hysteria. “It was due to unsubstantiated media reports that people were encouraged to come out with bizarre accounts of the creature though no one had actually seen it,” reported the *Hindustan Times*. During the panic, vigilante groups took to the streets armed with sticks and other weapons and police offered a 50,000-rupee

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.

reward for information leading to the capture of the creature.

CASTING THE NET

And, on a lighter side (or at least we hope no one takes the American tabloid press seriously—they don't do they...do they?), comes this report on what we have learned this month from the *Weekly World News* online edition. Stay with us here. This is a little complicated. It seems that in a “stunning conclusion of a super secret joint study by the Air Force and the CIA,” investigators have concluded that “UFOs are not visitors from outer space—but hellish demons in disguise who are trolling for souls.” *WWN* reports a high-ranking investigator as saying, “UFO manifestations are merely updated versions of the age-old behavior of demons. These are spiritual beings with the ability to manipulate matter and energy—the same thing that they have been doing for eons.” According to the *WWN*, “several religious leaders and veteran exorcists who were consulted by the investigators agreed with the conclusions.” *WWN* quotes a religious leader from Lebanon as explaining, “Everyone knows that demons are Satan's minions and that makes people cautious when they are present. So Satan very cleverly disguises them as flying saucers or extraterrestrials to appeal to people who consider themselves sophisticated capable of understanding the technology of an advanced race.” According to the *WWN*, a CIA agent agrees. “They may be showing themselves in new forms,” said the agent, “but they're the same demons that they've always been, and they're serving the same Satanic master.”

Are you with us so far? All right, let's continue then with another issue of the *WWN* that reports that “Space Alien Rates George W. Bush: He Stinks!” According to this issue, “The mysterious space alien whose endorsement of George W. Bush helped him with the election has issued a candid assessment of Bush's first 150 days in office—and he gives our new commander in chief a humiliating D-minus!” *WWN* continues, “The E.T. says that President Bush has already made a series of catastrophic blunders that ‘threaten the long term survival of the human species’ and warns that if he keeps going the way that he has been, his presidency will spell disaster for ‘not only the United States and the planet Earth, but possibly the entire galaxy as well!’”

Getting confused? What is the *WWN* trying to tell us? Is Satan trying to force George W. out of office? Is it that Born Again thing? Is there some kind of plot building here? And what do we make of this other *WWN* report from last month that tells us about “Tinseltown's Plan to ... Bring back Bill in 2004!” *WWN* informs us here that “Hollywood pals of ex-president Bill Clinton are secretly hatching a plot to return him to the White House by changing the U.S. Constitution that now prevents him from seeking the office again. Says a Tinseltown (Hollywood for the unhip) “insider,” “The plan is to repeal the 22nd Amendment which allows only two terms in office for anyone who holds the presidency and several meetings have already been held out here to lay the groundwork for the project and to begin raising the millions of dollars it will take.”

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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 34 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

O.K., it is all becoming clear now, isn't it? Are you beginning to see the pattern? Are the Democrats working with Satan? What is going on here? Has the *WWN* been born again? Stay with us. The conspiracy continues in another article from *WWN* that informs us that the Democrats (conspiring with the Satanic dominions?) have another plan up their sleeves. The headline reveals that “Democrats Plant Sexy Intern To Seduce Bush!” The story continues (for those of you still following us), explaining, “White House security personnel have reportedly booted a young female intern off the staff after

discovering that she was a mole planted by the democrats—on a mission to seduce President George W. Bush!” *WWN* continues to say that while the intern’s name has not been revealed and that the incident has been kept hushed up, “administration sources claim that sneaky Democrats cooked up the botched scheme, hoping to create a Monica Lewinsky-type scandal and unseat Bush. How did this all come to light? Well, it seems that the ‘intern-mole’ was a little less bright than George W. (Yes, this is beginning to sound fantastic isn’t it?). *WWN* continues the story: “Sources say that the mole brought suspicion upon herself from the first day... She was very flirtatious, always flashing a lot of cleavage and thigh,” said a White House insider...and her politics didn’t seem to match what she had written in her application.

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She once called Rush Limbaugh, who’s a conservative icon, “an idiot!” But *WWN* continues “the straw that broke the camel’s back came when the attractive intern confided to a White house worker that she was planning to quit “as soon as I earn my presidential Kneepads—a phrase coined by former Clinton galpal Monica Lewinski.”

All right. You sort it out. We just report it. (And we both have headaches. . . .) See you at the potluck this Sunday!

STOP THE PRESSES!

Wait a minute! Does this tie in? We’ve just discovered a report from the *Bay City Times* 5-1-01. We will give it to you straight.

“Inmate Chad Gabriel DeKoven’s lawsuit against the

Standish prison in Bay City, Michigan (and several other defendants), was tossed out in April as frivolous, despite DeKoven’s insistence that he is the “Messiah-God” and rightfully president of the United States (in that, since his name is ‘Chad,’ he figures that many thousands of punch card votes last November were symbolically for him). However, Judge David M. Lawson did compliment DeKoven’s typing, his ‘lengthy expositions’ on his deity, and his ‘disciplined effort’ in assembling his 125-page brief’s exhibition of numerical analysis and secret codes that proves he is God.”

“Numerical analysis.” “Secret Codes?” What is going on here that we don’t know about? Is this also some Satanic-flying-saucer-Democratic plot? What does it all mean? That headache is back. We will try to be calmer by Sunday.

SORT

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

*“Educating ourselves
and educating others”*

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED