

# The REALL News

The official newsletter of the Rational Examination Association of Lincoln Land

*"It's a very dangerous thing to believe in nonsense." — James Randi*

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## Local Creationist Changes His Mind

by Lapri Solof

In breaking news this month, creationist David Sack, who led the Lincoln Land Community College's creation club, and who was mentioned in last month's Chairman's column in this newsletter, has admitted that he was wrong all along. In an exclusive interview with Mr. Sack, he has informed me that he plans to make a formal announcement to the club on April 1. At that meeting, he will explain how wrong he'd been all along. He believes another faculty member will come forward to save the club from extinction.

Sack's epiphany came shortly after the end of REALL's February meeting, when he stayed around to discuss the issues with Malcolm Levin. Sack was arguing his standard line that no new information could be gained in the process of evolution. Levin explained to him that genes are not computer programs and biology is not math. Specifically, Levin showed him that genes are "really, really small" (see photo).

Sack was heard to exclaim at that point, "Oh my God! You're right!" He then went into seclusion for several weeks to read the material that Levin had provided to him. Upon coming out, he apologized to Levin for disrupting his lecture and for failing to read the material sooner. "I was so sure that the literal creation story had to be true and thought my mathematics background was good enough for me to properly analyze science, too. I see now that I was wrong."

REALL Chairman David Bloomberg said that he is glad to see that Sack has admitted his error. "I think this is the first time I've actually seen a creationist examine the evidence," Bloomberg said. "Because creationism is a religious belief, not a scientific one, they are generally blind to anything that contradicts their worldview. I'm glad to see that it is indeed possible for one of them to accept the scientific evidence that has been laid out for decades."

Bloomberg also says he hopes this will spark new interest in evolution in Central Illinois. "Here you have a guy who was going around giving lectures on how horrible evolution supposedly is and how great his creationist beliefs are. But now he's

recognized the error of his ways. I hope he will continue to speak out – but now he will speak of the actual science instead of the twisted version creationists put on everything."

Sack told me that he is now considering going back to school in pursuit of a Ph.D. in biology so he can teach future scientists as a way of atoning for his past. At the very least, he will be talking to the students and teachers in the creation club in the hopes of explaining precisely how he had been in error before. "Many of them still hold the same misconceptions and misunderstandings that I did," he said. "I mean, I used that 'second law of thermodynamics' argument so many times, and I never knew how ridiculous that really was. I can see now why scientists kept rolling their eyes whenever I brought that one up. It's amazing they didn't just outright slug me for making such a travesty of good, hard science."

However, Sack doesn't have high hopes for getting the rest of his club to see the error of their ways. "They have to get over their single-mindedness and accept the fact that a person can still hold religious beliefs even if they recognize that the Bible is not a science textbook," he said. "This isn't easy for somebody who is absolutely, 100% certain that their view is the only Truth."

One creation club member, who wishes to remain anonymous, said that he will have to wait until Sack's official announcement before deciding what to do. "Certainly this worries me, but I'm really more concerned about the PR coup this gives to evolutionary scientists. You just know they're going to be writing front-page articles about this for all their newsletters. Of course, with his official pronouncement scheduled for April 1<sup>st</sup>, a lot of readers will assume it's just an April Fools parody."

And they'd be right. ♡



Professor Malcolm Levin explained that genes are "really, really small."

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## Purpose

The Rational Examination Association of Lincoln Land is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) educational and scientific organization. It is dedicated to the development of rational thinking and the application of the scientific method toward claims of the paranormal and fringe-science phenomena.

REALL shall conduct research, convene meetings, publish a newsletter, and disseminate information to its members and the general public. Its primary geographic region of coverage is central Illinois.

REALL subscribes to the premise that the scientific method is the most reliable and self-correcting system for obtaining knowledge about the world and universe. REALL does not reject paranormal claims on *a priori* grounds, but rather is committed to objective, though critical, inquiry.

The REALL News is its official newsletter.

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## From the Chairman

David Bloomberg

While skeptics often come off as gruff cynics, I like to think that we can have some fun, too. In that spirit, I've been meaning to do something in the way of an April Fool's Day issue for several years now. Unfortunately, I hadn't quite gotten around to it.

