

DELVE REPORT

APRIL

A quarterly newsletter of unusual reports on various subjects. Published as an exchange with others of a like nature. Send comments to: Gene Duplantier, 17 Shetland Street, TORONTO, Ontario, Canada M2M 1X5

Forget E.T.; Phone Home for Reality Check



Alienation from government contributes to the belief in extraterrestrials. But don't be distracted from the need to solve earthbound problems.

By JACK SOLOMON

Aliens—the extraterrestrial sort—are haunting the popular imagination. They're everywhere: on TV, in the movies, on the Web and featured in a spate of books and magazine articles. The image of the alien, in fact, is so ubiquitous in popular culture that it doesn't really matter whether extraterrestrials exist or not: What matters is what this all says about the state of American consciousness.

I had an interesting experience involving aliens recently—well, really a couple of people who thought they might be looking at one—that illustrates the situation. I was careening down the long slope from Calabasas Peak into Red Rock Canyon State Park on my mountain bike when two hikers called out to me to ask if I could see the strange-looking figure they had been watching on a distant outcropping. Was it human, they wondered? An alien, perhaps?

Eager to oblige, I stopped to have a look, and, sure enough, I could make out a darkly clad figure silhouetted against the horizon, striding back and forth while waving some sort of object. It just looked like some guy to me, but I was curious about what he was up to, so I allowed myself to be persuaded by the hikers to bicycle back up the mountain for a closer inspection.

Here's where reality gets disappointing. I had misjudged the location of the outcropping and so could only get close

enough to verify that it was, indeed, just some guy, but I couldn't determine what he was waving around. I guess I'll never know. What is significant is the fact that the two hikers at least half-seriously wondered whether they might be having some sort of close encounter of the third kind. And, after all, why not? Even scientists, waiting patiently beside their radio telescopes, believe in the possibility that someday someone will beam a signal back in response to their own "we're over here" broadcasts. Indeed, it seems to be an almost rational thing to wonder whether contact hasn't already been made.

Personally, I remain skeptical, but that may soon be a marginal position. Because from the signals that popular culture has been beaming to me, it appears that belief in extraterrestrials is no longer such a fringe phenomenon. We smile at those poor souls who panicked in 1938 when Orson Welles made his notorious broadcast of "The War of the Worlds," but imagine what might happen were such a broadcast to occur today. This time a lot of people might not believe the whole thing was just a prank.

That's what I find to be of more significance than the growing belief in the existence of extraterrestrials: the shrinking belief in anything that the authorities have to tell us about any subject whatsoever. Isn't that at least half the appeal of "The X-Files," whose credits open with the image of a flying saucer alongside a headline banner reading "Government Denies All Knowledge"? Once, only a small fringe of Americans seriously believed that the U.S.

government is engaged in a conspiratorial cover-up of what it knows about the infamous Roswell incident or the John F. Kennedy assassination. Now, more and more people are skeptical about everything their government tells them, while being inclined to believe the most fantastic governmental conspiracy theories.

Frankly, I don't blame people for being skeptical. The legacy of the Vietnam War, not to mention Watergate and other instances where our government had eventually to concede that it was lying to us, has done nothing to improve governmental credibility. But, unfortunately, skepticism can backfire, because the growing legions of Americans who are more inclined to believe in the existence of extraterrestrials than in the words of their leaders are also withdrawing from participation in such activities as voting and community service.

All of which introduces a different kind of alien into the picture, the "alien" that lies at the root of the word "alienation." For what we have here is yet another example of the way in which cultural behavior hangs together. People who don't trust their government to tell them the truth often become both politically and socially alienated. Thus, it is no small thing to encourage skepticism, as shows like "The X-Files" and its imitators do every week. Certainly public officials need to do more to deserve our trust, but a blanket skepticism toward all government is self-defeating. A society, after all, is founded on trust.

So although it is amusing to imagine what it would be like to have an actual encounter with an alien, let's keep our feet on the ground. The truth is not "out there"; it's right here.

