

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

Volume 14, Number 1

☛ Lucky 13th Anniversary Special Edition! ☛

January/February 2006

Branching Out

Promoting Science and Reason at the Center for Inquiry-West

by Bob Ladendorf

It all started less than a year ago when I went online to one of the Center for Inquiry Web sites to research the latest information on Intelligent Design for a letter to the editor I intended to write. What I found instead ended up turning my life upside down. There was a notice for a newly created job as the Chief Operating Officer (aka COO) at the Center for Inquiry-West – in Hollywood!

After taking an early retirement incentive from the Illinois state government, I had been freelance writing and working part-time as an editor for *Illinois Issues* magazine. I was planning to work full-time again when I ran across the employment notice.

To make a long story short, I applied for it, was flown out to Amherst, New York, the headquarters of CFI, thrust into a CFI council meeting, and met and dined with CFI Executive Director Barry Karr and CFI founder and Chairman Paul Kurtz. I had al-

ready known them from a number of conferences that I attended over the years, including two in Los Angeles. I was offered the job on the spot and accepted.

Meanwhile, my wife, Jean, and I had already discussed what to do if it was offered to me. We decided that it was too good of an opportunity to pass up and that we would just have to cope with the “long commute.”

Heading to Hollywood

In one of the funnier side stories to my trek west, in late March 2005 just three weeks after I accepted the job, I entered Hollywood to meet with Executive Director Jim Underdown, who would be freed from many business aspects of his job to conduct more media relations and contacts with potential donors.

Years ago, I had studied film, receiving my Mas-

ter's degree from the University of Wisconsin in Madison. I had thought about moving to Hollywood to try to break into the film business, but a more pressing family life convinced me to re-enter state government in Springfield after a successful, but low-paying, stint as a writer for publications such as *On Location*, a Hollywood trade publication, for which I visited movie sets in the Midwest, such as Michael



Bob Ladendorf serves as the chief operating officer, managing the business operations of the Center as well as helping to find lecturers.

In This Issue

Branching Out	1
The Lost UFO Abduction of Geneseo, Illinois	6
Gleanings	8
Owen Twiddle	11

("CFI-West" continued on page 3)

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.

Annual Membership Rates: Regular, \$20; student, \$15; family, \$30; patron, \$50 or more; subscription only, \$12.

Board of Directors

Chairman.....	Wally Hartshorn
Vice Chairman	David Bloomberg
Secretary-Treasurer.....	Jim Rosenthal
Newsletter Editor	Clark Olson
At-Large Members.....	Mike Henebry
	Bob Ladendorf
	Janet Trutter

Editorial Board

Clark Olson
Wally Hartshorn
Jim Rosenthal

Unless otherwise stated, permission is granted to other skeptic organizations to reprint articles from The REALL News as long as proper credit is given. REALL also requests that you send copies of your newsletters that reprint our articles to the above address.

The views expressed in these articles are the views of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the views of REALL.

REALL Contacts

Chairman, Wally Hartshorn chairman@reall.org
Editor, Clark Olson editor@reall.org
Web Site..... www.reall.org

From the Chairman

Wally Hartshorn

Happy Groundhog's Day! Boy, that groundhog sure was amazing when he (did / did not) see his shadow, wasn't he? (Please circle the appropriate answer, as I'm writing this before the exciting event.) Actually, this month is rather exciting.

First of all, this special 12-page issue features an article by one of REALL's co-founders, former chairman Bob Ladendorf. Bob left Illinois to be Chief Operating Officer at CSICOP's Center for Inquiry—West. His article about his experiences out in California makes for some interesting reading. In addition to Bob's article, we have another great article from Martin Kottmeyer, this time about an alien abduction reported in Geneseo, Illinois. Lastly, Clark Olson has provided another installment of his "Gleanings" and George Free's "Owen Twiddle" continues.

Second, we'll be celebrating the 13th anniversary of REALL's founding this month, as well as celebrating Darwin's birthday! We'll be holding a double-barreled celebration at Shakey's Pizza on Saturday, February 11 (instead of our normal meeting). Please join us!

Lastly, there is a local atheists group being formed, The Springfield Area Freethinkers Meetup Group. Not all skeptics are atheists (and not all atheists are skeptics!), but there is a fair amount of overlap in terms of support for church-state separation and similar topics. The next meetup will be at 11:00 AM on Saturday, February 18 at Panera Bread. Visit <http://atheists.meetup.com/462/> for details. ☹

A Nod to Our Patrons

REALL would like to thank our patron members. Through their extra generosity, REALL is able to continue to grow as a force for critical thinking in Central Illinois. To become a patron member of REALL, please use the membership form insert. Patron members are:

Randy & Betsy Alley, Edmonds, WA	Wally Hartshorn, Springfield
Karen Bartelt, Washington	Bob Ladendorf, Springfield
David Bloomberg, Springfield	John Lockard, Jr., Urbana
David Brown, Danville	Bill Mellon, Valparaiso, IN
Alan Burge, D.D.S., Morton	Jim Rosenthal, Springfield
Bill Hahm, Bloomington	Doug Smith, Springfield

(“CFI-West” continued from page 1)

Mann’s Thief in Chicago, and wrote articles.

So, here I came, a quarter of a century later, entering Hollywood to work for the skeptic and humanist movement, not the film business!

Becoming the COO

CFI-West is one of the major branches that has existed for 10 years in Los Angeles, and just about three years at its new location in East Hollywood. CFI took over a two-story, rectangular AAA building and renovated it, creating offices on the second floor and a theater, theater lobby, bookstore, library and kitchen facilities on the first floor. The theater was named the Steve Allen Theater and is considered a 99-seat theater, although it can be expanded to about 120 by opening up the portable curtain that divides the theater from the lobby.

Famous entertainer Steve Allen, who died in 2000, was a skeptic who spoke at many conferences and was a supporter of CFI-West’s mission “to promote and defend reason, science, and freedom of inquiry in all areas of human endeavor.” His wife, Jayne Meadows, and family members approved the use of the name and were at a grand opening for the theater. The theater’s creative director, Amit Itelman, came on full-time before I got there and has scheduled many music, comedy and play productions, giving the theater a recognition as one of the best places for holding small productions.

Also at the theater are academic lectures, which are generally held twice a month on the first and third Sundays of the month. One of the pleasures I’ve had is to assist Jim with finding lecturers, including science and culture writers and authors from Margaret Wertheim (The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace: A History of Space from Dante to the Internet), Reza Aslan (No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam), Jonathan Kirsch (God Against the Gods;

The History of the War Between Monotheism and Polytheism), M.G. Lord (Astro Turf: The Private Life of Rocket Science), Marc Cooper, writer for The Nation and author of The Last Honest Place in America, which deals with Las Vegas, and, upcoming in April, Ray Bradbury in conversation with M.G. Lord.

But much of my daily job deals with the mundane details of operating a building, dealing with financial and personnel issues, working out schedules for custodian work, assisting with writing publications, such as the newsletter that is produced every other month for 7,500 Southern California skeptics and humanist, and coping with a myriad other details.

The Center has a small staff – executive director, chief operating officer, theater director, office manager, project director and director of the Secular Organizations for Sobriety (SOS-International), which is a secular alternative to Alcoholics Anonymous. Also housed at the Center is an office of Atheists United and the L.A. Press Club, which also uses the theater for panel discussions and press receptions.

Additional groups meet at the Center periodically, including Freethinkers Toastmasters,

Spanish-speaking Atheists, theater repertory groups, and the Independent Investigations Group (IIG), which conducts investigations of psychics, paranormal phenomena, and other issues.

In 2005, IIG tested a so-called psychic who said he could receive messages of words sent by another person. The test was done at the Center, with the psychic on one floor and his second on the other floor. They were checked for devices, and the words chosen were common, uncomplicated ones. He was competing for a \$10,000 prize from the Center, with a chance to move on to Randi’s Challenge. His score: 0 out of 20. He was crushed and returned to Hawaii after flying to L.A. on his own funds.



The electrical sign with constantly moving messages announces the many events occurring at the Center. Note that the photo accidentally captured the words “East Hollywood,” which is where the Center is located.

In the Shadow of Griffith Park

I have a grand view from my second floor office window, with Griffith Park Observatory on top of the Hollywood Hills and the “Hollywood” sign off to my left. After extensive renovation, it is supposed to reopen later this year. Readers may recall that the knife fight scene from *Rebel Without a Cause* was filmed there, among many other movies. Also seen from my window is the Ennis-Brown castle-like, deteriorating Frank Lloyd Wright House that was used in *Blade Runner*

As you may remember, I was an extra in *Legally Blonde 2*, which was filmed in part in Springfield in 2002. In the Steve Allen Theater in 2005, a documentary filmmaker staged part of his film, *The Flight of the Dodos*, and I was a part of the audience. It deals somewhat comically with the evolution/ID controversy. Recently, in the theater lobby, I actually made my acting debut for an independent *Crash*-like film as a veteran in a therapy group setting.