Until now, that is.

When I saw the image, on my digital camera review screen, of the photo that graces the front page of this newsletter, I knew I had to run with it. Many potentially humorous captions ran through my head, and I eventually settled on the one that goes with the article now. Although I tried to make it pretty obvious that this was a joke article, in case you only skimmed or missed the last line or something, let me make it perfectly clear: The article was a joke, a parody, a spoof. As far as I know, David Sack is still a creationist. I'll be the first to let everybody know – in a real REALL article – if he changes his mind. Don't hold your breath.

The other articles are 100% true, though they were picked with the April Fool in mind. For example, we have my review of a couple of "Complete Idiot's Guides." Get it? Idiot/Fool. And we also have a couple more Straight Dope Staff Report answers of mine. Here, you'd have to be a fool to believe these things. (Okay, that one was really a stretch.)

## April Meeting

The April 3 meeting will be a business meeting. We don't hold many of these, but occasionally they are necessary. This is one such time. The main topic under discussion will be some changes to our Bylaws. Now, I know what most of you are thinking: "We have Bylaws?" Yes, we do. We rarely bring

*("From the Chairman" continued on page 6)*

## A Nod to Our Patrons

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## Guides to Psychic Power and Tarot?

by David Bloomberg

Almost everybody is by now familiar with the series of “The Complete Idiot’s Guide” books, dealing with everything from public speaking to investing to baking. In each of these, an expert in the field provides step-by-step instructions on how to succeed at that particular task.

Two books in this line, *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Being Psychic*, by Lynn A. Robinson and LaVonne Carlson-Finnerty (Alpha Books, \$18.95), and *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Tarot and Fortune-Telling*, by Arlene Tognetti and Lisa Lenard (\$16.95), seem a bit out of place in such a series.

Both books deal somewhat with the “how-to” aspects of their subject areas. *Being Psychic* provides instructions on how to pay more attention to your “intuitive” side and how to find a “spirit guide.” *Tarot* talks about card meanings and layouts.

But both suffer from an inherent problem that is not found in most other “Idiot” books. Nobody doubts the existence of public speaking, investing, or baking. Yet both of these new volumes act as if the authors’ beliefs are all that is necessary to make these things real. Anybody who doubts it simply has a closed mind. The authors have proclaimed these things to be real, and simply move on from there.

As such, neither book can be considered a reliable source of information. Even most of those who believe in paranormal claims would likely have a hard time reading through the volumes of utter nonsense that fill these books. *Tarot* claims all Gypsies are psychic. *Being Psychic* has a host of wild claims the authors believe really happened, including one saying a “glittering, 12-foot-tall Liberace, along with his equally oversized piano, descend[ed] to Earth from a banana-shaped

spacecraft” in Alabama in 1989!

Indeed, it seems the authors of *Being Psychic* are so immersed in their beliefs, they cannot even see that which is obvious to an objective viewer. In one example, they talk about a scam involving a claimed psychic who would tell her victims that they were cursed and needed to bring large amounts of cash to cleanse themselves. Many people who believed in her powers fell for this scam, losing thousands of dollars. Yet the authors still insist the con-woman “definitely was a gifted psychic.”