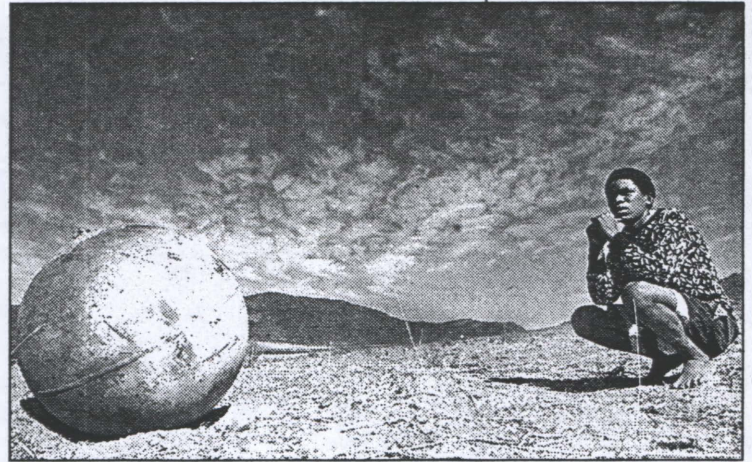
Jack Solomon is professor of English at Cal State Northridge.

L.A. TIMES - MAR. 5, 2000
CR: HOWARD KAUFMAN

SOUTH AFRICA

Balls from sky a mystery

JOHANNESBURG • South African authorities have asked U.S. space officials to help identify two large metal balls that fell from the sky north of Cape Town. The first, right, weighing 30 kilograms, landed on Pieter Viljoen's wine farm at Worcester. "My staff said they heard two loud bangs like gunshots and saw the shining ball fall near the vineyards," he said. The second ball which fell at Durbanville, was oval, 1.5 metres long and weighed about 50 kg.



ENVER ESSOP / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Moon's off-kilter orbit explained

PARIS • A decades-old mystery about why the moon has a strange, inclined orbit around the Earth may finally have an answer, according to U.S. astrophysicists.

The formation of the moon has long been attributed to a huge object the size of Mars slamming into the Earth 4.5 billion years ago, creating a hot disc of debris from which the satellite gradually coalesced.

But this notion, known as the giant impact theory and dating back more than 30 years, has long had a problem. Most other satellites in the solar system orbit their mother planets at the equator, where gravitational pull is strongest. The moon is an exception: Its orbit is inclined by roughly 10 degrees relative to the Earth's equator.

"The inclination problem had been one of the last remaining obstacles for the impact hypothesis of moon formation," said William R. Raid, a scientist at Southwest Research Institute at Boulder, Colo.

To solve the problem, Raid and Robin M. Canup, a SwRI colleague, propose a slight variation on the giant impact theory, focusing on debris caused by the impact event.

They speculate there were two distinct masses of material — a huge chunk that was the newly formed moon, and a disc of gas and debris left over from the collision.

Gravitational interaction between these two masses coaxed the moon out of its orbital plane above the equator and into a new path, at an inclination of 10 degrees, according to their model.

The work is reported in today's issue of *Nature*, the British scientific weekly.

Agence France-Presse

NATIONAL POST, WEDNESDAY,

FEBRUARY 17, 2000

THE TORONTO STAR Wednesday, April 26, 2000

West Coast sky watchers spotting the most UFOs

But Yukon, too, appears to be a hotbed of activity

WINNIPEG (CP) — British Columbia was the place to be in 1999 if you wanted to spot a UFO.

The province helped drive a 30 per cent national increase in such reports, says Chris Rutkowski, a University of Manitoba science writer and amateur astronomer who just published the 11th annual survey of sightings.

Almost half the unidentified flying objects in Canada last year — 118 — were seen over the West Coast.

Ontario had 79 reports and after that they drop off sharply: Yukon 20, Alberta 19, Quebec eight, Manitoba and Newfoundland six each, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Saskatchewan one each, and none in Nova Scotia or the Northwest Territories. Nunavut is not listed.

A very active UFO research community in British Columbia gets some of the credit, suggests Rutkowski.

"B.C. has a UFO hotline and they have a TV show and they

publish a magazine and there's really quite a devoted following in B.C., while that isn't the case in Saskatchewan or New Brunswick.

"So I think that, and the larger population base, has added to the fact that there's so many UFO reports there."

One example of the UFO reports out of B.C. last year included a sighting in May over the Richmond area, not far from Vancouver International Airport.

'Sheet of plywood with lights on it'

It was seen by observers about 300 metres from ground level.

"They described it as a rectangular sheet of plywood with lights on it floating above the ground. That certainly doesn't sound like your average Cessna or DC-3."

Another B.C. sighting came in Courtenay in June when a Canadian Air Force officer and two other witnesses saw what they first thought was a satellite. It stopped its forward motion, moved erratically, then interacted with another object and flew away.

