

EDITORIAL

The 2014 SSE Conference near San Francisco is now behind us, and I'd rate it as quite successful. Apart from the predictable good times shared with friends whom we see only at these get-togethers, several things in particular stood out for me. First, Gerald Pollack's Dinsdale lecture on the fourth phase of water was unusually interesting, and in fact all the invited talks were both stimulating and entertainingly presented. (Kudos again to Adam Curry for putting together a really first-rate program, and to Jerry Gin for doing such a wonderful job as local host.) Although I wasn't monitoring the behavior of attendees generally or invited speakers in particular, I happened to sit near or next to Gerald Pollack for much of the meeting. And I have to say that I was also struck and impressed by his attentiveness and openness to the rest of the program. If he missed a presentation, I didn't see it, and I believe he took careful notes of most (if not all) of the talks as well. I doubt this was a mere courtesy. I believe Pollack exemplifies the kind of inquisitiveness, open-mindedness, and intellectual courage I at least take to be a prerequisite for membership in the SSE, but which one sees all too infrequently in the Academy, or in the real world generally.

Moreover, the conference was quite well-attended, and I was pleased (and somewhat surprised) that many of those present don't yet qualify for membership in the AARP.¹ The shortage of "young blood" has been a concern, not just for the SSE, but also for other similarly minded organizations to which I belong (e.g., the Parapsychological Association and the Society for Psychical Research)². Indeed, the SSE Council routinely considers ways to encourage the recruitment and participation of new and young members. Brenda Dunne has certainly helped with this by organizing and hosting the New Members and Young Investigators meetings at the annual conferences, and my spies informed me that this year's meeting was again a success (and not just because the pizza was very good).

Despite the encouraging numbers of young(ish) attendees, the SSE Council remains concerned about the relative dearth of younger members, and it also remains uncertain about the reasons for this and the best ways to remedy the situation. Are the obstacles at least partly financial? Are the costs for attending the conference (especially when out of state) simply prohibitive for most students, as well as for relatively impecunious graduates clinging perilously but tenaciously to their positions in the workforce? It would hardly be surprising if that's the case. Similarly, as far as student membership is concerned, I imagine that many (if not most)

academic environments thwart or suppress students' interest in areas of frontier science and that many students simply have few if any conventional ways (except self-directed Internet searches) for learning about the SSE and similar organizations. I know, for example, that members of the University of Maryland Baltimore County Psychology Department often threatened students with reprisals if they attended my annual seminar on Philosophy and Parapsychology. And there's no reason to think that situation was unprecedented; irrational academic resistance to areas of frontier science is—disgracefully—too well-documented to deny.

However, I believe there's something most SSE members can do to recruit new and young blood into the Society. I regularly receive inquiries from people who ran across something about my work and write me with questions or anecdotes. And I'm sure many other SSE members have had similar experiences. These are golden opportunities to spread the word about the SSE, direct our correspondents to the SSE and *JSE* web pages, and emphasize that all but the most recent *JSE* issues are available for free download. Moreover, since some SSE members are very well-known and no doubt regularly receive unsolicited inquiries from strangers (if not anomalies researcher stalkers), information of this sort has a chance of being disseminated quite widely. Similarly, occasional mention of the SSE or *JSE* on Facebook and other social media sites has the chance of reaching many who might not otherwise have known about these resources. I'm realistic enough to recognize that these efforts probably won't lead to a huge increase in SSE membership or SSE conference attendance. But the effort required on our parts is minimal; so why not try?

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On another matter, I'm sad to report that our long-time Book Review Editor, David Moncrief, has resigned his position. David began as sole BRE back in 2001 and has done an absolutely astonishing job in that role. Indeed, I doubt seriously that we can find a person who has anything close to David's breadth and depth of familiarity with the broad range of topics of interest to SSE members and with the community of scholars engaged in the study of scientific anomalies. At the moment we have no replacement for David, and the most satisfactory plan B I've been able to conceive is to ask my team of Associate Editors to suggest books for review and to help recruit reviewers. That says it all, I think. The only way I know to adequately replace David is with the combined resources of a dozen other people. In the meantime, I'll be happy to entertain applications from anyone interested in the job. But be warned, you'll have very big shoes to fill.

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Notes

- ¹ For readers outside the U.S. that's the nonprofit American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), with a membership of 37 million people. One needn't be retired to belong, but one usually must be at least 50 years old.
- ² I don't include here the American Philosophical Association, which does have many young members, and whose primary criteria for membership are to be a scruffy dresser and very stingy when dispensing gratuities.