



# NMSR Reports

The Newsletter of the  
New Mexicans for Science and Reason

NMSR Reports, David E. Thomas, Editor, P.O. Box 1017, Peralta, NM 87042 © 2014

## JULY MEETING: CANCELLED

Our next regular meeting will be  
WEDS., AUG. 13<sup>th</sup>, 7 PM  
==>MUSEUM OF NATURAL  
HISTORY AND SCIENCE<==  
==>1801 Mountain Road NW<==  
In the Multi-Purpose Room  
Bring a friend

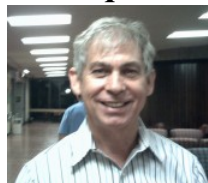
### FUTURE MEETINGS ANNOUNCED

July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014 NMSR Meeting:  
*Cancelled!*

As Dave Thomas has to go to night summer school during June and July, and since many folks are on travel that month, we have decided *not* to have a meeting for July.

August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014 NMSR Meeting:  
Milton Vernon on “Medical Isotope  
Production”

7 PM August 13<sup>th</sup> at the NM  
Museum of Natural History and  
Science. Info, John Covan, 268-  
1878.



### Future Speakers Needed !

If you have suggestions for future speakers, send them along to Dave Thomas ([nmsrdave@swcp.com](mailto:nmsrdave@swcp.com)) and John Covan ([jmcovan@juno.com](mailto:jmcovan@juno.com))!



Discovery Institute Launches  
Attack on Natural History  
Museum.

Details on page 4.

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) –  
Emotional Pseudoscience?



Details on Page 4.

YouTube 9/11 Truth Debate!



Fullerton Thomas 9/11 WTC Twin Tower Debate



Details on Page 3.



## New Mexicans for Science & Reason (NMSR)

NMSR is a non-profit group with the goals of promoting science, the scientific method, rational thinking, and critical examination of dubious or extraordinary claims. NMSR meets at 7 PM on the second Wednesday of each month, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science. NMSR Reports is its official newsletter.

### NMSR officers:

**Dave Thomas, President**

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**John Covan, Vice-President**

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**Nancy Shelton, Treasurer**

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**Eddy Jacobs, Resident Neutron Generator**

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**John Geohegan, Past President**

jgeoh@swcp.com

**Kim Johnson, Industrial Physicist**

kimber@comcast.net

**Marilyn Savitt-Kring, Science Mom**

**Harry Murphy, Physicist, Medical Quackery**

Membership: \$20/year, includes newsletter, make your check payable to NMSR, send to treasurer (Shelton).

Newsletter available in hard-copy and downloadable PDF.

### NMSR Advisors:

- **Mark Boslough**,  
Physicist (Impacts, Climate Change,  
Global Warming). Sandia National Labs.
- **Robert Cormack**  
Professor of Psychology, NMIMT
- **Kendrick Frazier**  
Editor, Skeptical Inquirer
- **John Geissman**  
Professor of Paleomagnetism, UNM
- **Alan Hale**  
Southwest Institute for Space Research
- **Randy Thornhill**  
Professor of Biology, UNM

Cyber-Cypher Clue: I = X

Bonus Puzzle Clue: Channel your inner MacGuyver!

## WANTED: READER ARTICLES AND COMMENTARY

Got something you want to share with NMSR members? Send it in! ATTN: Dave Thomas, Editor, NMSR Reports.

**REMEMBER**, our next regular NMSR meeting is at 7 PM on **WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11th, 2014**, at the **NM MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY AND SCIENCE!**

## PUZZLE TIME!

[Please send solutions to Dave Thomas at: nmsrdave@swcp.com, or at P.O. Box 1017, Peralta NM 87042.]

## Cyber-Cypher: JULY PUZZLE

(Submitted by Dave Thomas)

The following letters are a simple substitution cypher. If R stands for L, R will stand for L everywhere. Your Cyber-Cypher Clue: Clue? Oh, well - if you must, see p. 2.

" N D C H X D H    Y X G    H U H K P G Y P  
O C S H                    D Y X X L J                    Y X G  
N R L M O G                    X L J                    Z H  
N H B Y K Y J H G . "    -    Z K C J C N R  
Z C L B R P N C D C N J                    Y X G                    I -  
K Y P                    D K P N J Y O O L T K Y B R H K  
K L N Y O C X G    S K Y X E O C X .

