

The Arizona Skeptic

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Lippard Disgraced!

by Ron Harvey

At the most recent meeting of the Phoenix Skeptics, devastating evidence of the belief system of Jim Lippard, PS founder and former Executive Director, was revealed to an at-first skeptical, nay, incredulous gathering. What follows is an interview with the person most familiar with the events, Mike Norton. He is a Fellow of the Phoenix Skeptics, a member of the Board of Directors, and a long-time friend and one-time roommate of Lippard.

Arizona Skeptic: Just how did you discover the horrible truth?

Mike Norton: I first heard about it by accident, and shrugged it off as a joke. It wasn't until much later that I found how serious things were. It seems that it all started when Lippard was young, and his parents told him the usual tales of Santa Claus, the Tooth Fairy, the Easter bunny, and the like. However, Jim soon learned to read and developed an enormous appetite for information on wild claims.

AS: Yes, this publication is much indebted to his scholarly efforts to uncover the truth. It seems that Jim has a very good feel for things about which one should be skeptical.

MN: True, but due to several very powerful personal validations, he was never able to convince himself of the non-existence of the Tooth Fairy. When I was convinced that he really wasn't joking about this, I convinced him to set up an official investigation by the Phoenix Skeptics to determine, once and for all, whether or not the Tooth Fairy really does leave money under pillows.

AS: Investigations take considerable effort. How could the possibility of changing only Lippard's beliefs justify such cost?

MN: Yes, this was a considerable effort. But we agreed that the reputation of our organization was at stake. Jim is often out in front, confronting fraud. If this ammunition were available to our opponents, we wouldn't make much headway with public opinion.

AS: Please explain the test procedures.

MN: We solicited aid from friends and co-workers with young children for the source of test material. When a child lost a tooth, we arranged for a night away from home, with us, under controlled conditions. The child slept in a special bedroom, with a hidden video camera, set up for the test environment. Before each test run, the room was swept with a money-detector. We agreed to ten tests, at least three of which had to show positive evidence of existence before the claim could be made that the Tooth Fairy is real.

AS: And, of course, the test was negative?

MN: As you might expect, the Tooth Fairy was never caught by our monitors, nor, much to the dismay of many of the children, did there ever appear any money under pillows. They were, however, quite mollified with

the money and sugar-laden breakfast cereal that we gave them before we sent them back home. Lippard took all of this very stoically, and we believed he was coming around. After the last test had been run, however, his normally calm face displayed almost abject terror, and he ran out of my house, jumped into his car, and tore off down the street.

AS: Were you concerned?

MN: Not really. Jim has handled many tough situations in his life. I expected him to head for the ASU library and eventually write an article for the newsletter. However, I didn't see him again for about three weeks, when we happened to meet in our dentist's waiting room. He was missing three or four teeth from various places in his mouth. It turns out that he wasn't satisfied by the test procedures and decided to run his own test.

AS: But he had agreed to the terms, right? Is he still a Fellow because of his otherwise good record?

MN: Yes, but something just snapped. He felt there must have been something "anti-fairy" about the house, or perhaps the Tooth Fairy stayed in Indiana when his family moved here to Phoenix. It was at this point that I knew we had to get him out of the public eye. He was removed from the office of Executive Director, and this was announced at the most recent meeting.

AS: He certainly had everyone duped for a long time!

MN: Yes. Your publication should take care with all future article submissions. It is possible that there is some other belief that we don't know about. It is also possible, I suppose, that there are beliefs lying dormant in the minds of other Skeptics.

A Visit to the "Psychic Showcase"

by Jim Lippard

On April 23 and 24, 1988, an organization known as Truth Investigations Unlimited put on a "psychic showcase" at the Biltmore Commerce Center. According to a promotion for this psychic fair, the Biltmore Commerce Center hosted the event "due to the high standards established by the group concerning ethics, authenticity, enthusiasm and appearance."

After paying a \$5 admission fee, visitors could purchase tickets for readings for \$5 each. Tables were set up around the perimeter of the fountain- and foliage-filled atrium of the Commerce Center, where the tickets could be exchanged for brief readings by palmists, tarot card readers, astrologers, channelers, and assorted psychics. Crystals and books were also available for purchase. Every hour, demonstrations were given at one end of the atrium. I found the demonstrations to be the most interesting part of the show.

One demonstration was "mind transference techniques" by Lee Earle. He began his performance (after being introduced as a person "very talented in telepathy") by stating, "I have been accused of being a fake, a fraud, a phony, and a cheat." Rather than rebut these accusations,

Earle went on to say that "I am going to do my best to convince you that I am none of the above." After giving some examples of "telepathy" in the animal kingdom (antelopes simultaneously running from a predator, a school of fish making a turn in unison) and stating that "I believe that man has limited himself through his use of language," Earle went on to demonstrate his "mind transference techniques."

First, he attempted to find someone in the audience "attuned to the same frequency." He asked audience members to think of a two digit number less than 50, the two digits odd and not identical. Earle chose 37 (as did I and about a third of the audience--knowledge of population stereotypes dictates a choice of 37, 35, or 39 with the first being the most likely). To narrow down this group more, he then asked for people in this group to think of two geometric figures. Earle's choice was a circle in a triangle (I picked a triangle in a circle.) Finally Earle had narrowed it down to one volunteer who was called up on the stage.

The volunteer was asked to draw pictures of geometric figures and write the name of a movie star on pieces of paper which were sealed in envelopes. Earle successfully matched all of these. Unfortunately, the audience was not permitted to see what was in all of the envelopes Earle opened to preclude the use of a "one ahead" trick. He concluded by saying, "If I can do it, you can do it. There's nothing mystical or special about it. I'm just more full of it than other people."

On the second day, Earle gave essentially the same performance, except that he began by asking for an even two-digit number greater than 50, both digits different. (The most common answer here is 68.)

While Earle claims not to put himself into any ethical dilemmas, I'm not so sure. Many magicians (such as James Randi) always make it quite clear that what they are doing is illusion. Earle, on the other hand, appears to enjoy putting forth an ambiguous impression and not making any explicit claims either way. Since his acts include "mind transference demonstrations" and palm reading at psychic fairs for an organization which prides itself on high standards of authenticity, I believe he is walking a fine line.

Another demonstration I observed on both days was "channeling of Equinox" (a "group consciousness" of approximately 300 entities). This was performed by Joan Scibienski, who claims to have been developing and using psychic powers since birth. Scibienski prepared for her channeling by meditating with a group of her students seated around a circular table. She claimed that channeling is a draining experience which requires using her students as an energy source. The energy is so great that she warns the audience not to touch her during the channeling as it could result in her death. She also asked that audience members not take flash photographs, as this could also cause problems. Her stated rationale was that the aliens don't know what the flashes are--yet Equinox later explained channeling by analogy to replacing a spark plug in a car.

Scibienski does "unconscious channeling," which means that she leaves her body to go off visiting with a

Hopi Indian and Equinox takes over. Like most channelers I've seen, Scibienski's trance state involves her speaking in a strange voice with strange grammar and moving with jerky body movements. Also like other channelers, her presentation was full of inconsistencies. Equinox allegedly makes use of Scibienski's knowledge and memory (and thus does not understand foreign languages that Scibienski doesn't know). But for some reason, Equinox doesn't make use of Scibienski's knowledge of English syntax and morphology, let alone her understanding of flash photography. Instead, Equinox misplaces verbs ("what you must concentrate is upon your own power"), misuses, neglects, or adds superfluous suffixes ("a committedness that your being made prior to this incarnation"; "we feel the definite of the '2'"; "many small jumpings"), and makes inconsistent use of archaic forms (sometimes "thy," sometimes "your"), among other peculiarities.

Equinox answered questions from the audience, leading to more inconsistencies. One woman, who was trying to get information about a relative who served in the Confederate army during the Civil War, asked what regiment William Green Johnson was in. Scibienski answered, "We are seeing numbers...261...we feel the state of G-A." The woman responded in the negative, stating that she already knew he was in a Virginia cavalry regiment from 1861-1865 and was in regiment 2, 14, or 35. (She stated afterward that there were no three-digit regiments in the South.) To this, Equinox answered, "We feel the definite of the '2'...however there are two other numbers consistent with this." Equinox also stated that this soldier had risen through the ranks, but the woman said that he never rose above private.

Another apparently skeptical person asked Equinox, "What is my name in this incarnation?" Scibienski attempted to make a hit by saying, "What we are feeling, essence, we are feeling a name with the first initial 'T'. Is this so?" When a negative answer was returned, she then stated that "We don't do mind reading." If not, then why the attempt?

Scibienski also offered some vague predictions about the future, stating that two mountains in the United States ("1000 miles apart on a parallel") which have been dormant will "become hostile." This will be a third warning. Unfortunately, she didn't say what the first two warnings would be. No time frame was offered, though someone asked the second day. Despite these predictions, Equinox stated in answer to a question about what was in store for the U.S. in the 1990s that "We choose not to do what is known as prediction."

One other demonstration I observed on both days was a UFO lecture by Brian Myers and Tina Choate of the Center for UFO Research. They presented a slide show of UFO sightings, many of which are almost certainly hoaxes (such as the Billy Meier photos). Apparently no evidence was considered too weak for this crowd--the Travis Walton abduction, the "face on Mars," the drawings on the Nazca plain in Peru, and even von Däniken's "gold airplane" were cited as evidence for extraterrestrial visitation. Maria Reiche's name was dropped regarding

the Nazca drawings, but without mentioning that her view is diametrically opposed to the one being promoted. Her studies have shown how the figures might have been drawn without any advanced technology, using methods which Joe Nickell has successfully tested.

Myers and Choate also gave credence to the government coverup theory, claiming that "the government isn't telling us everything about UFOs." They also took some time to promote the Crystal Skull as evidence for UFOs.

As a special bonus, we were given a chance to hear from an actual UFO contactee named Jerry Wills. Wills claimed that his contacts began in 1965 in the woods of Kentucky and lasted about five years. He was contacted at least once a week, sometimes two or three times a week. He spent from an hour to a day in telepathic communication with aliens, and they gave him their theology, astrophysics, biology, physics, chemistry, sociology, and so on. Unfortunately, the only piece of alien technology he shared with us was a light-up crystal (called "The Guardian") that was for sale at a nearby table. Although Wills claimed aliens taught him how to make these crystals, literature on the table where they were being sold claimed that Wills was himself the inventor.

Wills gave a similar talk the second day, but this time he spoke of contacts with extraterrestrials taking place around 1971-1972. He also added new features, such as claiming that some of his friends were also contacted by extraterrestrials, and that the aliens gave him a ring. When asked where this ring was, he said he had traded it for an arrowhead and the ring was destroyed in a fire. He claimed that the aliens had given him information which he used to design a 3-D (television?) system for Toshiba and a Claymore mine detonator.

I should note that I met Wills at the "Focus on You" expo on December 5, 1987, at which time he was selling the lighted crystals (Jim Lowell of TUSKS was interested in purchasing one until he was told the price). At that time, he stated that he made no paranormal claims for his crystals. Now, however, the literature promoting these crystals states that "You can learn to use it to heal yourself and others as well as creating a sense of peace and well-being about the person wearing it" and "The Guardian is used like any crystal in healing, however, the light when it touches the skin has great healing effects." Further, it is claimed that The Guardian "is meant to be used by all who are to raise the consciousness of the planet."

Although I was hoping to see the scheduled demonstrations of glass shattering by "world-renowned psychic" Gil E. Gilly, he ended up being replaced on the schedule by other demonstrations. Gilly, who is a minister at the Desert Cove Chapel and bills himself as a "cryptotheologist," is well-known to local magicians. He has admitted being "a good magician," but also claims to be a genuine psychic. On the other hand, he states in his listing of services (ranging in price from \$25 per 6 minutes of telephone consultation to \$750 for a "total existence pattern") that "I do not claim any supernatural powers nor do I claim to be able to do anything you

cannot do." He further claims to have "made many startling discoveries and findings that have helped lift the field of Parapsychology to new heights."

Gilly allegedly predicted the April 10, 1975 suicide of James W. Howe, husband of Betty Ford's personal assistant, Nancy Howe. What Gilly actually predicted (for an unspecified time in 1975) was "a suicide or murder...though I lean to murder" in the White House. Another prediction he made for 1975 was that "A new planet, Vulcan, will be discovered right here in our solar system. It stays on the other side of the sun." The planet Vulcan was originally hypothesized to account for perturbations in the orbit of Mercury. Unfortunately for the hypothesis, Einstein's theory of General Relativity fully accounts for these discrepancies in Mercury's motion. Needless to say, no such planet was discovered in 1975.

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Color it Absurd

by Ken Morse

As TUSKS chairman, I get a lot of strange mail, but the oddest stuff lately has been coming from the "Rainbow" group.

They mail out a dulcet little sheet which exhorts folks toward World Peace.

Now, between you and me, there's naught awry with world peace; but done with *colors*? Anyhow, I was curious and called the editor, a David Christie, and asked if I could see his wares. He agreed and the date was set, to include his brother, Kenneth, who it develops, is the resident genius. I was brought to a table in a darkened apartment, where upon there lay three different Rubiks puzzles, a cube, a sphere, and a tetrahedron, you remember, don't you? But get this: They have been repainted special colors, and they rest in a circle and hexagon. Well, after a fairly long spiel about numerology, we get to the nexus: This is all related to "Revelations" in the Bible, about a cubical city 1500 km

on a side with 12 gates and they showed how if you assign numbers to colors, and add them up (using a couple of fudge factors), you get 666!

Guess you know who that is! Anyway, the bottom line is that these colors demonstrate irrefutably that at sub-atomic level this is the way things (matter and energy) combine. All this is, by the way, expatiated without the benefit of even *one* complete syntactical english sentence.

These guys give classes in this nonsense, so it figures there are lots of ripe fields of suckers to be plowed. In all fairness, I don't think they charge much if anything—so it is not a proper scam...just a waste of time.

Handwriting Analysis

by Jim Lippard

Perhaps the only exposure of most Americans to handwriting analysis is through advertisements in *Parade* magazine. Unfortunately, that has not been the case in Europe, where it has been used in hiring decisions by 85% of all companies (reported by Levy 1979, cited in Ben-Shakhar et al. 1986). It has been estimated that 3,000 American companies are using handwriting analysis (Rafaeli and Klimoski 1983). It has recently come to my attention that a company in Phoenix is now offering handwriting analysis services for aiding in hiring decisions (Abderholden 1988; Anonymous 1988a; Anonymous 1988b; Gruber 1988).

I called the company, the Handwriting Resource Corporation (hereafter HRC), and asked what published scientific support existed for graphology. I was told that "That's a bit of a problem. There's nothing at present... We are actively conducting research." (Abram 1988a). The HRC representatives told me that they would send copies of some of their in-house research and other information about their services.

What I received was quite interesting. The "in-house research" which they provided me was merely copies of summaries of research which did not give specific details about the methodology used (e.g., what controls were used, if any). The cover letter from HRC's director of research & development stated that "Most of our customers ask for validity studies (which we are happy to provide) but eventually make their decisions after they sample our product on themselves or a friend. Seeing yourself or a friend well encapsulated seems to be the best 'validity' of all." (Abram 1988b).

In fact, this seems to be the *only* "validity" demonstrated for handwriting analysis as a measure of occupational success or personality. Unfortunately, this seems to be not a demonstration of validity, but of an effect known as personal validation or the Barnum Effect (Forer 1949; Hyman 1977; Karnes 1988; Lippard 1987). Briefly, the "personality profiles" generated by handwriting analysis are such that subjects interpret them to match their own personalities and experiences. Some example quotes from an evaluation summary of a sample HRC profile help illustrate how this can occur: "the writer is also wildly excitable and becomes harsh and critical when things do not go well...the applicant is highly motivated, persuasive and intelligent, but is emotionally very

unpredictable...the ideal environment for this person must include a great deal of freedom, challenge and both people and project responsibilities [or] will become extremely frustrated and/or bored quickly." (Anonymous 1988c) While the HRC profiles more than such an evaluation summary (including graphs of various personal attributes), the same principle of subjective interpretation applies.

Yet the problem of personal validation and lack of published scientific support do not by themselves show that there is nothing to such handwriting analysis. Science does not know all there is to know, and personal validation may not account for all of the apparent effectiveness of handwriting analysis.

But the question of handwriting analysis' validity in such situations is not only scientifically answerable, it has at least partially been answered. For while published studies supporting handwriting analysis are lacking, there are a number of published articles providing disconfirmation of handwriting analysis (Ben-Shakhar et al. 1986; Klimoski and Rafaeli 1983; and many others, see bibliography for just a small sample). When critically examined, handwriting analysis gives results no better than chance in predicting occupational success (Ben-Shakhar et al. 1986; Rafaeli and Klimoski 1983), measuring personality (Birge 1954; Crider 1941; Klimoski and Rafaeli 1983), or diagnosing schizophrenia (Pascal and Suttell 1947). Not only does handwriting analysis appear not to be valid for such applications, several studies have shown it to have questionable reliability. That is, analyses done by multiple graphologists do not agree with each other (Ben-Shakhar et al. 1986; Crider 1941). Here, however, there is some controversy, as others have found high (Birge 1954) to moderate (Rafaeli and Klimoski 1983) agreement between handwriting analysts. Klimoski and Rafaeli (1983) discuss this issue and state that their studies "suggest that, although the different methods of handwriting analysis are unique, they do represent some unified framework of personality analysis."

Klimoski and Rafaeli (1983), in a summary of the literature, find several things in favor of graphology. Their previous study (Rafaeli and Klimoski 1983) found that the content of the script being analyzed did not influence graphologists' assessments, as might be expected. One study (Frederick 1968) found that graphologists could distinguish actual from fake suicide notes at above chance levels. Klimoski and Rafaeli note, however, that "examples of weaknesses in methodology have been cited throughout the paper. However, when researchers are more rigorous in these areas...the results have not been supportive of the usefulness of inferences based on script."

I conclude with a quote from Klimoski and Rafaeli (1983): "...interest in the application of handwriting analysis is increasing. In Europe and the United States, many groups (especially in industry) are seeking help from graphologists in assessing and evaluating individuals. They are doing so in the belief that inferences based on script samples made by graphologists will provide valid and valuable insights into personality and capacity. While definitive research is not yet available, it seems fair to say

that such enthusiasm for handwriting analysis appears premature...given the evidence that we do have, great reliance on inferences based on script must be considered unwarranted."

Note

There will be a session on graphology on Saturday, November 5 at the 1988 CSICOP Conference. Richard J. Klimoski and Edward Karnes will take part in the session, along with Rose Matousek, president of the American Association of Handwriting Analysts and Felix Klein, vice president of the Council of Graphological Societies. The session will be moderated by Barry Beyerstein, psychology professor at Simon Fraser University.

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Recognizing Destructive and Manipulative Groups

by Al Seckel

"When you meet the friendliest people you have ever known, who introduce you to the most loving group of people you've ever encountered, and you find the leader to be the most inspired, caring, compassionate and understanding person you've ever met, and then you learn that the cause of the group is something you never dared hope could be accomplished, and all of this sounds too good to be true it probably is too good to be true! Don't give up your education, your hopes and ambitions, to follow a rainbow."—Jeanne Mills, former member of the People's Temple and subsequent victim of assassination a year following the November 18, 1978 Jonestown suicides/murders of 911 adults and children.

It is tempting to view the new Age movement as mostly a decentralized, do-your-own-thing affair. In fact, the New Age movement—like its precursors EST and Scientology—can be highly organized; and groups supposedly formed around the dual principle of "awareness" and "freedom" often employ subtle manipulative techniques to enlist and keep a strangling grip on its members. For example, several New Age self-awareness groups have adopted firewalking as a spectacular gimmick to prove to people that they can do or achieve the impossible only through proper training and meditation. Because firewalking seems to be impossible to most people, it can serve as a very powerful psychological tool in convincing the walker that the material taught by a charismatic leader is correct, some of which may be of questionable validity. The Jonestown incident is an example of a group that used powerful and persuasive techniques to bring about drastic personality changes that completely destroyed the ability of its members to think independently.

In the United States alone, according to the latest estimates, there exist over 2500 destructive and manipulative groups, which fall into four separate and sometimes overlapping categories: (1) Religious; (2) Self-Awareness/Personal Development (Pseudo-Therapy); (3)

Political groups; and (4) Commercial Pyramid Enterprises and "Training" Seminars.

A group can be deviant or even heretical *without* being destructive; conversely, a group can also be destructive without holding particularly unusual beliefs. Destructive groups are not interested in helping you, but in helping themselves at your expense. Their hidden agenda reveals that they only want your free, full-time and life-long commitment as a recruiter and fund raiser. It is important, therefore, to learn how to tell whether a group employs manipulation and deception, is exclusive, psychologically or financially exploitative, totalitarian, or disruptive to families, friends, and society.

On the surface, many destructive groups seem to offer a strong feeling of community, sense of purpose, spiritual fulfillment, esoteric knowledge, and wealth. But behind these offerings may lie two subtle strategies of psychological coercion: (1) If you can make a person *behave* the way you want, you can make that person *believe* the way you want. (2) Sudden, drastic changes in environment lead to heightened suggestibility and to drastic changes in attitudes and beliefs.

Any of the following are characteristics of destructive groups, sometimes not apparent in the first stages of indoctrination.

Immediacy: You are pressured into making important decisions right away.

Charismatic leadership: The leader claims divinity or special knowledge and demands your absolute obedience.

Deception: In recruiting and fund-raising, the group hides its true objectives, often using "front groups" with innocent-sounding names. Followers are secretive or vague about their activities and beliefs.

Alienation: The group tries to separate you from your family, friends, and society. The group becomes your new "family."

Fatigue: Extended classes and/or training sessions, long working hours, and repetition of hypnotic practices (meditating, pseudo-speaking in tongues, and chanting) leave you exhausted and hence less able to deal critically with specious arguments.

Lack of privacy: The group interferes with your private contemplation and independent thought—inhibiting your ability to question.

Financial exploitation: You are required to relinquish your worldly goods and monetary assets to the group as well as work long hours without pay or benefits.

Physical exploitation: There is sexual abuse and child abuse. Leaders use fear of or actual punishment to keep members in line.

Totalitarianism: You are always expected to think, feel, and act in a manner prescribed by the group.

Mystical manipulation: The leader stages "miraculous" or "psychic" events to impress disciples of his or her special divinity.

Need for purity: The group tries to convince you that before you joined the group you were hopelessly impure. Therefore, you need to be cleansed by the group.

Confession: You are coerced into openly discussing your innermost fears, anxieties, and deepest secrets.

Loading the language: New words with special meanings, understood only by members of the group, are created. New and special meanings are given to familiar words and phrases. The group takes over your very vocabulary.

Stifling opposition: The leaders condemn those who disagree with the philosophy of the group as doomed, liars, or agents of Satan.

Exclusiveness: The group claims or implies that they have the only right answer to a specific question or problem.

Rules: The group requires strict adherence to trivial rules.

How to respond

If you are asked to join a group that has any of the above characteristics, here are some suggestions:

Ask questions: Never accept vague generalities and inadequate explanations in response to your questions. Learn to recognize when a message or answer is actually confused or ambiguous, perhaps intentionally so. Beware of those who try to silence you through group intimidation.

You can say no: You can always answer "none of the above" to any multiple choice before deciding. Recognize group pressure to decide quickly. Sleep and carefully think out your decision before deciding. No one knows what is right for you except you! After all, the group will not disappear in the next few days or months. Be willing to disobey simple situational rules when you feel you should. Never do anything you don't believe just to appear normal or get someone off your back.

Keep your self-worth: Try to focus on what you are doing, rather than on thoughts about yourself. Avoid giving personal confessions that may be later used against you. Many destructive groups and mind-control systems use in-group confessions, self-exposure "games," and the like to catalogue the weaknesses of their members for later exploitation.

Look for the hidden agenda: What is really being said? What is not being said. Beware of invitations to isolated weekend workshops having nebulous goals.

Keep outside contacts: Maintain outside interests and sources of social support. Reject the appeal that devotion to the cause requires severing these ties.

Avoid physical abuse: Exit those situations in which you are exposed to or threatened with physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.

People who have left destructive groups must deal with feelings of victimization, isolation, repression, and self-worthlessness. When beliefs are shaken, it is difficult to start over. After all, every exit is an entrance to somewhere else.

A slightly altered version of this article appeared in the Santa Monica News. This appeared in and has been reprinted with permission from LASER, the Los Angeles Skeptics Evaluative Report.

Upcoming Meetings

This section contains listings for Phoenix Skeptics and TUSKS meetings.

Phoenix Skeptics meetings are normally held on a Saturday near the end of the month. Meetings start at 12:30 p.m. and are held at the Jerry's restaurant at 1750 N. Scottsdale Rd. in Tempe (south of McKellips).

August 27. Normal PS meeting time and place. Local hypnotist Michael Preston will talk about hypnosis and may also give a demonstration.

September 4. TUSKS lecture. Jim Lowell will give a talk entitled "Applied Kinesiology and other Phony Medical Tests." Meeting will be at the Willmot Branch Library, 530 N. Willmot, Tucson, at 7 p.m.

September 24. Normal PS meeting time and place. Speaker and topic unknown at press time.

If you have a suggestion for a meeting topic or a guest speaker for the Phoenix Skeptics, contact Ted Karren at the PS address or 993-2600. If you have a suggestion for a TUSKS lecture, contact Ken Morse at 881-4910.

Ghost Busters or Lease Breakers

by Ken Morse, TUSKS chairman

Well, if I were in an air-tight rental contract, I guess a couple of ghosts or so would be a welcome sight. In fact, this has been determined to be the cause of ghosts in the past.

A friend of mine at the University of Arizona, Dr. Paul Turner, an anthropologist with an interest in claims of occult phenomena, called me the other day and said he had a possible "sighting" (UFOlogy is everywhere these days). It seems that a couple had rented an apartment in an upscale foothills dig and were, after a month or so of occupancy, being "terrorized" by a ghost, whom the man said he'd seen on five occasions. He, naturally, as any worthy true believer type would, bailed out of the apartment. One important detail, however, was the question of rent. Evidently the "ghost" was merely the landlord entreating him for the rent, because the issue is now in arbitration. Meantime, the tenants' association, it is rumored, has been casting around for some live-in ghosts—we used to call 'em "lease-breakers."

Well, Tucson is quiet for another night—but who knows...next week the night-stalking chiropractors may break loose. Stay Tuned.

June PS Meeting

by Judy Sawyer

Since June of 1987, Manifestations, a theatrical recreation of a 19th-century séance, has been running here in Phoenix. Attendees of the June Skeptics meeting had the enjoyable experience of meeting Craig Nichols and Lee Earle, creators of Manifestations.

They put on an entertaining telepathic demonstration for the group and discussed the marketing techniques they use for their spirit theatre. Skeptics raised the point that although Manifestations is marketed as "theatre and entertainment," it is still not made as clear as possible that this show has nothing to do with the paranormal. Nichols and Earle counted that, in a movie theatre, you are not continually interrupted to be told that what you are watching is only a film, not authentic.

Lee Earle closed the meeting by asking skeptics to keep an open mind regarding paranormal claims. He related a personal story suggesting a telepathic incident he and his son experienced some years ago. Skeptic members brought up coincidence or an overheard conversation as possible explanations. Skeptics should keep in mind that although such anecdotes are interesting, they are unverifiable and do not in any way constitute proof.

July PS Meeting

by Judy Sawyer

A good turnout of the Phoenix Skeptics was on hand to listen to Anita O'Riordan, head of the state attorney general's Elderly Abuse Project.

Just as the Phoenix Skeptics represent people dedicated to exposing paranormal fraud, Ms. O'Riordan and her group fight to expose and halt fraud against the elderly. Ms. O'Riordan gave an informative and entertaining talk about such issues as financial exploitation, home repair schemes and false advertising. The elderly are particularly susceptible to health frauds, which range from pharmacy price gouging to serious organized crimes. Ms O'Riordan reported that many health products on the market today offer much more than they deliver; for example, cures are "available" for Alzheimer's disease, hair loss, and skin problems.

Often, these frauds go undetected as the victim is ashamed to come forward or doesn't know to whom to complain. To obtain help if you or someone that you know is a victim of elderly fraud, call FRAUDLINE toll-free at 1-800-352-8431 statewide, 255-5763 in the Phoenix area.

CORRECTION: An omission was made in Jim Lippard's article "Psychic Detectives," in the May/June 1988 issue of the Phoenix Skeptics News. The three sentences "Marcello Truzzi of the CSAR spoke to two police officers Allison had mentioned to him as witnesses. One could not confirm having heard the name 'Williams.' The other recalled that, at one time, Allison had mentioned a number of names, one of which was 'Williams.'" were mistakenly printed without proper attribution. These three sentences are from pages 635-636 of "Reflections on Psychic Sleuths" by Piet Hein Hoebens with Marcello Truzzi. This article is listed in the bibliography.

Editor's Ramblings

As promised, this newsletter is a mixture of efforts from the Phoenix Skeptics and TUSKS. There is still a lot of PS bias in the newsletter, but I hope to make things equal with future issues. Suggestions and contributions are hereby solicited.

Speaking of soliciting, I would like anybody who reads a book that would be of interest to other subscribers to jot down a short description of the nature and bias of the book. There are a lot of new books on crystals and channeling. I'm sure somebody out there has waded through at least a few of them.

I'm sure you didn't believe much of the "Lippard Disgraced" article—after all, there is hardly a word of truth in there. However, Jim really is no longer Executive Director. He will be moving to Tucson to pursue a

graduate degree in Philosophy. We hope he doesn't believe that will get him somewhere in life...

Michael Stackpole is the new Executive Director. The new Phoenix Skeptics phone number is now 231-8624.

You can get any title from Prometheus Books at 25% off list price by ordering through the Phoenix Skeptics. You can examine their catalog of skeptical books at public meetings, or just look through the bibliography of an article by Jim Lippard.

Westercon, an annual science fiction convention, was held in Phoenix over the Fourth of July weekend. The Phoenix Skeptics participated in a panel discussion of skeptical topics. There were also several other panel discussions which cried out for skeptical participation.

Andre Kole, a Phoenix-resident magician and internationally-known illusion designer, has just published a book that is critical of faith healers. He has done worldwide research on the topic. The book is *Miracles or Magic?*, is published by Harvest House, and is a reprint of his earlier *From Reality to Illusion*. It can be found at The Carpenter's Village in Tempe and possibly elsewhere. There was an interview with Mr. Kole in the Religion section of the *Arizona Republic* on July 23.

A couple of articles by Hans Sebald that have appeared in past issues of the newsletter will be reprinted by other skeptics groups.

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