The Center is actually only a couple miles from the main Hollywood tourist area surrounding the Grauman and Kodak theaters. Nearer the Center, just across the street, is the Barnsdall Park, which also houses a Frank Lloyd Wright house. Two blocks east of the Center on Vermont Ave. is the Dresden Restaurant, which was featured in the 1990's film *Swingers* starring Vince Vaughn and featuring the lounge singers, Marty and Elayne. I live in an apartment about 10

minutes away next to the Los Feliz Golf Course that also was featured in *Swingers* and in the shadow of Griffith Park, the largest urban park in the nation,



The Steve Allen Theater on the first floor is the home to twice-monthly academic lectures and numerous musical and comedy productions. Eddie Tabash, chairman of CFI-West and who ran for public office as an atheist several years ago and narrowly lost, is on the left near the curtain.

looked up from her magazine and said, “Are you talking about that tremor?”

Seeing the bright orange flames of a wildfire above Burbank in the hills while driving the Ventura Highway on the way back to my apartment a few



The theater lobby is used for receptions, meetings and even filmmaking. The bookstore on the right houses many books on skepticism and secular humanism.

times helping with theater production box office or bar, that I've only been to the Santa Monica and Venice beaches a few times.

I've been back a few times to Springfield, and my

Living in L.A.

I bought a postcard here that indicated the four seasons of L.A. in a cartoonish fashion: Earthquakes, mudslides, wildfires and riots. I've experienced the first three. One Sunday morning while reading the LA. Times, the room rocked back and forth at least three times in a 5.6 quake in the desert over the mountains. I got all excited, later asking a fellow apartment renter if she felt the quake. Obviously an L.A. veteran, she

looked up from her magazine and said, “Are you talking about that tremor?”

Seeing the bright orange flames of a wildfire above Burbank in the hills while driving the Ventura Highway on the way back to my apartment a few miles away, I was struck by how Los Angelesans accommodate themselves to all these dangers

The weather is, of course, delightful if you're not into a change of seasons. I had to manage the Center over the holidays, and on Christmas Eve, it was weird to walk around in shorts and a tee shirt in 84-degree weather!

I spend so much time at the Center, though, working late and some-



From his 2nd floor window, Ladendorf sees Griffith Observatory and the "Hollywood" sign, which is behind the trees on the left.

family has visited me in L.A.. In December, I worked the second annual CFI cruise, and Jean joined me. We cruised on a Holland line ship to the Mexican Riviera, with speakers Daniel Dennett, Sue Blackmore and Adam Hart-Davis. I even gave an ad hoc presentation to 50 or so of the 105 who cruised with us that explained how they could help promote skepticism and humanism by writing letters to the editor, op-ed pieces and promoting their own local groups. I included a hand-out that included many of my letters, as well as publicity pieces like the *Illinois Times* article on the founding of REALL.

Jean and I did get to take a few side trips, one that including the memorable wading with dolphins and the other a serendipitous trailing of a humpback whale for almost an hour while touring in a boat the coast of Cabo San Lucas.

Skepticism and humanism in Southern California

One of the problems I saw right away at CFI-West was the fact that there was a lack of awareness of the Center and its location. Oftentimes, we've heard peo-

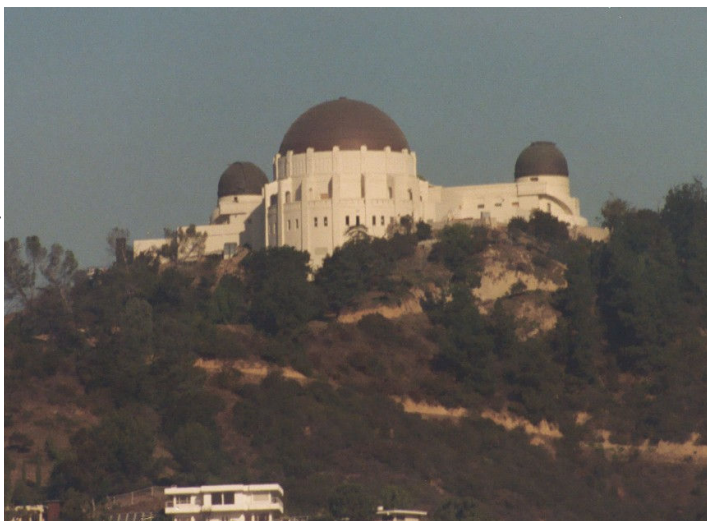
ple say that they never knew we were located here or that they thought we were Scientologists. By freeing the executive director from mundane business tasks, the Center has had more exposure on radio and TV, and the additional theater productions, from magicians like Max Maven, comedians like Emo Phillips,

and bands, from Janet Klein's that plays old time music to punk bands like Rancid, have increased awareness among both the young and the old.

We have about 400 Friends of the Center and many other donors that help to keep the Center alive and active along with the monthly funding by the CFI-Amherst.. In February, we are having two big events that will hope to give us even more media and public exposure: Based on my idea, a day-long reading of *The Origin*

of Species by writers, scientists, celebrities, artists and friends and supporters followed by the sharing of a Darwin Day birthday cake will happen on Feb. 12. A week later, Paul Kurtz will give a lecture about a new turning point in secular humanism followed by a buffet luncheon.

I'll tell you all about that in Part 2. ☹



*Undergoing renovation for years, the Griffith Observatory is expected to reopen this year. A part of *Rebel Without a Cause* was filmed here, as well as other films, and it affords a great view of downtown Los Angeles unless there's smog.*

The Lost UFO Abduction of Geneseo, Illinois

by Martin S. Kottmeyer

Not long ago, an ufo researcher asked for help locating details about an ufo case he learned about while reading Joe Lewis's encyclopedia *UFOs and Popular Culture* (2000). The case was set in Geneseo, Illinois, purportedly back in 1940. It turned out to be a frustrating search. I checked my copy of *The I-Files* that I thought had every ufo case ever set in the state of Illinois. It seemed comprehensive to me because it included even local ufo cases I knew the solutions to. It wasn't there. I searched through the indexes of dozens of books about abductions and ufo history. I pushed my memory for fragments of dimly relevant-sounding cases. I finally found a brief and delightful use in John Keel's *The Mothman Prophecies*. It gave no clue where the original story was set down. Weeks later, I was told by the guy he had achieved success from a British ufo researcher. He tracked down the original

source of the story to a 1968 Saucerian Press book, Frank Martin Chase's *Document 96*. The book is an incredible rarity these days and a copy can cost you hundreds of dollars, if you can even find one.

From my efforts, I can safely say the best works on the subject of ufo abductions have never described this case – understandable given the circumstances – but I confess I have come to regard it as a little treasure and want to sing its praises. So walk with me as we revisit the Geneseo Illinois close encounter of the 4th Kind.

It is the summer of 1940 and a gentleman involved in industrial chemistry named Rex Ball is in the middle of an exhausting drive from Detroit. Roll-

ing along, he is puzzled to see in the moonlight a locomotive in the middle of nowhere draped in pipes that seemed to be conducting steam to some underground location, presumably a mine. He travels a bit further, but he is so tired he is forced to pull over to take a rest. As he drifts to sleep, three powerfully-built little men approach.

They are half his size. They lift him, and walk him back to the area of the locomotive. Nearby, there is now a circular ufo. It hovers atop silent blue exhaust flames. On the Saturn-ring type railing, a man in light green aviation garments is looking around with binoculars. "I had a definite impression of a short, hairy man-like creature of highly oriental cast – a pygmy Japanese, perhaps, which I think he was, one of the more primitive of the hairy Ainus who live in the northern islands of Japan."



In Document 96, the original caption reads "The Rex Ball UFO Case: A Saturn-Disc Craft with Platform, Tripod Gear, brilliant landing light, and Pygmy Jap Crewman, Hovering" Observe the radio direction finder, the twin rocket exhausts and rectangular slits along the side of the cabin.

There is a lapse of memory at this point, then he finds himself dressed in a shabby U.S. army uniform and being led by a group of soldiers to some sort of cave or underground tunnel. These soldiers are different from the Japanese. He is led first into a large chamber that by look is part concrete construction, part rough-hewn rock. Then he passes through what look likes a series of officers' quarters in which are "erect and hard-bitten men in uniforms of U.S. Army officers of field grade." In one, he sees a Filipino mess-boy giving a massage to a white American officer.

His memory jumps. He is now outside, alone in the night air. The people that were escorting him reappear.

pear and guide him into another tunnel and another large chamber where there are more officers. They seem familiar to him, yet not familiar at the same time. Then he's told, "You are now under Fort Knox." But Fort Knox is in Kentucky, hundreds of miles away.

