

## **Stephen Jay Gould to Give UCSD's seventh annual Robert C. Elliott Memorial Lecture**

**January 14, 1988**

Contact: Marilyn Bernstein, Department of Literature, 534-3214 or Alixandra Williams, Public Information Office, 534-3120

### STEPHEN JAY GOULD TO GIVE UCSD'S SEVENTH ANNUAL ROBERT C. ELLIOTT MEMORIAL LECTURE

Stephen Jay Gould, a lecturer and educator who, since 1982, has added 19 honorary degrees to his credits, will speak at 8 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 18, in the Mandell Weiss Center for the Performing Arts at the University of California, San Diego. The lecture, sponsored by the UCSD Department of Literature, is free.

Gould, who teaches biology, geology and the history of science at Harvard University, has recently published a book of essays called "An Urchin in the Storm." Technically book reviews, these essays serve as a springboard for Gould's most popular causes: the defense of reason and the attack on biological determinism.

A proponent of Darwinism, Gould writes a warning about creationism, saying that its exploiters and fundraisers are "right-wing evangelicals who advance the literalism of Genesis as just one item in a comprehensive political program that would also ban abortion and return old-fashioned patriarchy under the guise of saving American families."

The unusual biological traits of pandas occupy Gould's interest in one of the essays, as he discusses how an animal from the carnivora order manages to thrive almost entirely on bamboo. "Evolution is the quintessential science of history, and the hold of history lies exposed in myriad imperfections and compromises (panda's thumbs) featured by all organisms as legacies of their different pasts...", he writes. (Gould has written on pandas in a book called, "The Panda's Thumb.")

History, for Gould, seems to depend upon "odd particulars" which are "quite unpredictable and unrepeatable themselves, that divert futures into new channels, shallow and adjacent to old pathways at first, but deepening and diverging with the passage of time."

Some say Gould is a natural showman, a wonderful teacher. During his own teaching sessions, it is said he digresses from the history of the earth and of life, to Mickey Mouse, science fiction movies and baseball trivia.

Since 1982, Gould has been the Alexander Agassiz Professor of Zoology at Harvard. He began teaching at Harvard in 1967, immediately after receiving his doctorate from Columbia University, and in 1973 he was named professor of geology, and curator of invertebrate paleontology for the Museum of Comparative Zoology.

A winner of the MacArthur Foundation "genius grant," which he reportedly donated much of to the Harvard Department of Invertebrate Paleontology, Gould is said to resent the suggestion that he is a popularizer. "Why is there the notion that writing science for the public cheapens the profession? I have some colleagues who might be very negative toward me, but the real motivation is jealousy and overt ill will," he was quoted as saying in a September 1987 Newsweek on Campus article.

(January 14, 1988)