

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER MEETINGS:

MIAMI:

Sunday August 27th at Ft. Lauderdale Main Library, 2:00 in the Boardroom. We will view one of the latest Atheists of Florida Fourm programs and discuss. For Miami meeting information anytime, call Atheist Hotline: (305) 936-0210.

TAMPA:

Saturday, August 26, 10:00 to noon. Clearwater East Public Library, 2251 Drew Street, Meeting Room B. We will view one of the latest Atheists of Florida Forum programs and discuss.

MANA-SOTA:

Sunday, August 27 at the Marie Selby Public Library from 1:30 to 3:30, 1001 Boulevard of the Arts, Sarasota. We will view one of the latest Atheists of Florida Fourm programs. Also, a surprise! Be there.

THE LEFT FOOT SOCIETY

Founded by Thomas J. O'Neill

I BELIEVE IN "MY LEFT FOOT
ALMIGHTY."

I BELIEVE THAT IF I DON'T BOW MY
HEAD IN PRAISE OF MY LEFT FOOT,
THAT I WOULD BE DENIED THE
REWARDS MY LEFT FOOT WOULD
BESTOW, AND I WOULD BE PUNISHED
FOR ETERNITY.

THE WONDERFUL THING ABOUT MY
BELIEF, IS I CAN DO IT ANYWHERE, IN
MY HOME, IN MY CAR, IN MY SCHOOL,
WHILE I'M EATING.

I CAN EVEN MEDITATE ON MY "LEFT
FOOT" BEFORE MEETINGS, OR JUST
ABOUT ANYWHERE I WANT TO.

ANOTHER GREAT THING ABOUT MY
BELIEF, IS I CAN DO IT IN SILENCE. NO
ONE HAS TO KNOW WHAT I'M DOING.

NOW SOME PEOPLE MAY NOT WANT

TO HONOR THEIR LEFT FOOT, AND
THAT'S O.K. THEY MAY CHOOSE TO
HONOR THEIR RIGHT FOOT, OR THEIR
LEFT ARM, OR RIGHT ARM, OR NOSE.
ANYWAY, IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE.
THE LIST IS ENDLESS. YOU CAN
CHOOSE ANY OF THE ABOVE, OR
SOME ONE OR THING NOT
MENTIONED, OR NOTHING. "FREEDOM
OF CHOICE," NO IMPLIED PRESSURE.
IN CLOSING, ONE OTHER GREAT
THING ABOUT MY BELIEF, WE DON'T
REQUIRE ANY SPECIAL AMENDMENTS
TO THE CONSTITUTION, OR SPECIAL
LAWS THAT SAY WE HAVE TO HONOR
ANY OF THE AFOREMENTIONED. WE
WOULD HAVE A CHOICE. I GUESS YOU
COULD CALL THAT REAL FREEDOM
OF RELIGION. SO AS FOUNDER OF
"THE LEFT FOOTERS," I WISH YOU
WELL.

WITH DEEP RESPECT FOR YOUR
BELIEF

— THOMAS J. O'NEILL

8 August 1995

Atheists of Florida



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Atheists of Florida

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Volume IV Number 6

August, 1995



Second Atheist Alliance Convention slated for Minnesota

FOLLOWING UP ON THE remarkable efforts of Atheists United in hosting the first convention in Los Angeles last year, Minnesota Atheists will be passed the torch for 1996.

The culture is described as "Minnesota Nice." The state sales tax is 6.5% and does not apply to clothing. The Native Americans there are getting rich off their new gambling casinos (an ironic replacement for the buffalo they once depended on and which the white settlers destroyed). The state gods seem to be the sports teams and the Mall of America, the third largest tourist attraction in the United States after Disney World and country music's Branson, Missouri. The Twin Cities are fairly compact and everything is easy to get to on their well designed, uncongested (except at rush hour) freeway system. Public life is about as secular as one can expect these days. The religious right is active but not beyond the festering sore stage in the body politic. The National Day of Prayer was barely mentioned in the newspapers, and mostly with critical comments about its political overtones. Best of all, their atheist-humanist community is growing and thriving.

So plan now to head to the Twin Cities and help celebrate secularism and positive atheism next Easter weekend, April 5, 6 and 7, 1996.

A first class hotel has already been lined up, the Sheraton Park Place, with fabulously low rates. Would you believe \$39 for a room, single or double? It's true! The Sheraton Park Place boasts a bright, open, tropical atmosphere with garden areas surrounding a beautiful indoor pool.

The program theme is developing around the theme "Imagine a World Beyond Belief." The emphasis will be on positive, forward-looking atheism, with a mixture of serious discussion, fun events and plenty of time to exchange ideas, socialize, and learn from each other. Watch for details.

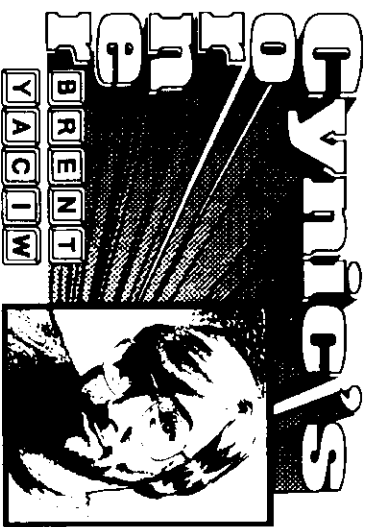
Lock in next Easter weekend for any days off from work you might need before, during and after the convention. Plan at least one extra day if you want to go to the Mall of America or an Indian casino. Keep an eye out for discounted plane fares. The Twin Cities is the hub city for Northwest Airlines, so you may find a direct flight fitting your schedule. **A**

Atheists of Florida Forum

Cable Telecast Times
Miami-Dade Cable-TAP Channel 36

Monday — noon
Tuesday — 9:30 pm
Friday — 5:00 pm

This month's column is going to be primarily a response to a letter sent in by David S. Mathews, a Xian who asks several things of me. Some he'll get, and some are like asking me to get pregnant and carry his child: not possible, despite Arnold Schwarzenegger's Hollywood success at it. Mathews' letter is on page 7 of this newsletter.



He just doesn't get it

sal definition," because an abstract idea can only be defined up to the point of agreement on it. There is no such thing as a "universal definition" of an abstract idea, despite the attempt by dictionaries to standardize them. I'll define humanism as a philosophy that centers on human ideas, though there are a number of variants on that definition, and one which lacks a dogma or creed that is "handed down" from a hierarchical structure.

I'LL START BY noting that David has distributed a number of self-published "books" at the Humanists of the Sun-coast meetings, so I'm pretty familiar with where he's coming from. David has addressed letters to me before, and I've told him that I simply don't have the time to waste responding to letters which assume things about me and draw conclusions based on taking comments out of context or making up his own definitions and insisting I use them when they don't

apply. I've noted before, in responses to David, that he consistently insists on redefining terms to fit his preferences and then trying to require others to fit his mold. He asks me for my "beliefs" as if I had something equivalent to his religious faith, and just like the aforementioned baby I'm not having, I don't have those either! Despite telling him so, and trying to explain that an empty bucket is no more a bucket of "non-water" than it is a bucket of "non-milk," he continues to describe my thinking in religious terms. It's as if he's insisting my telling him what my blue shirt sounds like, while I'm trying to explain that the question makes about that much sense to me! In reading this letter from him, I think I'm grasping the underlying problem: the difficulty is an inability to discriminate between abstract and concrete.

Science is a methodology of inquiry concerning the world, that applies principles of logic and evidence that have stood the test of time. Evolution is a scientific theory that has been generally accepted due to both the overwhelming evidence in its favor and its adherence to logic and mathematical formulas that work in other situations.

Atheism comes in two forms: gnostic, or "strong" atheism, which posits that no form of a god exists and this can be proven, and agnostic, or "weak" atheism, which says that though it is impossible to prove a negative, the logical position to take concerning any god is that it doesn't exist until proven otherwise. I personally hold with the second position, and would even agree with Mathews that the first position is an act of faith rather than an application of logic. Granted, it's a more rational act of faith, based on considerably better logic and evidence than the flimsy stuff religions are made of, but still takes some small measure of faith — if nothing else, faith in the probability that something you haven't been able to find any evidence of here doesn't exist anywhere. I've written articles on that subject which appeared in the March/April and September/October 1994 issues of *The American Rationalist*, so I shan't go on about it.

Finally, truth also falls into two categories: objective truth, which applies *only* to concrete objects (including matter, energy, or any form between the two states), such as "that is a chair, and it exists and is red," which will always be true so long as we've agreed on the defini-

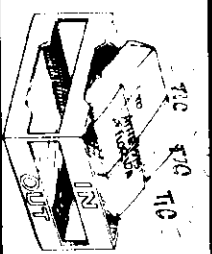
Driving me to Abstraction

As evidence, he asks me to define the terms humanism, science, evolution, atheism, and truth: all abstract ideas, and thus variables in definition. Fine, I'll give short definitions, but I'll first not that none of these are "the univer-

Indecent exposure

The recent senatorial pontificating prior to passing the "Communications Decency Act" not to mention the blathering of Sen. Bob Dole, brought to mind the concerns of a world-famous moral leader of the past: "Parallel to the training of the body, a struggle against the poisoning of the soul

Letters



nothing more frustrating than nailing a creationist on the inconsistencies in his 'god', then listening to him redefine it so that it appears you've argued against a straw man." I believe that Brent Yaciw's characterization of Christians is wrong, and that there are some Christians who are willing and able to discuss God, man, the universe, evolution, science and truth with him. And if Brent Yaciw would like key terms defined, I am sure that some Christians are more than willing to define those terms with him.

Before engaging in an intelligent conversation with Brent Yaciw, though, a Christian would demand that he define some of his key terms: humanism, science, evolution, atheism, and truth. Atheists have not yet formulated a universal definition of these key words, and there is evidence that some humanists have not even defined humanism yet. Would Mr. Yaciw happily define these terms so that intelligent conversation might follow?

Secondly, Brent Yaciw claims, "A book publisher produces textbooks that stick to the known facts of evolution, and mentions creationism only to say that it fails to meet the standards of science and is thus rejected by the scientific community." I challenge Yaciw to bring up all the "known facts of evolution" for critical examination. Does he believe that evolution is truth, or will his opinion accord with a humanist that I know, who said: "Maybe evolution is wrong...?"

Brent Yaciw is a very religious man, adhering to a faith which is founded upon the opinions of scientists and intellects. If he is willing to engage in an intelligent conversation about evolution or God, I am more than willing to talk to him.

Sincerely,
David S. Mathews
Pinellas Park, FL

Yaciw called to carpet

Editor:

As a Christian and a creationist, I must respond to Brent Yaciw's column, titled "Freedom without restraint is bondage" (July 1995 issue). The first area of dispute is Brent Yaciw's statement, "One of the things I've learned in debating Xians is that the first priority in maintaining an intelligent level of conversation is defining key terms. There is

Digs our rag
Dear Friends,
I used to be impressed with the format and layout of our own local newsletter until I saw yours! You put us all to shame. I've sent your newsletter on to our layout person with the question, "How close can we come to this?" Keep up the great work.
Faithlessly yours,
Tom Malone
Atlanta Freethought Society
and Humanists of Georgia

Atheists of Florida, Inc.

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Atheists of Florida

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City rebels after cross ruling

How utterly appropriate! Personally, we think the blank space represents their cranial contents...

CHICAGO—Rolling Meadows' trustees, faced with residents' lingering hostility over a U.S. Supreme Court ruling three years ago to remove a cross from the city seal, voted last month to keep the seal blank as a symbol of the cross they lost.

"The blank speaks louder than words," said one resident.

"Removing the cross as a symbol was bad enough," Virginia Grauger, a 38-year resident, told the City Council. "Those now pushing for a redesign of a city seal do not understand that the expression of religion we lost is not something we've gotten over."

The City Council was about to fill in the blank with a symbol, either the silhouette of a family or the depiction of clasping hands. But aldermen cited residents' continued outrage over the Supreme Court ruling.

"I am very much in favor of changing the seal, but every reaction [from residents] was to keep the blank quadrant," said Alderman Kenneth Nelson.

For three years, the official seal of Rolling Meadows has resembled a four-leaf clover that has lost its fourth petal. The picture in one quadrant of the city seal was ruled unconstitutional. That picture was of a Xian cross and a church, and the federal courts said that depiction violated the separation between state and church. After the ruling, the Rolling Meadows City Council opted to leave that quadrant of the seal empty as a protest.

The votes to replace the blank with either of the two other icons failed to get a majority of votes from the seven-member council.

Residents at the meeting seemed to harbor particular venom for atheist Rob Sherman of Buffalo Grove, who sued the city over the seal.

"The blank speaks louder than words," said Sharon L. North, a 31-year resident. "We lost one of our freedoms to a man, not even a resident, who twisted the real meaning of the Constitution."

Sherman, who arrived at the meeting too late to address the council, said later, "It's up to the people of Rolling Meadows to make the decision. It's not for me to pass judgment."

Sherman, representing American Atheists, sued the municipalities of Rolling Meadows and Zion four years ago for having Xtian sym-

bols in their official seals. Zion had a city emblem that depicted a cross and a banner stating "God reigns." Sherman won in federal appeals court.

The U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear appeals in both cases in June 1992.

Before the meeting Tuesday, Sherman said he supported the city's effort to select a new seal.

"I like to tell people that for 35 years, the City of Rolling Meadows had the Christian opinion of what God is on its city seal," Sherman said. "For the past two years, they've had the atheist opinion of what God is on the city seal. And they're the only municipality in the country to honor atheism in this wonderful manner. But now it's time to move on and for the city to leave religious opinion to the individual citizen and instead adopt a city seal that is appropriate for usage by a unit of government."

Parents who refused treatment for son charged in his death

At least there is one sane judge currently on the bench!

ALBANY, Ore.—A judge refused to drop criminal charges in March against a couple whose son died of leukemia after they relied on prayer rather than medical treatment.

Lloyd and Christina Hays — members of the fundamentalist Church of the First Born — were indicted on charges of manslaughter and criminally negligent homicide.

Circuit Judge Daniel Murphy rejected a defense motion that the charges be dropped because of the couple's right to privacy and freedom of religion. He earlier ruled that the couple could not use their religious beliefs as the basis for a defense.

Tony Hays, 7, died last November, three weeks after he began showing symptoms of acute lymphocytic leukemia. Instead of seeking medical treatment, the Hayses followed the instructions of James 5:14 in the Bible and called on church elders to anoint their son with oil and ask God to heal him.

While a pathologist said the boy's chances of survival would have been excellent with proper medical care, the Hays' attorney, Paul Kuebrich, said that has not been proven.

The couple contended in their motion that state law accepts spiritual healing as a form of care for a sick child.

But Murphy said the state has a compelling interest in "protecting the lives and physical well-being of persons including children." **A**

tion of a chair and the color red. No belief or faith is required, and anyone testing the claim (assuming the definitions agree) will reach the same conclusion.

Subjective truth, on the other hand, applies to all statements which include personal opinions or preferences. "Chocolate ice cream is the best flavor." "Disco sucks." "Rush Limbaugh is a jerk." All of these are subjective, and their acceptance as "truth" depends on the viewpoint of the listener.

The Concrete World

Now, let's talk a minute about concrete definitions. The claim by religionists is that, unlike the abstract terms discussed above, "god" is a concrete thing. I'd be perfectly willing to accept the claim that the abstract idea called "god" exists *only* as an idea in the minds of human beings; in fact, that's what atheists of either definition have proposed for centuries! However, if "god" is not merely an abstract idea, then there must be a universally-agreed upon definition of it, or at least one that David and I can agree on. In fact, that's one point of evidence for the lack of god's existence: no one can agree on exactly what this "god" thing is. The test of a concrete object, of reality, is that when you stop believing in it, it doesn't go away. However, as I'm sure every member of the Atheists of Florida can testify, this "god-presence" Xians claim to feel does not exist for us; thus the obvious conclusion is that, for those of us who were once religious, the feeling was a product of our own minds and not some external deity.

While we're on definitions, let's discuss Mathews' accusation that I am "a very religious man, adhering to a faith..." Religious is certainly an abstract subject to nearly as many definitions as human beings; someone might say, "Bowling is my religion" because it's an activity they enjoy weekly, and some might say "Paying taxes is my religion" because they enjoy it, weakly! However, for purposes of intelligent discussion, religion can be defined as 1. Having a hierarchical structure that is headed by a claimed non-human force or beings, or a human(s) that claims or claimed super-human knowledge or power, referred to hereafter as its "deity." 2. Having a set of guidelines that were either directly produced by or "inspired" by said deity. 3. Offering some form of reward and/or punishment structure for adherence to the beings guidelines. 4. At some point, "faith" is substituted for "proof." In other words, if the evidence is lacking, we are asked to "have faith" in its claims. Though this is not "the" definition, it fits most major religions.

Obviously by this standard, neither atheism nor science is religious. There's no ultimate

head or superhuman "giver of knowledge" in either: no one in either who claims any form of knowledge unavailable to other humans willing to learn the techniques; and there's no reward/punishment structure. I'm not claiming "gnostic atheists" are going to hell or something like that because they disagree with me, nor am I offering a reward to agree. Scientists and other atheists are just humans like me, and I owe them no allegiance, nor vice-versa. I need not have "faith" in anything science claims; I'm never asked to simply believe something, but always challenged to test the claims myself. In fact, there is general agreement in science that nothing should be accepted just because Mr. X says so; in general, it's discovered by X, tested by Y, re-tested by A,B,C, and D, and then, perhaps, it will reach the status of "theory" instead of mere hypothesis.

Same dichotomy of definition applies to "faith." Certainly, I have faith in my friends to do that which they say they will do based on previous experience, and which is not out of the bounds of normal reason to expect them capable of. For example, if Ed says he'll meet me at a certain street corner at 4:00 on Saturday, I'm relatively certain he'll show up about 4:30! "Trust" is probably a better word to use than "faith" here. On the other hand, if Ed tells me that he spent the last three days living in the belly of a fish, or that he's going to turn water into wine (without adding any grapes, mind you), or that he's going to walk on water, I'm not likely to believe him, which is obviously not the same thing as a person with faith of a religious nature would do!

The Evolution Catalog

Now, here's another baby I'm not having: I have no intention of reprinting the entire catalog of "known facts" on evolution here. To begin with, I'm no more a scientist than he is. Even if I were, this newsletter is hardly big enough to give him a Ph.D.-equivalent education in the supporting evidence for evolution. He could start by getting all the books published by Prometheus, which caters primarily to a lay audience. Then get the entire series of textbooks on the subject from a standard college publisher — *not* a Xian one! At that point, he might be able to discourse the on details of evolutionary theory with some degree of expertise, something not yet demonstrated in his writings. In addition, I must ask: What's the point? I'm not asking that he or anyone else accept evolution, but if he has a competing claim, I am asking for *his* evidence. From what I've seen of creationist books, they're filled with bad and/or outdated science, fallacious logic, and even some outright deceptive misquotes... (continued)

"god" exists only as an idea in the minds of human beings

(Darwin is a favorite to misquote).

Most churches just tell you what to think and pass the plate

Frankly, I don't base my life or my lack of belief in a deity on evolution. Even if, and I'm not saying it's likely, but even if someone proved that our current ideas about evolution were absolutely and utterly incorrect, I still wouldn't be jumping onto some supernatural bandwagon and proclaiming "I now had 'the way, the truth, and the real deal!' I was an atheist, at least as far as the Bible-god is concerned, before I ever heard the term "evolution," and it was the Bible itself that started me on that path. Any claim of knowledge based on that hook is no better than claiming knowledge based on the poetry of an insane writer, or the babblings of heat-crazed savages. Since my earlier Baptist days, I have had some occasion to look at other religions, and found them all similarly faulty.

So let's just lay out the steps required for David S. Mathews to convince me he could engage in a worthwhile discussion concerning a god, and specifically the Xian god he believes in: First, he must prove a god exists. It is not enough to disprove all or some scientific theories; his competing claim must be proven. Disproving a theory in chemistry is hardly enough to send me scurrying around hunting for the philosopher's stone, expecting alchemy to suddenly start working again! Part of this proof would, of course, include a definition. No one has yet accomplished such a proof, but suppose he manages this astounding task. He must then prove that that god is the one he believes in, rather than any of the thousands of other deities man has invented. Part of this proof would, of course, include a revised, more specific definition. Next would be proving that Jesus, who they claim was this god's son, existed. This may or may not include a proof that his version of the bible is accurate and has the claimed connection to said deity; if he gets this far, then that proof would also be necessary. Finally, he'd have to prove that the Jesus he described was indeed the one described in his entirely accurate version, did everything described therein, and really was the son of his deity.

Frankly, I'd be willing to settle for just the first step. Prove to me that any god exists that

could be reasonably considered the one in your bible version (No, my cat doesn't count!). I'm talking omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. If you could do that, you might be worth listening to. Until then, you're just another voice in a sea of prattlers, all selling their versions of "truth" and offering zilch when I ask them for proof!

One final note

Just for grins, let's agree for a moment with David's definition of humanism/atheism, science, and evolution as "religious beliefs." Now why would I choose these over what he's offering?

Let's begin with the slavery issue. Humanist/atheist groups, having no one telling me what I must not believe or agree with, allow me the freedom of discourse without threats of censure. Try getting up in a church service and saying you don't believe in god, and it's all a myth! However, I think even David would have to admit that he's never been barred or thrown out of the Humanists' meetings, nor ignored during the question and answer period. In fact, how many churches even *have* Q&A periods? Most just tell you what to think and pass the plate.

Now about science. Unlike religion, science is self-correcting, and gets quicker at it all the time thanks to our shrinking world of technology. Religion makes the same errors generation after generation, and calls them traditions! In fact, the error of slavery is still supported by some world religions, and equal rights for women is an error constantly compounded by the modern church. As the saying goes: Jesus, the same today, yesterday, and tomorrow: DEAD!

Evolution is simply a subset of science. If it were a religion, every scientist would still swear that Charles Darwin was exactly right in every detail, and that no further inquiry need be made! Instead, while we respect and appreciate the work of Darwin in laying a foundation of evidence and putting up a framework of theory, the building is still going on, and it may never be 100% complete. It doesn't matter: I'd rather live with incomplete knowledge that I can be reasonably certain is accurate than with 100% fantasy. So if David isn't happy unless he can call us religious and believe we're just like him, I'm certainly not going to imitate his church fathers and say he's going to humanist hell (something like a Promise Keepers Rally, only longer) just because he's made up definitions that disagree with mine. However, I'm not going to waste my time writing personal responses to someone who is struggling with the basics of a dictionary, but is convinced he knows more than all the best and brightest scientists in the world. **A**

Attention members:

If you are renewing your membership this month, please send the full year rate for your category since you have been receiving newsletters all year.

But I didn't drink the water...

The Amazing Randi takes a trip!

Insight

A few weeks ago, I received an invitation to visit Seoul, Korea, for the purpose of doing a TV program there. My agent, myself, and a representative of "Guinness World Record Korea" exchanged endless faxes to arrange the details of the contract, and experienced considerable problems with language differences. Those we suffered through via fax were nothing compared to what my friend Vikash and I were to undergo once we were in Seoul.

Nothing, but nothing, took place as planned. People would call, arrange to meet me, and never show up. There was little, if any, understanding of what I was there to do, though I'd gone into exquisite detail on the faxes. It took us two days to discover that the Big Producer, Mr. Kim, had been misinformed; he thought I was a genuine psychic!

Well, that posed a major problem. I'd outlined 16 tricks-of-the-psychics I would do, along with explanations. And I did them all at the production meetings, to establish that they'd work. Everyone oooooohed and ahhhhed, but Kim was quite troubled. He finally announced that I would wear a silver robe and hat, and declare it all to be the real thing. I counter-announced that I'd do no such thing, and he could only get that costume onto my corpse. Kim suggested that I say that some of what I did was fake, but most of it was real. I said no. He told me I could say that most of what I did was fake, but some was real. Nyet, nein, no, non. We were not at all happy with each other, and Kim kept saying that the Korean people like to believe that psychic stuff is real, and they would expect me to say that it is.

James Randi is a renowned psychic debunker and author of several books on the subject. He appeared as a guest on an Atheists of Florida Forum program last year.

Note: Mr. Kim wasn't at all interested in the truth of the matter, but only in what the Korean public wanted to hear. His lack of respect for their dignity really annoyed me. And his confident

declarations of psychic powers that were, he said, part of the lives of Koreans, really depressed me. When he ran on about a Korean girl who could read sealed envelopes — and had been "tested by scientists!" — I offered to give her my fee for the engagement if she could do it for me, *just once*, but he waved away that suggestion. We have an expression that involves putting up or shutting up, but I think it would have been lost on the man.

Well, we did the show. The same tired old spoon-bending, compass-moving, sealed-envelope reading, ESP, etc., and at the end I asked the audience — through the interpreter — how many believed that what they'd seen was genuine. Most of the hands went up. I told them that it had all been tricks, and there was a hush. Mind you, I *think* that's what was told them by the interpreter, but I can't be sure. I'll get a report after the show is aired.

I was supposed to have been paid immediately following the taping, but someone had forgotten to go to the bank. As I'd suspected for two days, they were going to try to stiff me for the money. Well, this old troupier didn't get into the business yesterday, and that wasn't going to work.

The next day, as usual, those who were supposed to show up at the hotel didn't make an appearance. I wasn't at all surprised. We were taken to the airport to await the money. Let me take you back to the night before, when I managed to discover (I have ways) that the Guinness chap had bank checks in the exact, correct and full amount, on his person. That same young man now sat with us awaiting a person who we all knew would never appear. He finally announced, 45 minutes before the flight, that he had some money for me, but that only half of it was there. Gee, what a pity. I told him that I would postpone my flight until the following day, and wait at the hotel for the rest of the payment. That didn't seem to be too acceptable to him, but he just didn't seem to know where he'd get the rest of the money. I suggested he look carefully in his memo case (where I already knew the rest of it was), and lo! he found it. I accepted the rest of my money, and we headed for the airport.

Not a good experience, at all. Korea is deeply into supernatural beliefs, and the press supports that angle shamelessly. After the department store collapse a few weeks ago, dowders and other fakery were called in to find bodies, alive and dead. Everyone was shaking sticks and pendulums all over the place, and when one of the indicated spots yielded a person, everyone got excited. They ignored the hundreds of bad guesses and the subsequent waste of time and effort. I can't picture my going back to Korea in the near future. **A**

the Korean people like to believe that psychic stuff is real