## SUPER SECRET WORD!

However you prefer to do the cypher itself (above or below), simply duplicate those actions on the alphabetized row of cypher letters below. You'll build an answer key, and you'll also reveal - the Super Secret Word!

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

## JUNE CYPHER SOLUTION

"IT IS THE CREATIONISTS WHO  
BLASPHEMOUSLY ARE CLAIMING THAT GOD IS  
CHEATING US IN A STUPID WAY." -- J. W.  
NIENHUYS

Esteemed June Code Crackers: Mike Arms\*, Terry Lauritsen\*.

\*Secret Word: "DEITY WHO CAN JUMP"

## July Bonus: "Gettin' Both Trucks Home"

University of Texas at Austin biologist David Hillis has a favorite "stuck in the middle of nowhere" story with a happy ending. He was out in his truck, hours away from Austin, when his alternator light



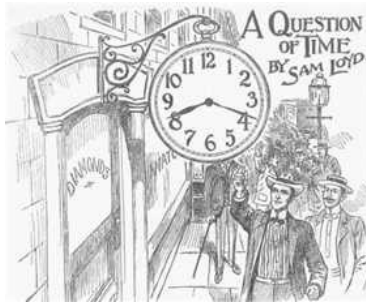
came on. He watched his voltmeter drop until the truck stopped, hundreds of miles away from the closest place that could repair the alternator. Luckily for Hillis, his good friend Jim happened to drive by, and stopped to help. David Hillis could have ridden back to Austin with Jim, of course, but then his truck with its broken alternator and drained battery would still have been stuck in the middle of nowhere. Using one truck to tow the other was not feasible, either. However, the two clever men hit on a plan, and proceeded to return both trucks to Austin in a matter of just a few hours.

**The July Bonus: How did David and Jim get both trucks back to Austin?**

### June Bonus: "A Question of Time"

*Courtesy Sam Loyd*

**The June Bonus:**  
*The hour and minute hands are at equal distance from the 6 hour, what time will it be exactly?*



**Solutions:** 0:55.38, 1: 50.77, 2: 46.15, 12:00, 11:4.61, 10: 9.23, 9:13.85, 8:18.46, 7:23.08, 6:27.69, 5:32.31, 4:36.92, 3:41.54 ...

**Congrats to our June Solvers:** Mike Arms (NM), Eric Hanczyc (WA), Paul Braterman (UK), Harold H. Gaines(KS), Brian Pasko (NM).

### June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2014 NMSR Meeting : Dave Straub on "Remembering Underground Testing Days at the Nevada Test Site: Traveling with the Thundering Herd"

At our meeting, **Dave Straub**, a retired staff member from Sandia National Laboratories, showed many photos and film clips from his days at the Nevada Test Site (NTS) when it was conducting underground nuclear detonations (above-ground testing ceased after 1962 to restrict release of radiation into the atmosphere). Most underground nuclear detonations fell into two classes: **device development** and **effects tests**. *Development tests* occurred in deep vertical holes ("shafts") that needed no access after detonation. Conversely, *effects tests* were conducted with proven devices that had known neutron and photon fluences. Effects tests were conducted in long horizontal tunnels

("drifts") to facilitate access before and after detonation. Effects tests were the primary focus of Straub's efforts in his years at NTS.

Dave showed photos of a large flaring tube called a "line-of-sight" (LOS) pipe used in effects tests. The LOS pipe held the device at one end and the materials to be tested at the larger end. The LOS pipe could be evacuated to allow unrestricted fluence of radiation and neutrons onto the test object(s). But to prevent their annihilation by the debris cloud following the neutrons and radiation a "fast closure" device was employed to cut and seal the LOS pipe. Invented by Sandia personnel, it could drive a massive door in guillotine-fashion several feet through the LOS pipe in a matter of milliseconds.

Dave talked about the need to develop high-speed recording techniques and specialized hardware because none yet existed in those days. Among his inventions was Stack Racks to provide for convenient and mobile positioning of electronics expected to perform subject to ground shock.



Dave also gave us a sense of what it was like to work long, difficult hours with personnel from multiple organizations in a remote location with few amenities. They were pioneers and deserve our thanks! NMSR thanks Dave Straub for an excellent presentation.