When British Columbia is removed from the mix, the last decade shows a fairly consistent level of UFO activity, says Rutkowski. The average is around 230 a year, although last year there were 259.

Almost 80 per cent of last year's sightings could be explained away as natural phenomena such as meteors or fireballs.

But it's what's left that has kept people like Rutkowski engrossed in the study of unidentified flying objects.

For the second straight year there were a large number of sightings in the Yukon. There were 22 in 1998.

"One theory that's been suggested is if it really is related to the testing of secret aircraft by the Americans, the perfect place to do it would be in the Alaska-Yukon area where there's very little population.

"If it's not that, then maybe the aliens are looking for a place where there's not very many people either."

He says the Yukon continues to be a hot spot.

"It's showing no sign of stopping. Already this year in 2000 there have been some extraordinary cases coming out of the Yukon. We have no idea why this is so."

Yukon meteorite a 'cosmic bonanza' for researchers

SECRETS OF UNIVERSE

BY MARGARET MUNRO

The charred remains of a meteorite that exploded over the Yukon in January are proving a "cosmic bonanza" that is giving an international team of scientists a glimpse of the universe before the solar system was created.

The primitive composition and pristine condition of the 4.5-billion-year-old meteorite "offers us a snapshot of the original composition of the entire solar system before the planets formed," says Michael Zolensky, a cosmic mineralogist at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston. He is studying fragments meticulously collected and preserved by an anonymous Yukon resident.

"It tells us what the initial materials were like that went into making up the Earth, the moon and the sun," says Mr. Zolensky. The solar system is about 4.5 billion years old.

Scientists say the lumps of crumbly rock with scorched, pitted surfaces resemble partly used charcoal briquettes: black, porous, fairly light and still smelling of sulphur.

A joint statement issued yesterday by NASA and Natural Resources Canada describes them "as a cosmic bonanza" for scientists.

"These meteorite fragments are of immense scientific value and interest," said Dr. Richard Herd, curator of National Collections for the Geological Survey of Canada.

"This rare find potentially will contribute to a better understanding of the nature of the universe."

He added that previously undetected compounds in the fragments will have implications for both planetary and biological sciences worldwide.

The meteorite is a rare type known as a carbonaceous chondrite that contains many forms of carbon and organics, the basic building blocks of life, he said.

Carbonaceous chondrites comprise only about 2% of meteorites collected so far because they are

easily broken down during entry into Earth's atmosphere and by weathering on the ground.

Mr. Zolensky said the last time a carbonaceous chondrite such as this was recovered after falling to Earth was 31 years ago. "This is probably the only time in my career this will happen," he said.

The meteorite, created as a huge fireball as it streaked through the northern skies on Jan. 18, set off sonic booms that startled residents as far away as British Columbia and Alaska. The Yukon's frozen, snow-covered ground provided near-ideal conditions for preservation, Dr. Herd said.

A local resident, who has requested anonymity, found the fragments, put them in clean plastic bags and kept them continuously frozen, a feat that makes them the only freshly fallen meteorite fragments recovered and transferred to a laboratory without thawing. Keeping the fragments continuously frozen minimized the potential loss of organic and other volatile compounds in the fragments.

About a kilogram of fragments have been recovered so far. Of those, NASA has about half, passed on by the Canadian government and the University of Calgary.

National Post

Sex in zero gravity said to have been tried out by NASA

NASA astronauts have practised space sex in an experiment to find out which lovemaking positions are possible in zero gravity, according to a new book by a French science journalist.

Breaking a taboo about sexual contact in space, NASA sent up a specially prepared shuttle flight in 1996, one of four that year that had women astronauts on board, says Pierre Kohler, a writer and astronomer.

The sex positions had been selected following computer simulations, said Kohler, citing what he said was a NASA document, reference number 12-571-3570.

"Of the 10 positions tested, six required 'mechanical' help, with the use of an elastic belt and an inflatable tunnel to keep the partners pressed together at the torso, the pelvis or the legs," he wrote in *The Last Mission*, about the

Russian space station Mir.

"The other four turned to a 'natural' approach, in which the couple depended only on muscle power" to keep together, he said.

The experiment, recorded on video with the couple's consent, took place on the shuttle's lower deck, and an inflatable screen was installed to give some privacy from the other astronauts on the craft's flight deck, he maintained.

But a British expert cast scorn on Kohler's account.

"My first reaction is that it's absolute rubbish and unlikely in the extreme," said Doug Millard, curator of the space technology department at London's Science Museum.