Eventually, he is brought to a briefing room. A dozen men in civilian clothes sit behind a long desk spanning nearly the length of the room. In the center is a graying man with a general's insignia. Beside him was a girl adjutant with long blonde hair. He is scrutinized sharply, particular by the woman. In a low voice comes the verdict, "Take him back." He is turned to leave, and then hears, "Seal his mouth – call him a nut!"

He is taken through something resembling an office building sub-basement and then he moves through what appears to be the ready room of the saucer pilots. Short orientals were lounging around, smoke hanging in the air. Flight outfits were on the wall. Some were equipped with claws or webs for apparent grasping at hand-holds along the ship. Along one wall was a glass case arrayed with weapons that looked more appropriate to science fiction comic books. There were also electronic consoles and devices for navigation and the plotting of positions. From there he exits the facility.

His memory jumps once more and he finds himself in a small community hospital in the town of Geneseo. He doesn't think it's hallucination, but even he has troubles with the obvious paradoxes. He can't really have been to Fort Knox. If the saucer was an American secret weapon, why are the pilots Japanese? If it is a Japanese weapon, why are there American Army personnel?

A drawing accompanies the tale bearing a caption that reads "The Rex Ball UFO Case: A Saturn-Disc Craft with Platform, Tripod Gear, brilliant landing light, and Pygmy Jap Crewman, Hovering." One detail that should be noticed is the projection on the top consisting of a circle on a metal post. This is recognizably a radio direction finder. I can't recall ever seeing another ufo drawing with this particular device on it, but it is telling of the period. You saw them repeatedly in Fifties and Sixties film and tv work. As an example, you can see it in the film **Phantom from Space** (1953). You can't miss it. While these things were usually merely a few inches in diameter, for reasons never stated, in this movie the direction finder is as big as the car that it sits on top of. It always makes me laugh.

The slit windows along the wall of the saucer also seems unique among ufo drawings. They seem inspired either by the viewing slits in tanks or the bunkers used in atomic testing.

The blue flame exhaust naturally suggests the craft is based on jet or rocket technology of the era and reinforces the presumption that the saucer was created on earth by and for the American military. Alien technology was usually presumed to involve invisible forces like magnetism or anti-gravity instead of rocketry. It is interesting that there are two exhaust flames for the mid-Sixties was the heyday of Project Gemini, the manned spacecraft test-flight program bridging Project Mercury and the moon-quest's Project Apollo. Gemini spacecraft were lifted into orbit by Titan boosters and they had distinctively had two rocket engines and twin exhausts, different from the Agenas and Saturns of the other two projects. Rockets are not silent, though. Another problem.

While Ball's statement sets the story in 1940, we can discount that. The craft is clearly a flying saucer and we know that the concept derives from a journalist's error in 1947. Putting the story in 1940 makes it an anachronism.

Using the word pygmy in the size description of the pilots reflects generalities given by ufo buffs throughout the 1950s and 60s. The hairyness of the pilots specifically echoes a string of Venezuelan cases in November and December 1954 that were embraced by both Donald Keyhoe and Coral Lorenzen in their writings as the most credible they had seen. It should be blatant that it would be hard to parse these guys as consistent with current Grays. They are explicitly regarded as primitive in appearance rather than futuristic, one of the curious conventions seen in early writings about extraterrestrial life, including early ufo literature. [For a full historical background, see my article "Headhunt - Seeking the Degenerates among the Primitives - Varicose Brains, Part 3" *Magonia* #77 March 2002 pp. 3-17.] Hairy Ainus just can't be confused with bald Grays.

The fact that the entities walk on the rim of the saucer is somewhat unusual, though there are two precedents. The Steep Rock case – a confessed hoax – had entities walking on the rim while the saucer floats in water. More acceptably, one can point to the Father William Gill close encounter of Boianai, Papua, New Guinea, June 1959, one of the most highly regarded cases in ufo history. It had normal-sized men walking around on top of a saucer floating silently the air. Per-

(*"Lost UFO Abduction"* continued on page 10)

Gleanings

by Clark Olson

The Federal District judge in Harrisburg decided 12-20-05 that ID could not be presented in schools because it is religious in nature. (Immediately the Discovery Institute started calling the judge an activist!) So this is good news, but it might have been interesting to see what would have happened if it had been appealed. This is unlikely to happen because the creationist school board was mostly voted out in the November elections and is very unlikely to appeal the judgment. However, the ruling may still carry some weight around the country, especially since it is 139 pages long! The conclusion of the case was widely reported on TV news and in newspapers. The *New York Times* 12-22 has a lead editorial on it.

Unfortunately, there is some troubling news in Georgia where an appellate court seems to be opposing the district court judgment against antievolution book stickers.

The evolutionist/anti-evolutionist exchange of letters continued in the *State Journal-Register* earlier in the month with 13 letters from 11-29 to 12-16. They split down the middle with 6 of each and 1 equivocal. The letters concerned general nature of science, origin of life and the "distinction" of micro and macro evolution. The latter was an issue brought up by an ID supporting PhD who says he works on brain cells.

A letter from Bruce Chapman, president of Discovery Institute, appeared in the *New York Times* 12-10-05 p A28. He reported that a meeting in Europe attracted 700 people, including scientists. He said the *Wall Street Journal*, Knight Ridder and NPR have had reports listing a number of ID supporting scientists. The Discovery Institute now has a list of 470+ scientists supporting ID. This is pretty dismal but NCSE has many more lining up for evolution and also over 70 organizations.

A Fordham U group has published finding for state education standards including evolution. Surprisingly, Illinois gets top grades along with a dozen other states. Of course, it is equally important to know what is happening in the class room. If anyone has information on this subject, please send it in.

The Darwin exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History in New York got a lot of coverage in the national media. The exhibit will be at the Field Museum in Chicago sometime in the next year or more, but the web site does not say exactly when. The

Field is opening a new permanent exhibit called Evolving Planet this coming March.

There is a review of *Abducted. How People come to Believe They were Kidnapped by Aliens*. By Susan H. Clancy, 2005, Harvard U Press in Science Magazine 11-25-05. This book results from an interest the author has in revealing repressed memories of sex abuse. This area is controversial because, while some memories are verifiable, people can also be induced to remember things that never happened. The author assumes that alien abduction is, of course, false but wants to find out what induces these memories and how they relate to other memories. She and colleagues interview a number of people and subject them to some simple memory tests. The conclusions of the study are not entirely clear to me from the review, but the book might be a good place to learn something about how seemingly normal people come to believe weird things.

Member Karen Bartelt had a 2 page article in the Nov-Dec 2004 (received Nov 2005!) Issue of Reports of the NCSE on an e-mail exchange she had had with a creationist- very informative. Also thanks to Patrick Tinkham and George Free for continued letters and articles in the paper. Martin Woulfe, the Unitarian minister, and I taped a TV interview on evolution, which was shown on Access 4 at 8:30 pm Jan 5 and 12.

January was relatively quiet on the evolution front nationally, although the *SJ-R* was busy with letters. From the state and national level the news seems pretty good with Dover and positive news from the Vatican, but several articles reported below show how bad the situation is at the classroom level.

The *NYT* (1-19-06) and the *SJ-R* (1-21-06) report that the official newspaper of the Vatican – *L'Osservatore Romano* – contained an editorial calling ID non-science and reaffirming the science of evolution. The *NYT* reports that Discovery Institute tried to downplay the opinion, as might be expected, but this paper is considered pretty official.

The Dover case seems to be closed with the judge's decision and the replacement of the school board. And the *SJ-R* reports (1-4-06) that the new school board has officially rescinded the ID policy. It is likely that the Kansas story will continue to be interesting in 2006. The *NYT* (1-1-06) reports that pro-

evolution, moderate Republicans will be entering the primaries and pro-evolution Democrats entering the final elections to unseat anti-evolution incumbents, so another reversal in the makeup of the board is possible.

Although the situation at the national and state levels looks somewhat encouraging, the situation at the classroom level is bad, at least in Texas and Arkansas, as reported in the *NCSE Report* for Jan-Apr 2005 (received Jan 2006!). In the Texas example the writer, a high school biology teacher describes incidents with three other science teachers, all of whom were creationists! In the article about Arkansas the writer, a graduate student doing research in science education at McGill U, reports a number of incidents in various teaching situations in Arkansas where the teacher was either a creationist or where administrators wanted to soft peddle evolution teaching. Another article by another grad student at U of Phoenix doing research on attitudes in evolution teaching also showed considerable confrontation with parents, students and administrators about evolution and sympathy for anti-evolution by some teachers. One problem is that some teachers are not strongly trained in evolution, but mostly it is deeply ingrained attitudes. Another example of classroom problems showed up in a review of the tv program *Frontline* about youths in a poor rural area in Kentucky. A teacher is shown pooh-pooing evolution in class.

Since the last Gleanings there have been 15 letters to the editor in the *SJ-R*. These include 9 pro-evolution and 6 anti, although some were confusing. There were 13 writers, including some not heard from before, I believe. Most of the letters referred to ID and the Dover PA decision. The most interesting was from Eddie Bratton, a familiar anti-evolution voice. In his letter he affirms that life comes from life, but then is unclear about where that leads him. I suspect what he was trying to say was that there was separate creation of each organism and then there was life from life within that species. In fact, what that principle means to biologists is that once life arose (in the form of single cell microbe) succeeding cell divisions could give rise gradually, and with biological continuity, to different kinds of cells and again, with biological continuity, to multi-cellular organisms. The evidence for this idea is that all cells contain DNA and the same code and protein synthetic machinery. And also the same optical isomerism for amino acids and sugars is found in all cells.

The *SJ-R* also carried two syndicated columns, one by Molly Ivins and the other by Eugene Robinson, which were favorable to evolution. Also they had two cartoons: One, "Opus", a liberal one lampooning ID, and the other, "Mallard Fillmore", a conservative one, which seemed favorable to evolution. However, this strip is sometimes hard to fathom.

The *SJ-R* also had an article in the Sunday "Beliefs" section (1-22-06, p49) about a case before a federal judge in California concerning approval of courses for admittance of students to U of California system. The disapproved courses included non-science and science, including evolution. Since many of the students trying to gain admittance do well on standardized courses and the NSCS web site reports many actually get into the U Cal system, it is hard to know what the suit is really about. At any rate the suit has the backing of a national association of religious schools, so the complaint could go national and Illinois has many religious schools, so the problem could come up here. Any information on admission policy at Illinois state and private colleges would be of interest to me.

The *NYT*, in addition to any mentions above, had other articles on evolution and creationism during the month. In addition they had an interesting non-evolution book review (1-20-06, p B37) on "Amazing Stories of Coincidence and the Mystery and Mathematics Behind Them" by Martin Plummer and Brian King. It sounds like a real hoot. For instance, a woman comes home to discover she had locked herself out, when the postman arrives with an envelope containing a house key from her brother who had visited her the previous week and had forgotten to return it!

The *Illinois Times* contained one short and equivocal letter and a cartoon of the words "intelligent design" in the form a fish, as in the religious symbol.

The UIS newspaper "the Journal" of Nov 16 contained a long letter critiquing ID from the point of view of science by the new evolution teacher, Jim Bonacum. In this letter he refers to Dr. Keenan Dungery who teaches a course on science and religion, and seems to be somewhat uncritical of ID.



(“Lost UFO Abduction” continued from page 7)

haps significantly, Gill was of the opinion the saucer was a strange new device of the Americans. I don’t think there are any cases in the ufo abduction literature where Grays are walking on a platform outside the craft. One glitch in the comparison is that there were no exhaust flames beneath the crafts seen by Gill and the people around him.

The memory lapses echo the missing time syndrome inaugurated by the premier American abduction case, a.k.a. Betty & Barney Hills’ *The Interrupted Journey* (1966). The Oriental aspects of the entities picks out a detail both Barney and Betty agreed upon concerning their abductors. Barney, in his April 1964 playback session said, “They had Oriental sort of eyes, but the eye socket gave an appearance of being much larger than what it was, because nature had developed a roll of fat around the eye.” (IJ: pp. 305-6) Betty, in her June 6, 1964 session, said “I keep thinking that the crewmembers are Oriental, Asiatic. Only they were not as - they’re short.”

Though borrowing material from pro-extraterrestrial-ufo authors, the underground base with its saucer pilot ready room and American officers unambiguously sets the story in a firmly terrestrial framework. Rex Ball’s case thus mixes and matches ufo lore, but ultimately privileges the theory that saucers are an American secret weapon. It bears emphasis that this was still the dominant theory in the general culture according to polls taken in the Sixties. In a 1969 opinion survey people were asked whether this statement was true: “Most UFOs are due to secret defense projects, either ours or another country’s” Adults answered True: 57% False 43% (N = 1798) Teenagers answered True 54% False 46%. Authors of ufo books may have been nearly unanimous in thinking ufos were aliens, but they hadn’t made the other idea disappear by a long-shot.