### It's a YouTube 9/11 Truth Debate!

*By Dave Thomas*

NMSR is involved in a YouTube Debate on "What Caused the Collapses of the Twin Towers on 9-11-2001." Going first is Michael Fullerton of Vernon 9/11 Truth, based in British Columbia.

Dave Thomas's introductory video is here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7RO4uOE9R7s>

Mr. Fullerton's opening remarks are on YouTube here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9lsNFYt5Ik>

Stay tuned to YouTube channel theNMSR for some 9/11 Truth Debate Action!



Fullerton Thomas 9/11 WTC Twin Tower Debate







## Discovery Institute Launches Attack on Natural History Museum.

The Discovery Institute has published thousands of words in multiple articles toward the end of June 2014, with the common theme *"Academic Freedom Alert: Ask State-Run New Mexico Science Museum Why It Used 'Darwin Day' to Promote Atheism."* They are alleging that the museum conspired with NMSR to "promote atheism" back in February for "Darwin Days", and then *tried to cover it up*. What really happened? It seems that one of the early NMSR flyers for "Darwin Days" incorrectly identified the museum as a "co-sponsor" of several talks on religion at the Feb.12 NMSR meeting. When asked to correct this flyer, NMSR promptly did so – before Darwin Days had occurred – and this is now being labeled as a "coverup." The Institute has sent their urgent story to many New Mexico media outlets, but so far the only takers have been religious news services like World Magazine and Baptist Press.

The events the museum sponsored on the Feb. 9<sup>th</sup> event were all about science; the NMSR-sponsored talks on Feb. 12<sup>th</sup> were expressions of the speakers' free speech. Suggesting that celebrating Darwin's life is itself anti-religious is wrong; in fact, many religious leaders participate in such celebrations in New Mexico and all across the country (the Clergy Letter Project).

NMSR's September 2013 speaker, Michael Roberts, wrote the Discovery Institute to say *"You are totally incorrect to say NMSR is atheistic. It has a mixed membership, Christians included. As a priest in the Church of England I was invited to speak to them last September on Christianity and evolution. I also gave lectures at NMT. I was given a fine welcome, stayed with members. Of course some members are atheist but not all. Please don't force atheist-Christian war by your misrepresentation."*

Paul Braterman has pointed out the ironic hypocrisy of the Discovery Institute: *"Chutzpah for the DI to complain about this, when they hired a hall at Cornell and now refer to their mutual backscratching there as the 'Cornell Conference'; details at <http://wp.me/p21TIL-76>."*

The Discovery Institute is calling for people to *"Get in touch with Charles Walter, Executive Director of the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science, via e-mail at [Charles.Walter@state.nm.us](mailto:Charles.Walter@state.nm.us)."* That's not a bad idea - why not drop Walter a line, and indicate your support?

## TNR – Emotional Pseudoscience?

By Alice Anderson

TNR or trap-neuter-return is the practice of live-trapping free-roaming cats, surgically neutering them, in some programs vaccinating them against rabies, and releasing them, usually but not always near the capture site. TNR advocates say, "TNR is the only humane way to reduce and eventually eliminate feral cat colonies." TNR is legally practiced in Santa Fe, Bernalillo County and Albuquerque, Carlsbad, Dona Ana County, and elsewhere in New Mexico.

Arguments made by TNR advocates are filled with factual errors and logical fallacies. Here are a few of their logical fallacies, selected from <http://www.yourlogicalfallacyis.com/>.

**SPECIAL PLEADING.** *Moving the goalposts, or making up exceptions when a claim is shown to be false.*

TNR advocates say "TNR eliminates cat colonies", then "TNR eventually eliminates cat colonies", then "TNR stabilizes cat colonies", then "TNR reduces shelter intake and shelter euthanasia", then "TNR makes cats happier." They end up a long way from eliminating cat colonies.

TNR advocates say, "Cats don't kill birds", then, "Well-fed cats don't kill birds", then "Cats kill only introduced pest birds like starlings", then "Cats kill only common birds like white-winged doves", then "Yes, cats kill endangered piping plovers, but the piping plover isn't extinct yet", then "Yes, cats rendered extinct the Stephens Island wren, but the Stephens Island wren lived on an island."