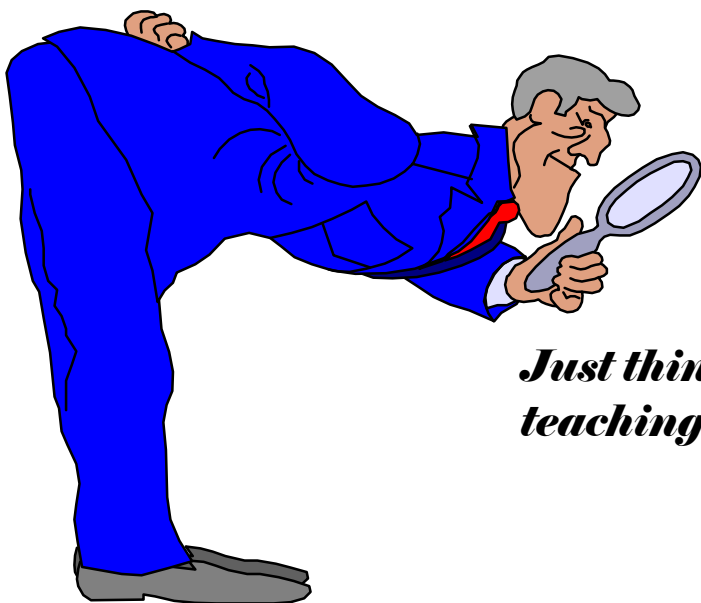
*Tarot* does have more of a guide book feeling. The authors discuss each card and what its meanings are. Of course, they are vague enough to apply to almost any situation, and also say that one shouldn’t be locked into a specific meaning, but should essentially mold it to a person’s situation. With all of this said, it’s a bit puzzling that they bother taking up 140 pages discussing the meanings of cards that don’t necessarily have those meanings.

The *Tarot* authors run into problems even when they are dealing with their own realm of beliefs. The images in Tarot cards are usually thought by readers to have very specific meanings. Yet the authors have a tendency to miss that intended symbolism and instead seem to base their card descriptions on a casual observation of the card’s overall appearance. As such, their descriptions tend to vary somewhat from standard Tarot meanings (though, as noted, they say you shouldn’t be limited by meanings anyway). So Tarot believers will find that there are already better books on the market to address this aspect.

Even with the varied card meanings, sometimes they say the cards will appear confusing. Have no fear, though, for the authors insist that the cards know what they’re doing. If you ask the cards a question and they don’t seem to answer it, you shouldn’t take that as a failure of Tarot. Rather you should understand that the Tarot knows you better than you know yourself, and the cards are answering a question you didn’t know to ask. In other words, even when they’re wrong, they’re right. Their belief in the power of a few pieces of cardboard is such that there can be no argument against them, because the authors already have all the bases covered.

The authors do acknowledge that some people might actually be skeptical of these claim, but their understanding of skept-

(“Guides” continued on page 7)



***Just think of the tragedy of  
teaching children not to doubt.***

**— Clarence Darrow**

# Meaningless Divisions and Meaningless Predictions

## *Fighting Ignorance with The Straight Dope*

by David Bloomberg

As I've mentioned before, I write for the Staff Reports portion of *The Straight Dope* by Cecil Adams. The column is of the question-and-answer variety and runs mostly in alternative independent newspapers across the country. It does not run here in Springfield, but you can still read it on the web at [www.straightdope.com](http://www.straightdope.com) and buy collections in book form at pretty much any book store.

A number of the Staff Reports I write are also related to REALL, so we reprint them here from time to time. This month, we have a two questions that have little to do with each other – except that they both address some all-too common misconceptions: Are Microevolution and Macroevolution Two Different Things? How Does a Ouija Board Work?

As before, Ed Zotti, Cecil's editor, did some editing on these answers, and I have also edited it for clarity since it was originally released as a Staff Report.

### Dear Straight Dope:

I was viewing the Straight Dope website and stumbled across a Mailbag article entitled “Does the Theory of Evolution Fly in the Face of the Facts?” SDSTAFF David states that there is constant evidence of animals being in a transitional state by evolution. This is true only in one way of looking at it, and SDSTAFF David fails to make the proper distinction that scientists have now made. Evolution as a theory was recently re-discussed by scientists as a body, and they broke it down in micro and macro evolution theories. As I am sure you are aware, macroevolution has more to do with the “common ancestor” aspects of evolutionary theory, whereas microevolution deals with the “survival of the fittest.” As far as microevolution is concerned, it's hard to find fault with it. Even creationists, unless they feel particularly stubborn, will admit that it works. Macroevolution, on the other hand, is an entirely different story. – A. Frederic Harms

All right! Creationists accept half the theory of evolution! We'll have you guys believing we're all monkeys' uncles yet.

