

June 2006
 Volume 9, Issue 6
 Publication of the
**Sacramento
 Organization for
 Rational Thinking
 (SORT)**

Inside This Issue

- 1** June 27 SORT Meeting
**MALE CHAUVINISM: WHY
 DOES IT LINGER?**
- 2** *A Call for Volunteers*
PICNIC TIME?

 The Book Beat—Quick Takes
 Silver: **CHALLENGING
 NATURE: THE CLASH OF
 SCIENCE & SPIRITUALITY...**
 and
**RICHARD DAWKINS: HOW
 SCIENCE CHANGED THE
 WAY WE THINK**
- 3** **DIRECTIONS**
- 4** **THE RATIONAL
 COMMUNITY CALENDAR**

©2006 by Ray Spangenburg and Kit Moser. All rights reserved.

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

**June
 SORT Meeting
 Tuesday, June 27, 2006
 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

June 27 SORT Meeting “IT’S A GUY THING”: MALE CHAUVINISM— THE LONG, LONG TRAIL

The adventures of Buffy the Vampire Killer, the conquests of tough-minded Ripley of the *Alien* movies, and what-ever-the-deuce Halle Berry was up to in *Cat-woman* may show women as powerful against terrible monsters. But today’s real-life woman often still finds herself contending with a much less colorful group of adversaries than these fearless fighters face.



Instead, most women have to confront a group that movies and television prefer to call simply “the guys.” While “the guys” may not be the baboons of *Wedding Crashers* or a hundred other summer movies that attempt to cover up a basic “me man, you woman” mentality with a “sensitive” (they learn a lesson) ending, more than a few real-life guys, it seems, still echo the old refrain. The belief in male supremacy has had a long

REMINDER:

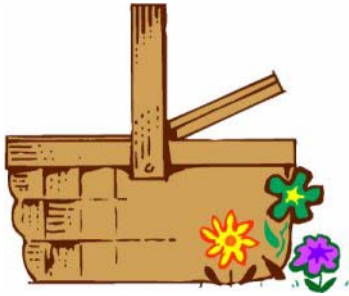
**SORT Meetings
 are now at 7:30 p.m.
 on the last
 TUESDAY
 of the month
 LA SIERRA
 COMMUNITY CENTER
 Room 800**

life, and while much has changed, much still remains the same. This month at SORT we will be taking a look at how it started, why it stayed alive through so many ages, and why it still lingers today. It promises to be another interesting evening around the SORT open round table.

As usual soft drinks, coffee (regular and decaf) and assorted cookies, etc., will be available during the meeting to encourage a relaxed, easy conversation. Bring yourself, bring an interested friend. All SORT meetings are free and open to the public. Hope to see you, then, June 27.

The June SORT meeting will take place from 7:30–9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 27 at La Sierra Community Center, 5325 Engle Road in Carmichael. SORT meetings are free and everyone is welcome. Come join us!

(See directions on page 3.)



TO PICNIC OR NOT TO PICNIC, THAT IS THE QUESTION

Last year the annual SORT picnic kind of found itself lost somewhere along the way, as your editors struggled with professional writing deadlines. Time is even tighter for us than usual this year but some folks have asked us what the plans are for the picnic this summer so we would like to see if we can pass some of the responsibilities on to others.

We're thinking one of the local parks should do for the location. It might be too late to reserve a particular spot, but there are usually plenty of non-reserved spots available, if someone can get there early to stake a claim. Basically, we need a couple of volunteers to find the spot and time/date for the picnic and to make some basic arrangements about food, drinks, etc. We usually have plenty of people bringing along pot luck contributions (hot dogs and hamburgers if the site has BBQ facilities and otherwise alternatives such as KFC fried chicken, lasagna, baked ham, etc., salads, drinks, desserts, nibbles, etc.). So it's primarily a matter of sorting (pardon the pun) things out so we have BBQ supplies, if needed, and don't have five

dozen hot dogs and no buns, or a crowd of thirsty people with nothing to drink.

Richard Kowaleski has stepped forward as volunteer Activities Director and will bring his stash of croquet set, possibly badminton, board games, and other wonders. Thanks, Richard! Any other volunteers out there to do a little light organizing?

QUICK TAKES ON THE BOOK BEAT

Our top choice for this month is *Challenging Nature: The Clash of Science and Spirituality at the New Frontiers of Life* by Lee M. Silver, a professor of Molecular Biology and Public Affairs at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. Silver takes a heroic stance here as he not only argues eloquently in defense of biotechnology but astutely examines its foes and sees in them a common and not often spoken of denominator. While New Age secularists on the left and activist proponents on the religious right may appear to be unlikely bedfellows, any defender of biotechnology finds him or herself quickly under frantic attack by both factions—the left attacking genetically modified crops and other advances of biotechnology and the right trying to turn embryo stem cell research into a heinous capital crime.

What Silver penetratingly points out is that both these left and right foes of biotech are “consciously or unconsciously” driven by a belief in some higher mystical power or righteousness that they see as being under attack by science. While the religious right

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 . . .

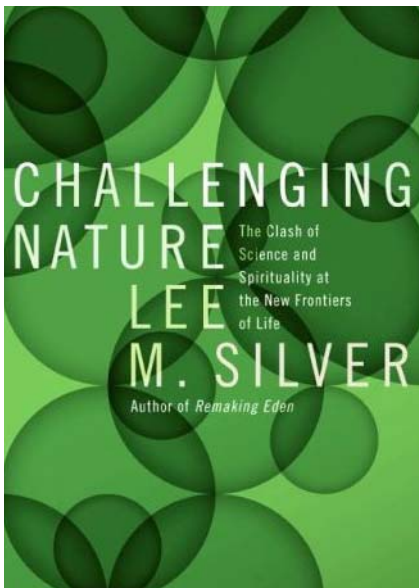
- Host a monthly discussion group.
- Publish a monthly newsletter.
- Host special events, talks, and presentations.
- Host a web page.

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.

sees biotechnology as being against the “true word of God,” the New Age left rallies itself around a vaguer but no less mystical banner called “Mother Nature.” Caught between the superstitious but powerful and well promoted beliefs of both secular left and religious right, biotechnology with all its promise of conquering many of the woes of human life ironically finds itself defending its own life in the marketplace of ideas. Unfortunately as well reasoned and keenly argued as Silver’s book is, the fight against superstition and ignorance will doubtlessly remain an uphill battle as long as science continues to be viewed as a kind of “anti-Christ” to a public too often and too easily manipulated by the voices of the self-righteous of both the left and the right.



If you are looking for a quick pickup to that depressing thought as well as a good “take-it-with-you” summer read, you might invest a few bucks in a neat little volume entitled *Richard Dawkins: How Science*

Changed the Way We Think, edited by Alan Grafen and Mark Ridley and published by Oxford University Press. A hard cover about the size of a thick paperback, it’s a fascinating look at the work and thought of Richard Dawkins, and how his ideas have affected not only evolutionary biology but also much of today’s intellectual life. Over two dozen short essays written by both admirers and dissidents give us a compact but clear look not only at Dawkins’s often controversial ideas, but also at his role as a brilliant and outspoken champion of science.

That about wraps it up for this issue. See you at this month’s SORT meeting. Remember, you don’t have to be a Richard Dawkins to put in a good word for science when the opportunities crop up. You might even make a few of those opportunities yourself. Every cogent voice helps, as the late and indomitable Carl Sagan reminded us, to light another candle in the darkness.

BOARD OF ADVISERS

Terry Sandbek
Psychologist

Robert Sheaffer
UFO Specialist, Author

Bob Steiner
Magician, Author,
Bunco Expert

Lauress Wise
Mathematical Psychologist

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)*.

For more information, contact:
SORT (Sacramento Organization for Rational Thinking)
Phone (916) 978-0321
Email: kitray@quiknet.com

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

June 27: Sacramento Organization for Rational Thinking (SORT)

Topic: “‘It’s a Guy Thing’: Male Chauvinism—The Long, Long Trail” (Round Table Discussion)

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.

July 9: Atheists and Other Freethinkers (AOF)

Speaker/Topic: Jerry Sloan on “Who Funds the Christian Right and Where Does the Money Trail Lead?”

Check <http://aofonline.org/events> and <http://aofonline.org/generalmeetings> for more details.

Time: Second Sunday, 2:30–5:00 p.m.

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



*Educating Ourselves
and Educating Others*

**Sacramento Organization
for Rational Thinking
P.O. Box 2215
Carmichael, CA 95609-2215**

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED