

Skeptics Predictions for 1996

On 18 November 1995 the Phoenix Skeptics held their annual Predictions meeting at which the membership produced the following list of predictions for the following 14 months and beyond. In the Sixth year of our ongoing experiment in prognostication, we returned to a 60% plus hit rate (33 of 54 right for a hit rate of 61%, with two weeks remaining in the year at the time of this writing.)

Among our hits in 1995 was the death of Rose Kennedy, the scandal over Newt Gingrich's ethics violations, the entry of Steve Forbes into the Republican Presidential pack and the retention of Arizona's income tax for 1995. (Why would J. Fife get rid of it when it was made abundantly clear this year he wouldn't have to pay any?) We did miss on the Simpson verdict, but we were using a critical thinking skills in coming up with our list.

Our thesis with this experiment has been and continues to be this: a dozen or so reasonably well informed individuals can accurately predict events in the near future without reliance on any supernatural powers. Our hit ratio continues to be higher than that of the professional psychics out there — which begs the questions: are their powers faulty, or are they just not reasonably well informed?

Our predictions:

World & National Politics:

- ◇ 1) The Republican revolution goes the way of Bob Dole's Presidential campaign.
- ◇ 2) The President will be elected with less than 50% of the popular vote.
- ◇ 3) China threatens to invade Taiwan.
- ◇ 4) US-Mexico relations become strained.
- ◇ 5) The presence of NATO peacekeepers does not bring peace to the Balkans.
- ◇ 6) Smart money says more scandals rock the LAPD.
- ◇ 7) The LA DA's office actually wins a case in 1996.
- ◇ 8) Domestic terrorism increases and targets the IRS.
- ◇ 9) Highway fatalities decrease with the rising speed limit.
- ◇ 10) Outlaw cybernauts flout Congressional regulation efforts.

◇ 11) Abortion controversy is a key issue in the elections.

◇ 12) The Christian Coalition peaks and faces backlash.

◇ 13) New dollar coin appears in 1996.

◇ 14) Militia mayhem casts pall over the Atlanta Olympics.

◇ 15) Communist resurgence in Russian politics.

Local Politics & News:

◇ 16) In an effort to raise more money, Joe Arpaio goes for corporate sponsorship of his office, making him the Gatorade Sheriff of Maricopa-Windows '95 County.

◇ 17) J. Fife Symington continues to model his political career on that of Evan Mecham.

◇ 18) Showing he has as much sense as J. Fife has money, Terry Goddard will again run for Governor.

- ◇ 19) Governor *Hull* will see no reason for her office to be redecorated.
- ◇ 20) Record summer heat wave produces power problems.
- ◇ 21) Major public transit innovation comes to the Valley.
- ◇ 22) Libertarians continue to make gains in local politics.
- ◇ 23) Posse misconduct tarnishes Arpaio's image.

Personalities:

- ◇ 24) Boris Yeltsin joins Lenin in retirement.
- ◇ 25) O. J. Simpson's search of golf courses fails to uncover the Goldman/Brown-Simpson murderer.
- ◇ 26) Buckingham Palace divorce.
- ◇ 27) Elvis ceases spinning the grave after Lisa Marie and Michael Jackson split up.
- ◇ 28) Post-election cabinet does not include Janet Reno.
- ◇ 29) Yassir Arafat survives assassination attempt.
- ◇ 30) Love at first Roar – Rush and Roseanne find true love with each other. [Okay, not so much a prediction as wishful thinking.]

Sports:

- ◇ 31) The LA Cardinals get a new coach.
- ◇ 32) The Cardinals win a game in 1996.
- ◇ 33) The Phoenix Suns are eclipsed in the playoffs.
- ◇ 34) The 1996 Superbowl is a disappointment.
- ◇ 35) Braves do not repeat as World Series champs.

Business and Economics:

- ◇ 36) The stock market goes through a major adjustment.
- ◇ 37) The Olestra war begins.

- ◇ 38) A major Internet hoax is reported by national news media as real.
- ◇ 39) New players enter the personal computer market, but their offering crashes and burns.
- ◇ 40) Major automotive recall.
- ◇ 41) The Dow Jones Index hits 5500.
- ◇ 42) The Encyclopedia Brittanica becomes Encyclopedia Gates.

Arts & Entertainment:

- ◇ 43) Romance, not sex, will be box office magic in 1996.
- ◇ 44) Art world shaken by forgery.
- ◇ 45) Trend toward nude opera and theatre builds in 1996.
- ◇ 46) Like dinosaurs, TV talk shows begin a die-off in 1996.
- ◇ 47) "Alien Autopsy" pathologists are sued for malpractice for murdering their patient.

Science:

- ◇ 48) Major advances in artificial blood.
- ◇ 49) Advancement in determining if neutrinos have mass.
- ◇ 50) Cold fusion returns to the news.
- ◇ 51) Space telescope discoveries rattle scientific community.
- ◇ 52) Global warming controversy heats up!
- ◇ 53) Major AIDS vaccine advance.
- ◇ 54) 1996 – the Summer of Killer Bees.
- ◇ 55) Earthly telescope competes with Hubble at a fraction of the cost.

And, as always, we predict our hit rate will be better than that of the supermarket tabloid psychics.