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For past issues of *The SORT-fied News*, bibliography, links to other skeptics, and more, check out the SORT Website—  
<http://www.quiknet.com/~kitray/index1.html>

### SORT's Next Meeting:

**Wednesday, Nov. 17, 1999  
 7:30 P.M.**  
 La Sierra Community Center,  
 Room 405  
 5325 Engle Road  
 Carmichael, CA

# The SORTified NEWS

**This Month Only: Meeting Date/Time change—  
 Third Wednesday (Nov. 17) at 7:30**

### Wednesday, November 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting—

### **AREA 51: SPACE, ALIENS, PARANOIA, AND THE "NEW WORLD ORDER"**

Forget all that bunk about captured flying saucers, secret deals with space aliens, or plans for thwarting an upcoming invasion by little gray men. The people really in the know about Area 51 realize that something else is going on there—a secret plan by the New World Order to take over the United States and put us all under fascist control!



And how are they going to do this? By convincing us that flying saucers are real! By feeding on our paranoia about space aliens—and by staging a fake invasion of the United States by creatures from outer space, thus allowing the secret powers of the New World Order

to declare martial law and implement top secret technologies already in place in order to control our every move. Now, though, you too can be in the know!

Join us at SORT for our November meeting when we will view some video clips that will reveal this secret plan for us, examine the top secret technologies already in place to be used against us, and hear what we can do to fight for our cherished freedom!



Be prepared for some lively discussion during and after the clips, but be warned—the person sitting next to you may be a government spy—avoid speaking to anyone dressed in black suits, and keep watching the skies for those black helicopters!

Free coffee, soft drinks, and cookies will be available. Bring your skepticism and your sense of humor and remember this



month only we will be meeting one week earlier than usual—the **third** Wednesday of the month (*November 17th*), and one half hour later than usual (7:30)!

## HE'S BACK!

Just when you thought that your spoons were safe too! Yes folks, Uri Geller is back among us. And this time he is bringing us more than the incredibly useful ability to bend spoons or start old watches ticking! This time he is going to teach us all how to live better and wiser and experience true emotional and physical well being! How? “Just by being positive and believing in yourself, you can help to heal your ailments,” Geller is quoted as telling Reuters reporters on the Yahoo.com News Service. “There is a force in all of us, call it telepathy or whatever you want, that can do this.”

And guess what? Uri has a new book out explaining all of his new health and medical secrets to us—the book is called *Mind Medicine* and boasts an introduction by the always-available Dr. Andrew Weil.

So, friends, step up and pay your money! For only \$17.47 (the going price at Amazon.com—a little more at your local book store) you can read all about Uri's incredible new system as endorsed by no less an authority than Sarah Ferguson, the Duchess of York! Or you can just take two aspirin, get a good night's sleep and hope (you dreamer) that he will go away again.

## AND SO IS HE!

If Uri can make a comeback then why not Erich von Daniken? According to Reuters, Oct. 28, 1999, Von Daniken is now selling shares to investors hoping to see some out-of-this-world returns when he completes his planned theme park in Switzerland. He hopes to open his new “Mystery Park” in 2002, where for only \$17 admission visitors can come face to face with the kinds of mysteries he has explored in his books.

“People don't have the time or money to visit the mysteries of the world,” Von Daniken explained to reporters. “We do not want to give answers to these unsolved mysteries, because we don't have any! . . . Everyone should leave the park with a head full of question marks. . . .”

Like: why do these people keep coming back to us and how come we keep giving them money?



## IS YOUR MIND YOUR OWN?

Stuart Ewen's *PR!: A Social History of Spin* (1993) and Gustave Le Bon's *The Crowd: A*

*Study of the Popular Mind* (1896)

O.K., so we are often left bewildered about why the public buys into all this stuff the Gellers and Von Danikens push on the world. But then we are also amazed at the audacious spins thrown out of Washington by just about everybody involved in the great Clinton-Monica follies of the last few years, talking purple dinosaurs, Beanie Babies and Pokémon games. Not to mention Brad Pitt. Can you really sell anyone anything? Sure you can, according to Stuart Ewen in his book *PR!: A Social History of Spin*, Basic Books, 1996. It's a great read and available again in paperback at most of your local bookstores. We found ours at Borders. Tracing the history of the elusively quantifiable business called “Public Relations” in America, Ewen provides some fascinating insights into the twists and turns employed in attempting to understand the American mass mind and to sell it ideas or products. It's a spooky but enlightening book. And, if you get intrigued by the subject you might also want to take a look at Gustave Le Bon's *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1896). Wait, did we say 1896! Yes we did, and its frightening how many of Le Bon's insights are still valid today. Ewen quotes him frequently (taking care to leave out the disparaging remarks about women's intelligence that Le Bon sprinkles about his book of course). Even if it was 1896, Le Bon could be pretty stupid

about this! Still, it's worth while to work around his prejudices in order to get to his intriguing insights and discover how many of them are unfortunately still valid today. So where do you get Le Bon's book? It was re-issued in 1994 and might still be found around in some bookstores or in the local University library, but keep it simple—it's in the public domain, and if you have an Internet connection, you can read or download the whole book free from Project Gutenberg at [www.gutenberg.net](http://www.gutenberg.net).

### **PLEASE, ERICH—READ THIS BOOK!**

While we are on the subject of good books, there is a brand new edition of one of our favorites out. Kenneth L. Feder's *Frauds, Myths, and Mysteries: Science and Pseudoscience in Archaeology*, Mayfield Publishing Company, 1999. Both Feder and his publishing company are to be congratulated for keeping this excellent book continuously up to date. Feder has added much new material to each of the books' chapters, and he's added a "Best of the Web" box in each chapter to tell the reader where to get further reliable information.

In addition "Frequently asked Questions" are answered in each individual chapter, along with critical thinking exercises, and the book also includes a "Reality Check" inside the front cover to help readers access the validity of pseudoscientific and fantastic claims. If you have earlier editions you will want this one, and if you've never read it



before—do it now. Feder writes well and keeps his style clear and conversational. He knows and cares about his subject, and about the abuses and absurdities that have been foisted upon many readers by the likes of Von Daniken and others, if his anger shows it's only occasionally and who can blame him.

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

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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 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)*.

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