Let's take a look at some terms. Creationists consider microevolution to be small changes within a species. A prime example of this would be a change in coloration or beak size or something of that order such that the species stays the same but there is an obvious change to the animals within that species. As you rightly note, Fred, these are instances of survival of the fittest – animals with coloration that blends in better or beaks that can better break whatever nuts are available are more likely to elude predators or find food and thus pass along these qualities to their offspring.

Macroevolution is said to be the change from one species to another. This naturally leads to discussions beyond species and into genus, family, etc., and ultimately leads to the question of whether we humans share a common ancestor with apes. So you got that right too.

The problem is in your attempt to separate the two. Macroevolution, far from being “an entirely different story” from microevolution, is actually the same story, just on a larger scale. Creationists have not come up with a reasonable explanation why evolution should stop at the boundary of a species, rather than include the process that changes one species to another over time. Fact is, there is no such reason. No hard and fast distinction can be drawn between “micro” and “macro” evolution. It's all one process.

A recent book by Niles Eldredge (who co-authored the famous paper explaining the theory of punctuated equilibrium with now more well-known colleague Stephen Jay Gould) discusses this very topic, among many others. It's called *The*

*Triumph of Evolution and the Failure of Creationism*, and I encourage everybody to go out and buy a copy. Maybe two.

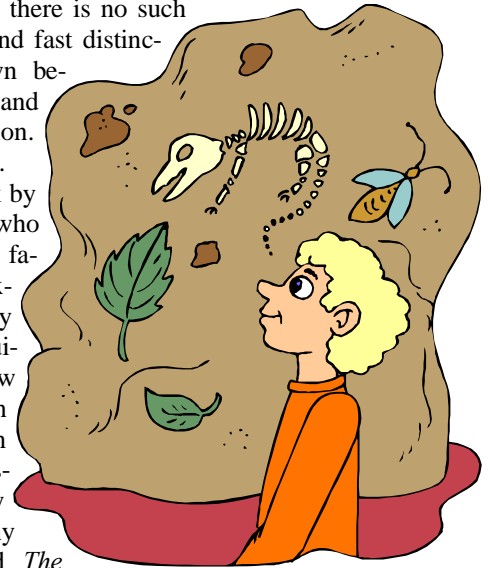
One of Eldredge's statements in the book summarizes the main point here: “There is utter continuity in evolutionary processes from the smallest scales (microevolution) up through the largest scales (macroevolution)” [p. 119].

Here are some of the other things he had to say on the microevolution/macroevolution topic:

Evolutionary processes taking place in relatively small scales of space and time connect to larger-scale entities, processes, and events to produce the entire history of life from the smallest incremental evolutionary change to the vast spectrum running from the simplest bacteria on up through the complex fungi, plants, and animals—from, in other words, the small-scale changes of so-called microevolution on up through the larger-scaled changes often referred to as macroevolution. This tremendously diverse array of life, spanning at least 3.5 billion years of Earth history, is all connected by a pattern of nested sets of genetic and anatomical similarity that can rationally be explained only as the simple outcome of a natural shared descent with modification [pp. 62-3].

Patterns of evolutionary change within species seem no different in principle just milder in degree from the sorts of changes we see between closely related species. All evolutionary changes are produced by natural selection working each generation on the variation presented to it [p. 76].

The evolution of a family should be no different in its basic





nature, and should involve no different processes, from the evolution of a genus, since a family is nothing more than a collection of related genera. And genera are just collections of related species. The triumph of evolutionary biology in the 1930s and 1940s was the conclusion that the same principles of adaptive divergence just described—primarily the processes of mutation and natural selection—going on within species, accumulate to produce the differences we see between closely related species—i.e., within genera. QED: If adaptive modification within species explains the evolutionary differences between species within a genus, logically it must explain all the evolutionary change we see between families, orders, classes, phyla, and the kingdoms of life [emphasis in original, p. 76].

Microevolution and macroevolution differ only as a matter of scale, as we have seen from the connectedness of all life, and from the sliding scale of events—from the simplest, smallest evolutionary changes up through the enormous effects wrought as the aftermath of global mass extinctions [p. 88].

Creationists say there can be variation within kinds (microevolution) but not between kinds (macroevolution). Biologists assert that there has been one history of life: all life has descended from a single common ancestor; therefore one process—evolution—is responsible for the diversity we see [p. 123].

That pretty well sums it up. Granted, Eldredge is just stating his case here; I don't expect the above to persuade you because it is only possible to summarize the evidence here, not show it all to you. For that, you will need to take a long trip to a university (or similar) library. I encourage you to do so. My point is that mainstream scientists, of whom Eldredge is a representative example, don't attach the same importance to macro- vs. microevolution that creationists do.

Incidentally, as far as I know, there was no big conference of scientists on this topic (at least, none outside the realm of the creationists). I have no idea where you got this claim, but the terms macro- and microevolution were coined in 1927, casting doubt on the idea that this division is newly drawn. One would suppose that a guy like Eldredge would have been involved in such a scientific conference had it occurred.

In summary, it's nice of creationists to admit that microevolution occurs, but the truth is that there is no magical dividing line between micro- and macroevolution. Biological evidence shows that changes within species are caused by the same natural forces that eventually cause differences between species, genera, families, and all the way up the line.

For further information on just what is or isn't considered macro- or microevolution, see the Talk.Origins Macroevolution FAQ: [www.talkorigins.org/faqs/macroevolution.html](http://www.talkorigins.org/faqs/macroevolution.html).

#### Dear Straight Dope:

**Can you please explain exactly how a Ouija board works? I know some people say it's because of spirits, and others say it's because of involuntary movements, but most people would agree that it's really not explainable. If that's the case, then how can Parker Brothers manufacture a game which process can't be explained? – Heather and**

#### Mark

To answer your last question first—it is, as you said, a game. They don't need to explain it; they just need to know that people will buy it so they can make money.

Going back to your first question, yes, we can explain how the Ouija board works. In fact, you mentioned it in your question—involuntary movements. Evidently you didn't find that persuasive, so let me take another stab.

For those who don't know what a Ouija board is, let's start from the beginning, with some help from the Museum of Talking Boards at [www.museumoftalkingboards.com](http://www.museumoftalkingboards.com) (only on the net, not a museum you can visit in person). The Ouija board was invented by E.C. Reiche, Elijah Bond, and Charles Kennard in the early 1890's, and then improved upon and mass marketed by William Fuld. Before the Ouija board, spirit mediums used, among other things, a dial plate talking board, which had a letter indicator joined by a spindle to the center of the board. This rotated to pick different letters. Another way of bringing forth supposed messages from the dead was the planchette, which was generally heart-shaped, with a hole for a pencil in the tip of the heart. The medium put his/her hands on the two lobes of the heart and either moved it on a piece of paper to do "automatic writing" (writing with the pencil that supposedly came from the dead) or on a pre-printed chart to point to letters, statements, etc. The inventors of the Ouija board combined these two items.

Even back in the 1880s, the planchette was being sold as a novelty item and parlor game. The Ouija board was in the same vein—an important point. The board didn't originate with swamis, emanate from the mysterious East, or anything like that. It was invented and marketed by American businessmen hoping to make a buck.

The Ouija board has the letters of the alphabet and the numbers 0-9 printed on it, along with YES, NO, GOODBYE, and sometimes a few other things. Copycat versions of the game may incorporate astrological, Tarot, or other New Age symbols. The idea is that you ask the spirit world a question and then rest your hand(s) on the pointer while the spirits answer you.

You may have heard that the name Ouija (pronounced WEE-ja) is a combination of *oui* (French for "yes") and *ja* (German for "yes"). Alas, that was made up by Mr. Fuld. Another story is that Mr. Kennard thought Ouija was Egyptian for "good luck." It isn't really, but the board itself supposedly told him, so who was he to argue?

After Kennard came up with the name, the Kennard Novelty Company advertised the first Ouija board as follows:

#### OUIJA

#### A WONDERFUL TALKING BOARD

*Interesting and mysterious; surpasses in its results second sight, mind reading, clairvoyance;*

*will give intelligent answer to any question.*

*Proven at patent office before patent was allowed.*

*Price \$1.50.*

I particularly like the part about having to prove that it works at the patent office. It would be interesting to see how they did *that*.

