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**Sacramento
 Organization for
 Rational Thinking
 (SORT)**

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For past issues, bibliography, links to other skeptics, and more, check out the SORT Website:

home.surewest.net/kitray

For more about the co-founders of SORT, see

www.spangenburgandmoser.com

**July
 SORT Meeting
 Wednesday,
 July 27, 2005
 7:30 P.M.**

La Sierra Community Center
 Room Sierra 1, 5325 Engle Road
 Carmichael, CA
 (See driving directions, p. 3)

The *SORTified* NEWS

“Doubt is the beginning of wisdom.”

—Clarence Darrow

July 27 SORT Meeting MAYBE WE SHOULD CALL THIS MONTH'S MEETING "HAPPINENSS: PART 2"...

... But we like the snappy title of Steve Salerno's book *SHAM* better. Salerno explains the acronym stands for the Self-Help and Actualization Movement, and as you can guess Salerno doesn't think so highly of the whole thing. Obviously, though, a lot of people disagree with him. According to recent figures self-help has grown into an \$8-billion dollar industry turning out books, radio and television talk shows, lectures, workshops, and more than a handful of self-satisfied quacks—all willing to make you a happier person in exchange for a substantial lightening of your wallet.

Don't get us wrong—we're not dumping on all therapists (that may be a later meeting), just those big and small ones who cash in on the great American illusion that somehow we are not as happy as we should be. And how happy is that anyway? Do we really know or do we depend upon information from such wizards as Dr. John Gray (who according to Salerno received his

REMINDER:
 JULY MEETING ROOM
 SIERRA 1
 AT
 LA SIERRA COMMUNITY
 CENTER

credentials from Columbia Pacific University, a diploma mill shut down by California's Attorney General) or Tony Robbins (who, Salerno claims, thinks that foods have different energy frequencies that can be measured in megahertz)?

This month we'll be taking a look at the wild and woolly world of the Self-Help and Actualization Movement, its gurus and goofballs. Do they do more harm than good, or are they essentially harmless (if you've got the bucks to throw away)? And perhaps, if we want to dig just a little bit deeper, we'll get into what this great American obsession about happiness is about, anyway.

It should be another good evening of conversation at SORT, where the art of intelligent conversation lives. Join us at the SORT open

round table and let's talk. As always free coffee, soft drinks, cookies, and other goodies will be on hand.

The starting time is 7:30 p.m. The formal meeting will break up at 9:00 p.m. leaving time until 9:30 for socializing.

All SORT meetings are free and everyone is welcome. (See page 3 for driving directions.)

CAESAR'S MESSIAH AUTHOR TO SPEAK

Were the four gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—forged? Did the Flavian Romans invent Christianity to turn the militant Sicarii Jews into pacifists? These are the arguments Joseph Atwill makes in his book *Caesar's Messiah* and Mr. Atwill will be in Sacramento on Sunday, August 7, (7:00-9:00 p.m.) to discuss his book. It should be a fascinating talk and an equally interesting discussion.

Kevin Schultz passes on these links to reviews of the book:

<https://insmkt.securesites.com/ellensreview.htm>

<http://www.tektonics.org/books/csmessrvw.html#Review>

The event hosted by Brian Jones will be held in the Round Table Pizza Party room at 3005 Freeport Blvd. There are parking lots in both the front and the rear of the building. There is no charge and attendees are free to order or not order (of course Round Table

kind of expects that some people will order). If you're not crazy about pizza, they also have a fairly nice salad bar.

If you're not sure how to find the spot just use the following link for a map.

Map: <http://maps.google.com/maps?q=3005+Freeport+Blvd,+Sacramento.ca&spn=0.028536,0.053571&hl=en>

Our thanks to Kevin Schultz for sending along the info.

TRAWLING THE WEB THIS MONTH

Well, the hot summer days are on us again, so escaping the heat we've spent a couple of evenings looking into the stranger corners of the Internet, pages of the weird and the wild, the sad and the hopeful.