The long trek through underground corridors and sudden scene shifts creates a mood reminiscent of dreams. At times it seems almost like a pastiche of Bond films. The large chamber of rough-hewn rocks and concrete recalls the volcano crater base operating in Japan in *You Only Live Twice* (1967). The talk of Fort Knox recalls *Goldfinger* (1964). There was also a flying saucer cave in *Casino Royale* (1967), the Bond parody. Most Bond films had blondes and people getting massaged. The long corridors first reminded me of the Japanese monster movie *The Mysterians* (1957) which included Japanese looking

aliens that set up a base to take over Earth and acquire fertile women. That base had glass-enclosed equipment, too, though admittedly not weapon display-cases. There are admittedly other possibilities for such stuff like *The Man from UNCLE* (1964) and *Get Smart* (1965) TV spy series.

The order “Seal his mouth. Call him a nut!” is something that sounds very generic, something that could easily have been uttered in any number of the Cold War spy thrillers of the era. John Keel clearly loved the line. He was that single ufologist I found who mentioned Rex Ball in his writings. Keel was a connoisseur of paranoia and he found the case helpful in his master-work *The Mothman Prophecies*. There he was pleased to boost it as illustrating the nature of ufo secretiveness. In the tag line to one chapter he wrote, “That seems to be the battle-cry of the phenomenon, ‘Make him look like a nut!’”

The use of paraphrase instead of exact quote is not untypical of saucer writing. So, too, is the fact that he mistakenly wrote that Ball woke up in a field, instead of a hospital. Though some might cynically wonder if Keel suppressed the detail about waking up in a hospital to reduce the thought Ball had been mentally ill, I don’t think that was actually a concern for Keel who was only too happy to concede saucer-folks were often hallucinating. Ball did say he fell asleep in the first part of the story and that is doubtless the source of the mistake. Keel simply jumbled things in his memory.

I think the same may true of Ball but on a somewhat larger scale. The setting of the story in 1940 is clearly a false memory in some sense. I’m inclined to think the tale came out of a dream given the maze of corridors and the absurd and implausible element of a quick and largely pointless round trip to Fort Knox. By pointless, I mean, why bother with all the walking? Couldn’t they have just held him and called down for orders on what to do with Ball? Why take him all around a secret base that he never would have suspected without the escort?

All of it seems like something belonging in the Sixties. Maybe he was influenced by how Betty reified her dreams into an alien reality and did something similar, taking a dream of a saucer and underground base he has in the Sixties, adding it to a real trip from 1940 in which he took a nap. He ends up with a singular little false memory of ufo abduction. It may have been less innocent than that of course. I don’t say it’s impossible there is a confession lying



One of the twice-monthly lecturers in the Steve Allen Theater was author M.G. Lord, who wrote a memoir and history about her father and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory where he worked. She also will be conducting the conversation with Ray Bradbury for a CFI presentation on April 5.



Jim Underdown, who has been an actor and stand-up comedian, is the executive director of the Center for Inquiry-West in Hollywood.

around in somebody's diary that Ball or Chase consciously contrived the tale, but, personally, I think the absurdities go beyond simple dramatic license.

Whatever its ultimate means of construction, the Geneseo abduction is unique. Its unreality is underscored by its irrationality and the larger problem that it is unlike any other abduction case in the ufo literature. There has never been any other stories of an underground military complex in this part of the Midwest that I am aware of. Nor have I ever heard of a group of hairy Ainu pilots either in the American military or in later ufo literature.

Some may be tempted to term this a transitional case in the evolution of the ufo mythos – one that provides an intermediate form between the secret weapon beliefs of the 50s and later forms of the abduction mythos like The Dulce Base tales of Myrna Hansen, Christa Tilton, etc. in the 80s. I feel that would be a dubious judgment. Rex Ball's tale is an obscurity. It seems more like a sterile hybrid, a mule of a case, that joined strands of ufo lore and spy fiction into an ugly product that spawned no offspring of its own. Underground bases, even vast complex ones, are too much a commonplace of myth to think Ball's story specifically fathered the Dulce Base tales, particularly as there is nothing else shared in the details.

The Geneseo tale is merely a nuisance in the larger scheme of ufo mythology. As we noted, it does share certain annoying similarities to other abduction narratives – missing time, oriental facial features, pygmy-size – but this was very much high-profile stuff in the period and doesn't require any special

knowledge. Those touting the extraterrestrial nature of ufo abductions will doubtless shrug it off as completely irrelevant. Yet it is a lovable lost little mutt - a love child of Sixties paranoia. If you think of abductions as a psychosocial phenomenon, there is no denying it is a member of the breed. It just has a very unexpected pedigree. ☹