*("Straight Dope" continued on page 6)*

(“Straight Dope” continued from page 5)

Having taken over Kennard, Fuld and later his family ran the Ouija board company for many years, finally selling the game to Parker Brothers in 1966. Early last year, Parker Brothers introduced a smaller glow-in-the-dark version of the game.

How does the Ouija board work? New-Agey folks think you get messages from spirits or ghosts or Invisible Pink Unicorns or something. Yeah, sure. Here's the real explanation, from the Skeptic's Dictionary ([skepdic.com/ouija.html](http://skepdic.com/ouija.html)): “those using the board either consciously or unconsciously select what is read.” If you want to prove it to yourself, follow the advice of that same site: “simply try it blindfolded for some time, having an innocent bystander take notes on what letters are selected. Usually, the result will be unintelligible nonsense.”

What makes the pointer move? An effect similar to that which occurs in dowsing, known as the *ideomotor effect*. This is a fancy name for involuntary/unconscious movement, such as a dowser's hand flicking enough to move his stick when he passes over an area he knows has water. The basic point is that your muscles can move without your consciously thinking, “move to the word YES.” As the Skeptic's Dictionary says, “suggestions can be made to the mind by others or by observations. Those suggestions can influence the mind and affect motor behavior. What is purely physiological, however, appears to some to be paranormal.” In other words, if you believe this stuff and are trying to get the spirits to answer questions proving that they are all-knowing, and you ask a question that you already know the answer to (for example, “What's my father's name?”), odds are that your own hands will do the rest by spelling out your answer. That's where trying it blindfolded comes in (provided you haven't memorized the board, obviously). If it's spirits, they should be able to guide your hands no matter whether you can see or not. But if it's you doing it unconsciously, the blindfold will screw things up.

Of course, this assumes you're the one operating the pointer. If a medium is doing it instead, there's always the possibility that s/he is simply faking it as part of the show.

The point is, the Ouija board is easily explainable. Whether you'll accept that I don't know. Shall we consult the Ouija board? ☹



(“From the Chairman” continued from page 2)

them out because they don't often come into play. In fact, that's one reason for some of the changes: To bring the Bylaws more in line with the way we actually do business. The other is to make a smoother election procedure and eliminate the need for a special election meeting each year (which always has the worst attendance of any meeting).

Right now, the Bylaws state that the membership elects the Board, and then the Board elects the officers (Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary/Treasurer, and Newsletter Editor). Terms are for one year only. The proposed change would have the previous Board elect the incoming Board, and terms would be changed to two years.

We will discuss all of the reasons for these proposals at the meeting, but we have done some investigation and found that a number of other organizations work this way and it seems to make things go smoothly. And, as I said, it means you wouldn't have to find an excuse to avoid an election meeting each year.

Members would still retain voting rights for anything that is not specifically a Board decision, and, of course, would still be necessary for any future changes of the Bylaws. In addition, the change would specify that members would get exclusive benefits not open to non-members. For example, access to the REALL e-mail list, reduced prices on items sold through RE-ALL, etc.

Another change would better explain how we can notify membership of upcoming meetings. Currently, the Bylaws state that we should send out written notice seven days before each meeting. This seems a little silly in light of the fact that we almost always meet on the first Tuesday of the month in the same place at the same time (the only exceptions being holidays or days when the room at the Lincoln Library is closed – both of which we know far in advance).

Finally, there would be a slight change in the way reimbursement is processed by the Secretary/Treasurer, again bringing the Bylaws in line with the way we actually do our day-to-day operations.

According to the Bylaws, we will present these proposed changes for discussion at the April meeting, and then vote on them at the May 1 meeting. But have no fear – the May meeting will not be devoted solely to voting on the changes.

In April, I will be traveling to New York, to the headquarters of the Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) to meet with CSICOP officials and representatives from other local skeptics groups from across the country. There we will discuss a wide variety of issues dealing with how we can improve the way we get our message out and how we go about our regular activities. I don't have an agenda yet, so I can't be much more specific than that. But at our May meeting, I will go over that trip and talk about what I learned there.

So, that about sums it up for now. I hope I see you at both the April and May meetings! ☹

(“Guides” continued from page 3)

ticism is quite skewed. They claim that skeptics have to prove “that psi doesn’t exist” (rather than the proper scientific view that somebody making such a claim needs to provide evidence to support it) and wonder what they will say “when evidence finally arrives that proves psi exists as a natural force.”

They also take pot-shots at skeptics several times. In comparing the logical and rational mind vs. the intuitive mind, they say the former needs proof while the latter is “trusting,” and the former is “critical” while the latter is “loving.” Obviously, it’s better to be trusting and loving than critical! Less subtle is their claim that, before it happened, skeptics would have “been as unbelieving” of a claim that Charles Lindbergh could complete his flight as they are now of astral travel. It’s hard to believe the authors didn’t know they were setting up such a blatantly false straw man argument, but if that is truly what they think about skeptics, it’s no wonder they vilify them as having closed minds and even say “the public may confuse these two types of extremists — fanatical followers of all things paranormal and ever-suspicious skeptics.”

Oddly, the authors themselves seem to fall into the category of “fanatical followers of all things paranormal.” They cite several well-known “psychics” to support their claims, even including Uri Geller on their list. (Amusingly, they state that “skeptics continue to debunk Geller and his feats.” Since they seem to fully believe in his powers, this implies they don’t know what the word “debunk” means.) They cite firewalking as an example of an “unsolved mystery,” ignoring the proven fact that one does not need to be in any sort of special trance state to do it – it’s just simple physics. They talk of hypnotically regressing people to past lives, ignoring the vast amount of evidence dealing with false memory implantation. They cite therapeutic touch and Kirlian photography as valid – the latter is even “proof that auras exist.” They claim that Einstein had a “psychic experience” because he “is reputed to have formulated the Theory of Relativity while resting.” (No, they don’t explain it any better than that.) They cite the Fox Sisters as having invoked spirits to “rap on and levitate objects,” ignoring the fact that they later admitted it was a hoax. They perpetuate the incorrect claim that the late Jeane Dixon predicted President Kennedy’s assassination. Those are only the tip of the iceberg.

It is intriguing that they repeatedly try to claim scientific backing for some of what they say, but don’t cite anything specific. They even claim that “one thing that physicists and psi scientists agree on is that physics and psi probably follow the same set of natural laws.” (I’d like to know who these physicists are.) They appear to want to have the credibility associated with the word “scientific,” without having to deal with any of the rigors of the scientific method.

These books are not completely devoid of good advice. There is one small paragraph in *Being Psychic* that says, “Certain types of schizophrenics also report hearing voices, and if you start hearing voices out of the blue, your first stop should be your doctor’s office. We also recommend that you make sure you’re truly hearing psychic information before acting on your premonitions. And whatever you do, don’t try anything dangerous because you think it’s based on your intuition!” Good advice, indeed, but that’s pretty much the extent of it.

In general, the “Complete Idiot’s Guide” series works well

when addressing subjects that people may want to learn about in order to reach a goal, such as becoming a better public speaker, investor, or baker. Unfortunately, they have tried to apply that same formula here, to topics that are complex, controversial, and quite probably just plain untrue.

People cannot simply wave their hands and dismiss everything that challenges their beliefs. But that’s exactly what these authors try to do, especially in *Being Psychic*. Anything that seems to substantiate their preconceived beliefs is promoted (and not checked too thoroughly); anything that does not is ignored.

Whether a reader is familiar with this subject matter or just has a passing interest, after shelling out the money for either of these books, he may well feel like a complete idiot.

(This article includes material that I originally wrote for articles in the *State Journal-Register* of Springfield, Illinois, and *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine.) ♣



## Our Next Meeting

### Business Meeting

At our next meeting we will be discussing some proposed changes to our bylaws. In addition, David will be requesting suggestions for issues to raise at the upcoming gathering of the local skeptic group leaders in New York. Bring your ideas and join us for an evening of discussion!



Springfield, Illinois  
Lincoln Library (7th & Capitol)  
Tuesday, April 3, 7:00 PM

Free and Open  
to the Public

[www.reall.org](http://www.reall.org)

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