On the sad side we join with others in a few seconds of respect mourning the death of Arnold the pig. The 450-pound Arnold died last month from an apparent heart attack. He was 6 years old. A hero of the bravest kind, Arnold had won fame in 2001 when he saved his owner Becky Moyer from armed robbers. Moyer, returning to her home in a South Minneapolis neighborhood, was surprised to find two men in her garage. Forcing her inside at gunpoint, the robbers did not know what to think when they saw Arnold sitting quietly by the refrigerator waiting for his dinner. Arnold, though, was not your

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.

usual pig. As his frightened mistress screamed, Arnold sprang into action, leaping forward (can pigs leap?) to clamp his teeth down on one of the intruder's legs. Managing to escape the heroic pig's fearless attack, both robbers fled. The proud and surprised Moyer told interviewers, "I never dreamed, never dreamed that a pig could be a protector. Never!" Arnold had come into Moyer's life as a birthday present in 1999. "I was like, I don't need this pig," Moyer said. "I just wanted a night out on the town or something." At the time, Arnold, a part-Yorkshire, part-Vietnamese potbellied pig weighed in at 10 pounds and was expected to add another 50 pounds on as an adult. Arnold exceeded expectations both in weight and bravery. A proud pig whom we salute today.

Moving from the sad to the scary, we note that a new U.S. firm has been recently established to send internet blogs into deep space. "We are giving bloggers the opportunity to send a piece of their lives into space to potentially connect with extraterrestrials," explained Ted Murphy, president of the Florida based firm Mindcomet. The internet service at Blogin-space.com will beam blogs into deep space via satellite. Perhaps after viewing years of re-runs of Gilligan's Island and other assorted signals as they leak out into space, any extraterrestrials lurking about will learn from the

blogs what life on earth is really like. Scary isn't it?

GOOD GOODS FOR SKEPTICS!

Looking for some new critical thinking gifts either for yourself or a friend? Lisa Goodlin, who founded the Central New York Skeptics in 2001 and who has served as President until this spring, has opened up a new web site where you can purchase some of her original skeptically oriented goods. The t-shirts, bumper stickers, mugs, and other items are all of Lisa's own design. She also does personalized designs for those wanting a more individualized critical thinking statement. You can take a look at Lisa's work at <http://www.rationalitees.com>.

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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)*.

For more information, contact:
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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. Park in the main parking lot and enter the main passageway, proceeding to the walkway between the gyms. (Look for the SORT signs to Room Sierra 1 and come on in!)

From I-80: Take the Madison exit and head east. Turn right on Garfield and head south. Turn right on Engle and right at La Sierra Community Center. Park in the main parking lot and enter the main passageway, proceeding to the walkway between the gyms. Look for the SORT signs to Room Sierra 1 and come on in!

RATIONAL COMMUNITY CALENDAR

July 27: SORT Meeting

Topic: “Happiness: Part 2 (Does Self-Help Help?)”

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

Place: La Sierra Community Center, Room Sierra 1, 5325 Engle Road, Carmichael.

Everyone is welcome and all meetings are free.

Sacramento Skeptics

Temporary hiatus: For details, contact Liam McDaid, (916) 558-2005, mcdaidw@scc.losrios.edu

August 14: Atheists and Other Freethinkers (AOF)

Time: Second Sunday, 2:30–5:00 p.m.

Speaker/Topic: Summer (Freethought) Sizzler

Hot summer speeches (on freethought topics), cool salads. View the oratory or participate—a fun time.

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

August 11–14: Skeptics’ Toolbox, Eugene, Oregon

A rare opportunity to meet some of the luminaries of skepticism and engage hands-on in meeting some challenges to rational thinking. For more information, go to <http://www.skepticstoolbox.org/>.



*Educating Ourselves
and Educating Others*

**Sacramento Organization
for Rational Thinking
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED