The California Tech

Skeptics Society

Doubts Existence of Own Convention

By DAVID CHEN

The Skeptics Society hosted its annual conference the past weekend. This year the theme was brain, mind and consciousness. Scientists and psychologists presented talks and magic shows.

The opening talk came from Dr. Michael Shermer, Executive Director of the Skeptics Society. Shermer introduced an essay for Scientific American. Roger Bingham then began the conference with a presentation titled, “Aun aprendo—Still Learning About Minds.”

Professor Christof Koch then gave a talk called, “The Quest for a Neural Biological Approach.” The Koch laboratory studies private visual systems, consciousness and the biophysics of neurons. Koch wrote a textbook, Biophysics of Consciousness, which is now in press. In the future, neuroethics and neuroeconomics will be part of the conference.

Several more talks discussed consciousness, emotions and the brain. Their lab has digitized samples from the human brain collection at the University of Pennsylvania. Randi spoke. James Randi is a member of the Caltech faculty. He is famous in the 70’s for being a skeptic and currently offers one course in the subject.

The new ASCIT President, Warner Leedy, will complete all of his duties in ASCIT’s new president. He will also continue to support the ideas of Social Director Dima Kurnosova, who has led the society for the past nine years. Warner was also able to address the senior year students and administration. Warner has been in the job for nine years, and that’s a long time. There comes a time when you have to be able to change the procedures and to have people be comfortable,” said Revel. He also said that the students need to be comfortable with the people in the office, such as his former secretary Suzette Connelly and current secretary Malina Chang, aided in making students feel comfortable with the people in the office.

After retiring, Revel looks forward to a new chapter in his life. He will have more time to do research to which he has long looked forward and to begin painting again. “I am retiring, because I have been in the job for nine years, and that’s a long time. There comes a time when you realize that Dima’s body can do a better job,” Revel said.

Professor John Hall, a professor of Civil Engineering and the Executive Officer for Civil Engineering and Applied Mechanics, will succeed Revel as the new Dean of Students. “I think it’s a wonderful guy. I know what to do and how to work with the students. I don’t have any other advice for him except to be yourself,” Revel said.

Despite looking forward to pursuing his other interests, Revel says that he has mixed feelings about leaving the Deanship. He finds it strange to realize that he will not be a part of the orientation next year. However, he says that he will visit. “I am不留, I won’t be far,” said Revel.
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Eating for Free for the Non-Boarder

By VERA TE VELDE

Like most freshmen at Caltech, I descended on my dorm's CDS’s mighty gong-fest. My indulgence at forking over more than ten dollars a person for the occasional French fry or ice cream beat the recharging for off-campus housing, regardless of its greater distance from campus and fewer opportunities to interact with spats or whatever it is you can find. If you’re a real manly dormer you can also jpg the tail with your bare hands.

Shrimps are done when they’re orange. Otherwise, the possibilities are particularly easy to remove by simply putting them snugly in the hole in the middle. Remove shrimp from pan and drain after 3 minutes. If it’s still too hot, you may have to put it in the refrigerator to slow down the process.

Remaining orange juice can be a real problem. If there is some of the orange juice remaining in the jar, remove the orange juice by spooning the contents of the jar into the sink. Then wash the jar with warm water and soap. If you have too much orange juice, it can be stored in the refrigerator for up to two weeks.

On the other hand, you cannot raise shrimp by yourself. You will need to buy shrimp from a fish market or a grocery store.

For more information, please contact the Department of Agriculture at 1-800-929-9468.

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COMMENTS

In the end the consistency of the mixture is just right. Thus, as the last enrolled member of the Class of 1997, I decided to re­produce this experience in the event that the reader might have some interest in trying this new food trend.

I hope you enjoy this recipe as much as I did. It is a great way to add some variety to your diet and it is a healthy option as well.

Jean-Paul Revel

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[Image 0x0]
Honor

BY JEFFREY PHILLIPS

From our frosh camp introduction to graduation, the honor code is an integral part of Caltech life. Ostensibly a single sentence, the honor code needs a 24-page handbook to explain the bureaucracy and the proceedings surrounding it at the institute level. Many Techers think of honor violations as applicable only to academics, disobeying test restrictions or duplicating answers. But the honor code embodies more than that; it is a personal dedication to honorable action independent of the BoC and the CRC.

Honor came to my mind while I was taking a ridiculous midterm last week. It was an insult to the students who took it and to test writing in general. I considered turning in a blank test and calling on the rest of the class to do the same in protest. This second midterm magnified some of the worst elements of the first draconian test. Multiple choice, multiple correct answers; a point for each correct, a negative for each incorrect for a -8 to +4 point spread. The choices varied by subtle nuance, and this class had no redeeming homework credit; the absence of a TA meant that the lazy proI had no time to grade partial credit. I imagine it infuriated most of the class enough that they would have followed me. Yet, as with any strike, most would not be enough. A few students would have undermined the protest by taking the test to secure their own GPAs, a classic prisoner’s dilemma: we all gain from solidarity, but the rest lose if any one of us sticks around to finish, so we all endure the travesty that passed for an exam.

Honor acts as an external to this game-theoretic model of personal gain. We stand together because it is the right thing to do, and all payoffs are beside the point. Some cultures retain specific methods for punishing dishonorable conduct: stoning, exile, keel-hauling, loss of rank and privilege. The honor code gives no provision for punishing opportunistic defectors and disallows many of the more creative penalties for scabs. Indeed, anyone suspected of taking such vengeance is vulnerable to anonymous accusation without proof. The honor code, as implemented, encourages the meek, not the honorable.

Duels are a drastic solution to a challenge to honor, but they exemplify a key element of honor amid their brutality. Honor demands that the accuser and accused abandon meek anonymity and face each other. The smoke and mirrors of the BoC should be a last resort when honorable, personal confrontation has failed, not a first defense. Anonymity is necessary for the report of the most heinous acts, not to ease personal discomfort. A security guard once told me that most of the inter-student noise complaints come from people who had not personally asked the offender to be quiet. All too often, Techers look to security, the administration, the BoC or the CRC to solve problems within their own power but beyond their inclination. Social interaction can be uncomfortable for a Techer; standing against a fellow Techer for what is right, doubly so. Grow a pair and deal with it.

Some cases deserve a BoC hearing. Professors investigating duplicate submissions and other irregularities may find little help in personally confronting students. But, of every matter that tugs at your sense of honor, ask yourself whether you can take it into your own hands; if so, you are as honor bound to rectify as to report it. Moreover, look over to your sense of honor whenever you interact with a Techer, and demand the same of him; we are all meek loners to some extent, but being students together chains us all to one fate. A commitment to honor demands constant attention to those ties that bind you to the Caltech community.

S.L.O.M. - Greg’s Life of Misery

Step 1: Deep Intellectual discussion

No way man, the Lakers suck!

Your mom sucks.

Step 2: Frank exchange of opinions

Yo’ mama’s so dumb that she thought Jar Jar was a Jedi!

You’re denser than osmium!

Step 3: Reconciliation and blood brotherhood

By Ning Bao, Nathan Lau, and Angela Shih

Irrational Exuberance

Girls ask me to get boba for them all the time. And yet, in the end, I am ignored.

Hey, I bet they’d go out with me if I had my own helicopter!

With my life savings, I shall open a flying boba shop! I will be irresistible!

And behold, the flying jollylup is born.

*Grumble*... not again.

When I asked you to set the alarm for 9, I meant PM!
Every year, ASCIT gives out 3 to 4 Staff Appreciation Awards. Undergraduates nominate their favorite staff members and explain why they deserve the award. Past winners include Alice from the Tech Express and Suzette from the VP for Student Affairs’ Office.

This year, ASCIT received numerous nominations, but 4 of them stood out above the others. They are Jack Escobedo, the favorite staff member and his smooth award. Jonathait walks with accolades from residents of Page who received many congratulations. Jack Escobedo, the favorite staff member, deserves it, and we all appreciate what you do for us!

Occidental College professor of political science Peter Dreier will present the final keynote address in the 2004-2005 season of the Social Activism Speaker Series at the California Institute of Technology. Dreier is the director of the Urban and Environmental Policy program at Occidental College and a commentator on social and civic issues facing Los Angeles. This event will take place on Thursday, May 19, at 7:30 p.m., in the Beckman Institute Auditorium at Caltech. It is free and open to the public.

Before joining the Occidental faculty in 1993, Dreier served for almost a decade as a senior policy analyst in the California Senate. In 1990, he co-founded the California Campaign for Fiscal Equity, which focuses attention on issues of public education policy. Since moving to Los Angeles, he has co-authored several books, including The Next California: The Struggle for a Livable City, and he has contributed regularly to the Los Angeles Times, The Nation, and other publications.

The event will be hosted by the Social Activism Speaker Series, which focuses attention on current social and political issues by inviting prominent activists and experts to share their experiences and perspectives with the Caltech community and the public. This series is coordinated with the help of the Caltech Y, and is made possible by contributions from the Moore-Hufstedler Fund, Student Affairs, the Alumni Association, Campus Life, the Diversity Program Fund, the Graduate Student Council, Jack and Edith Roberts, and the Associated Students of Caltech.

Beckman Institute Auditorium is located on the west side of the Caltech campus. Free parking is available in the lots south of Del Mar Boulevard between Wilson and Chester avenues, and in the Wilson Avenue and Holliston Avenue parking structures between San Pasqual Street and Del Mar Boulevard.

Tammy Ma, Hesper Rego, Jonathan So, and Philip Wong received the Robert L. Noland Leadership Award at a dinner presentation in the Athenaeum Library on May 5, 2005. The Robert L. Noland Leadership Award is for outstanding Caltech students who have demonstrated exceptional leadership abilities and have encouraged and supported others in realizing their own leadership capabilities.

Tammy has been the longest-serving Managing Editor of The California Tech. For the last four years, she has worked diligently to create a quality publication. Tammy has also served as Secretary, Historian and Librarian for Fleming House. In addition, she was a member of the Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship Student Advisory Committee and a student participant in Challenges and Choices at Frosh Camp.

Hesper has worked diligently to ensure a smooth transfer of leadership. His work as Secretary, Historian and Treasurer of the Caltech Y is outstanding. His dedication to the community service has resulted in significant opportunities for students and the community. He has also demonstrated exemplary leadership as a counselor for the Internship Program. In addition, Jonathan has been very active in organizing the last two Student-Faculty Conferences. For the most recent conference, he worked on the committee on international studies and scholars. Jonathan has also served as a co-chair on several cases. Most recently, Hesper just finished her term as Dabney president, during which she worked closely with the administration in the planning of the South House renovations.

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