TNR advocates say "Cat colonies form a barrier between



people and rabid wild animals", then "It's been 20 years since anyone in the U.S. has gotten rabies from a cat", then "The cat that was alleged to have given rabies to that 8-year-old California girl was never found, so we don't know that's where she got rabies", then "She didn't tell her parents immediately that she had been scratched by a feral cat at her school", then "She probably had been teasing the cat." This is both special pleading and blaming the victim.

**BLACK OR WHITE.** *Presenting two alternative states as the only possibilities when in fact more possibilities exist.*

TNR advocates say the only alternative to TNR is trap-and-kill, which they always describe as "failed." The best alternative to both trap-and-release and trap-and-kill is neutering pet cats. Pet cats can be found and neutered much

more easily than stray cats, and the cat owner may pay part of the cost of neutering. Colony cats are all either abandoned pet cats or descendants of abandoned pet cats. With enough pet cats neutered (best estimate is 88%), there would be no unwanted pet cats to be abandoned and no colonies would form.

Existing colonies can be eliminated if people feeding the cats would relocate their cats to enclosed yards at their homes. "If you feed it, then you own it" is a good non-lethal alternative to TNR.

TNR advocates ignore the possibility of neutering and releasing without feeding. It is the feeding that creates and maintains cat colonies.

**FALSE CAUSE.** *Presuming that a real or perceived relationship between things means that one is the cause of the other.*

TNR advocates talk a lot about the "vacuum effect". They say that removing cats from a colony creates a vacuum which will be filled with new cats. In fact, new cats had been moving into the colony site all along. That's why TNR doesn't eliminate cat colonies. If you remove all the cats but continue putting out food, cat owners with too many cats will still see the food dishes, still conclude the site is a good place to leave unwanted cats, and still leave their unwanted cats. If you remove all the resident colony cats and stop putting out food, new cats won't come. Removing cats doesn't create new cats.

**AD HOMINEM.** *Attacking your opponent's character or personal traits instead of engaging with their argument.*

TNR advocates regularly label TNR opponents as "cat haters."

**LOADED QUESTION.** *Asking a question that has an assumption built into it so that one cannot answer it without appearing guilty.*

TNR advocates ask, "Why do you want cats to be killed? Why do you hate cats?"

**BANDWAGON.** *Appealing to popularity or the fact that many people do something as an attempted form of validation.*

TNR advocates present a long list of cities that have legalized TNR. All of these cities, some after decades of TNR, have lots of colony cats and cat colonies.

**BEGGING THE QUESTION.** *A circular argument in which the conclusion is included in the premise.*

When TNR advocates are shown evidence that TNR does not eliminate cat colonies, they say, "The cats don't hurt anything." When shown evidence that cats hurt people, wildlife, and other cats, they say, "TNR will eliminate the colonies."

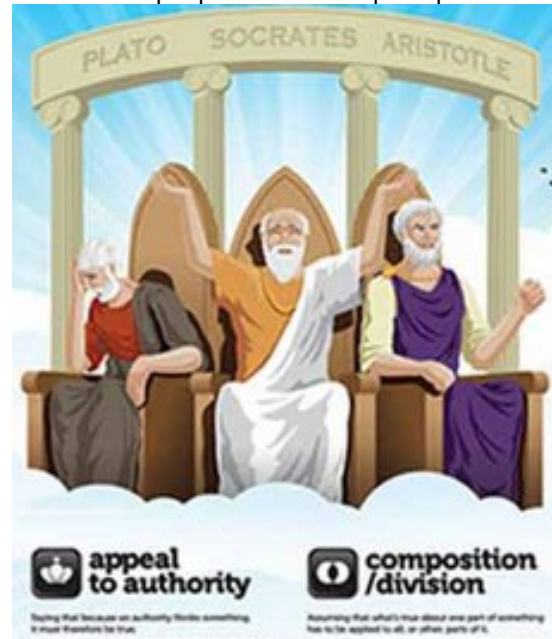
**APPEAL TO AUTHORITY.** *Using the opinion or position of an authority figure in place of an actual argument.*

TNR advocates quote Mahatma Gandhi as saying that the moral character of a nation can be judged by how it treats its weakest members. They never give a source for

the quotation. The Mahatma was primarily concerned about people, including India's weakest members, the untouchable caste.

**APPEAL TO NATURE.** *Making the argument that because something is natural, it is therefore valid, justified, inevitable, or ideal.*

TNR advocates say that free-roaming cats are a natural part of our wildlife. They are not. No cats were in the Americas before 1492--they are an unnatural addition to our fauna. Moreover, house cats are not a natural animal. They have been shaped by thousands of years of artificial selection to be super-predators and super-reproducers.



**ANECDOTAL.** *Using personal experience or an isolated example instead of a valid argument, especially to dismiss statistics.*

TNR advocates present a long list of anecdotes from people saying "TNR works in my city." No verifiable data is presented. Most of the anecdotes aren't even about cat numbers--instead they are about proxy variables such as admissions to shelters, euthanasia numbers, or numbers of complaints. Each anecdote has zero evidence value. One thousand times zero is zero. One pair of well-designed, well-conducted, well-analyzed, well-presented studies in two different cities conducted by two different teams would outweigh a thousand anecdotes.

**APPEAL TO EMOTION.** *Manipulating an emotional response in place of a valid or compelling argument.*

TNR advocates manipulate our love for cats by saying that TNR prevents euthanasia. They often illustrate their comments with pictures of really cute kittens.

**PERSONAL INCREDULITY.** *Saying that because one finds something difficult to understand, it therefore must not be true.*

TNR advocates find it difficult to accept that cats kill

birds. They conclude that cats don't kill birds.

**GENETIC.** *Judging something good or bad on the basis of where it comes from or from whom it comes.*

TNR advocates reject anything from the American Bird Conservancy or the Smithsonian Institute because a former employee was convicted (framed) of putting poison in cat dish.

TNR arguments, for and against, have been published on the op-ed pages of:

Las Cruces Sun News ([www.lcsun-news.com](http://www.lcsun-news.com))

Las Cruces Bulletin ([www.lascrucesbulletin.com](http://www.lascrucesbulletin.com))

Albuquerque Journal ([ABQjournal.com](http://ABQjournal.com))

and in a thread of comments on a Washington Post story published on February 6, 2014, titled "Is it more humane to kill stray cats or to let them fend alone?" by Lisa Gracie Lednicer. ([www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/))

For an account of the California child's ordeal, see [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrht,l/mm6104a1.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrht/l/mm6104a1.htm).

See also Alley Cat Allies ([www.alleycat.org](http://www.alleycat.org)), Vox Felina ([www.voxfelina.org](http://www.voxfelina.org)), and Alley Cat Rescue ([www.saveacat.org](http://www.saveacat.org)).

A good source of fact and opinion on both sides is the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association ([www.avmajournal.avma.org](http://www.avmajournal.avma.org))

For evidence refuting TNR proponents' claims, see the American Bird Conservancy ([www.abcbirds.org](http://www.abcbirds.org)) and select Cats Indoors.

*Drought-safe*

*Fireworks; be careful  
this fire season!  
Brought to you by the  
Committee for  
Painfully Obvious But  
Annoying Facts,  
CPOBAF.*



## IN CELEBRATION OF THE WARM SUMMER SOLSTICE, SOME HALF-BAKED HAIKU

by Keith Thomas

To grasp the essence Of a doughnut or bagel, One must see the whole.	Border patrolman Swears he has seen alien Autopsy photos!
Is it best to pray Your team will be the winner Or theirs the loser?	Just how dangerous Are the toxins we release With a twelve hour cleanse?
Could we use feng shui To protect our computers From Chinese malware?	Murder at Starbucks! A man drops with a double Shot of espresso.

DUES - check the date on your mailing label. If it's time for you to renew, or to make a contribution, please send a check to

NANCY SHELTON, NMSR Treasurer,  
11617 Snowheights NE, Albuquerque, NM 87112

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Membership \$20 per annum

*On the Net? Ask for the Paperless NMSR Reports!*

*Send an email to [nmsrdave@swcp.com](mailto:nmsrdave@swcp.com) "Dave Thomas"*

**The NMSR e-mail list is fun! It's an e-mail list with news announcements of interest to NMSR members, discussions about news of the times, and more. To join, send a request to [nmsrdave@swcp.com](mailto:nmsrdave@swcp.com).**

Thanks to: Alice Anderson, John Covan, Debbie Thomas, Keith Thomas and our Puzzlers!

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**NO  
JULY  
MEETING**

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

**Future Meetings  
Announced**

**Puzzles**

**DI Attacks NM Nat.  
Hist. Museum**

**Cat Pseudoscience**

**Half-Baked Haiku**