

News & Review

FOR MAINSTREAM COMPUTING USERS

Readership - 50,000

Page 20

*Editorial . . .***Gullibles' Travels -II***Stan Goodrich, Editor*

It appears as if this editor, along with those from the San Francisco Chronicle and numerous law journals as well as reporters with CNN and other media, was taken in by a hoax - The Solomon Project.

Several months ago, an artificial intelligence expert named Dr. Joseph Bonuso announced that he and his colleagues at New York University Law School had completed a seven year project to develop a revolutionary computer program called Solomon. Using "fuzzy logic" and voice stress analysis, among other attributes, the program could weigh the evidence and separate truth from fiction in jury trials to render an objective verdict. Well, it now seems that Bonuso is, in fact, Joey Skaggs, a person known for a long succession of media hoaxes.

He attributes The Solomon Project hoax to a desire to make the public aware of what he perceives as a "crisis of jurisprudence in American society."

In fact, this editor called The Solomon Project's New York phone number, left a voice mail message, and had the called promptly returned

Why was I, and the others, all too willing to believe The Solomon Project was real. But why not? Computers are "invading" every facet of our lives, so it just seems a natural extension of this invasiveness and fast-moving computer technology that computerization be applied to the courtroom environment.

About a year ago, a computer program was actually announced to help doctors determine if an individual should be removed from life support systems. By feeding in the appropriate data, the computer determines the efficacy of maintaining the status quo or "pulling the plug." And, several months ago, a similar-type program was announced to help busy doctors in HMOs come up with a diagnosis. Again, symptoms are fed into the computer and voila, the computer tells what could be ailing the patient. With computers more or less playing God, why not a computer playing both judge and jury?

It would be far more difficult to think of one facet of our lives where computers play no role than to list the various areas where they significantly impact us all.

Perhaps, the lesson to be learned from Solomon is that computers have conditioned us much like Pavlov's dog. We anticipate and expect them to play an ever increasing role in our lives and openly accept extensions of this "invasion" without question.