He pointed out that NASA was quite transparent about its shuttle program, and so it would be bizarre to hear about an unusual experiment of this kind nearly four years after the event.

But a bigger question mark was why NASA would give over precious payload and mission time to an activity that was not of immediate scientific concern. While most people were curious to hear about sex in zero gravity, there would be no immediate benefit from the experiment, he said.

Agence France-Presse

NATIONAL POST, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2000

THE TORONTO STAR Tuesday, April 18, 2000

Sighting: Area 51 images on the Web

Satellite captures photos of secret U.S. test base

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — The truth is out there — on the Web.

Photos of Area 51, the super-secret U.S. Air Force test site in Nevada that has long tantalized UFO and conspiracy buffs and fans of *The X-Files* TV series, are being posted on the Internet.

"This is the first glimpse into the most secret training and testing facility for the air force," said John Hoffman, president of Aerial Images Inc. of Raleigh.

The company had planned to post five images of the site, divided into four frames each, in collaboration with Microsoft,

Kodak, Digital Equipment Corp., Autometric Inc. and the Russian agency Sovinform-sputnik.

Aerial Images, at www.terra-server.com, is offering a link to the Area 51 pages.

The U.S. Air Force only recently acknowledged that Groom Dry Lake Air Force Base even exists. The 21,000-square-kilometre base is 120 kilometres northwest of Las Vegas, in the arid, rugged Nellis Range.

Among UFO aficionados, it has long been known as Area 51, the base's designation on old Nevada test site maps. They believe unidentified flying objects from other worlds are hidden at the base, where their parts are copied for U.S. prototypes.

So what did the satellite see? "There are runways, there are

buildings, there are buses, there are test sites, but there aren't any little green men or super-secret aircraft to be seen," Hoffman said.

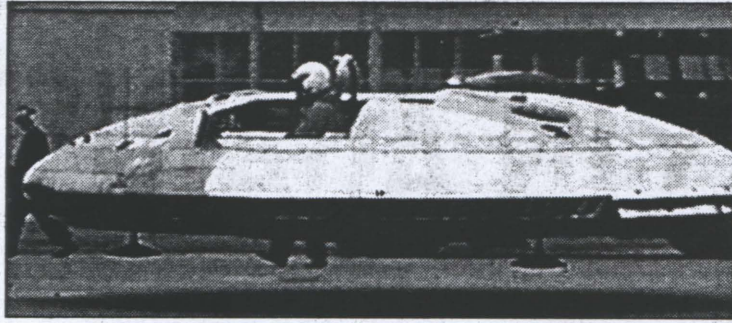
Several government agencies are aware of the images and haven't responded, said Hoffman, 52, who recently retired from the National Guard.

"I've had no feedback from anybody that indicates anybody gives a hoot," he said.

An air force spokesperson would not comment yesterday on any security concerns.

Walter Andrus Jr., international director of the Mutual UFO Network, seemed to have a hard time believing the object of so much secrecy is available on the Web.

"We have other photos taken from the ground and from the air, but they aren't this current," he said.



An Avrocar test flight in Malton, circa 1958. Two models of the quirky flying cars are in the U.S.

Avrocar 'part of our history lost to U.S.'

BY JONATHON GATEHOUSE

Bill Zuk wants to bring Canada's flying saucer back home.

The 52-year-old Winnipeg author and aircraft buff has started a campaign to reclaim a curious and little-known piece of the country's aviation history: a top-secret circular jet plane built by Avro Canada in the late 1950s.

Only two Avrocars were built. Both now reside in American museums, neglected and unloved. Mr. Zuk wants to change that.

"Very little of Avro Canada has been preserved," he said yesterday. "They're important historical objects." The operational "proof of concept" vehicles, part of Project Y — an ultra-classified U.S. military effort to create a new type of supersonic fighter — were constructed in Malton in 1958 and 1959. Designed by John Frost, a British-born engineer who helped create Canada's CF-100 jet fighter, the futuristic silver metal discs were supposed to be the first generation of planes capable of making a vertical takeoff and landing.

When the U.S. Air Force and Army pulled the plug on the project in December, 1961, after disappointing test results — the planes were deemed dangerously unstable and never flew higher than three metres — the flying cars were shipped to the United States. Avro Canada, which had been mortally wounded by the Canadian government's decision to cancel development of the Arrow fighter jet almost three years earlier, closed its doors within months.

"[The Avrocar] was as much a Canadian project as an American one," said Mr. Zuk, who will be publishing a book on the top-secret program later this year. "Almost all of the work was done in Canada."

One of the saucers has been sitting, partially assembled, in a dusty warehouse at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., since 1966. Efforts to have it returned to Canada in the mid-1980s were rebuffed and the museum now apparently plans to put it on display when a new building is completed.

The other, lesser-known, Avrocar is perched upon a concrete pylon outside the U.S. Army Transportation Museum in Fort Eustice, Va. Open to the elements since 1979, it is reportedly in poor shape, and Mr. Zuk said staff at the museum are keen to dump what has become an eyesore and a magnet for the undesirable UFO crowd.

"It's a museum that's largely run by volunteers. They just can't undertake the amount of time, money and effort to keep it up," said Mr. Zuk. "The idea that Canada would be willing to take it on and possibly restore it, really makes sense to them."

Calls to the U.S. Army museum yesterday were bounced up the chain of command to an official spokesperson in Washington. Messages asking for information on the status of the flying saucer were not returned.

Several Canadian aerospace repositories have expressed interest in acquiring the Avrocar. Howard Muchnick, the president of the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum in Mount Hope, Ont., said he has written to Sheila Copps, the Heritage Minister, expressing support for Mr. Zuk's campaign. Christina Lucas of the National Air Museum in Ottawa said her facility would also leap at the chance to own the faux-space ship. Small-scale models of the Avrocar will be part of the museum's "Retrospective on the Future" exhibit opening this June.

Jacques Lefebvre, a spokesman for Ms. Copps, said the minister has asked her department to look into the matter. "Before we can speak about it, we need a bit more information," he said.

But at least one of Ms. Copps' Liberal colleagues is already on

board. John Harvard has sent a letter to the heritage minister asking for her support in the matter.

"It's part of our history lost to the U.S. and I want to get it back," Mr. Harvard said.

National Post

NATIONAL POST, THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 2000

A snowball's chance in hell turns out to be pretty good

BY MARGARET MUNRO

Snowballs, it turns out, do stand a chance in hell.

According to physicists at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory near San Francisco, frozen water will not melt under the right type of hellish conditions.

Writing in the March edition of the American Institute of Physics journal, the *Physical Review Letters*, Eric Schwegler and his colleagues say water — and snow-

balls — would stay frozen at temperatures of up to 320C when subjected to extreme pressures like those that might be encountered at the centre of Earth — and, presumably, in the mythical underworld.

Many of the unique and unusual properties of liquid water are due to the ability of water molecules to form hydrogen bonds, which in turn causes the oxygen atoms to be arranged in a three-dimensional diamond-like network.

Under extreme pressure the properties of water can change drastically, they report in an article complete with illustrations to show what happens. At a pressure of 10 gigapascals (10,000 at-

mospheres) they say the hydrogen bonds and oxygen network would be substantially altered so that each water molecule is surrounded by 12.9 other molecules, and make ice much less likely to melt. Water molecules common to Earth's surface have 4.5 molecular neighbours.

Although water ice melts at 0C under earthly conditions, at a pressure of 10 gigapascals the temperature would have to be more than 320C to reduce a snowball to a puddle, according to their computer simulations.

National Post

the companies promise almost all can be seen with binoculars or telescopes. Purchases come with maps that identify the named stars' positions in the heavens.

Members of the International Astronomical Union say no astronomer is going to acknowledge these names when charting or analyzing starlight.

The union, made up of professional astronomers, is responsible for naming celestial bodies and the rules are strict: Virtually no stars are given names any more; there are too many. When new stars are discovered, they are given numbers that note only their celestial co-ordinates.

The Boston Globe.

Star-naming business angers astronomers

BY BETH DALEY

Trillions of kilometres away in the Cancer constellation, Krystal Fransen's namesake radiates.

Her boyfriend paid the Name a Star company \$50 (US) last month to change the name of star number 098139 to "Krystal." But Fransen's and thousands of others' places in celestial immortality are being threatened.

The International Astronomical Union says only its organization is allowed to name anything in the sky, and the star-naming business is a scam real astronomers refuse to recognize. Buy-a-star companies keep popping up on the Web, raising suspicions that certain star names are being sold twice.

Meanwhile, the star-namers have turned on themselves. The biggest firm, International Star Registry, has filed suit in Federal Court in Illinois against Name a Star, saying the company was using its registered name to sell star names on its Web site.

"It's a fight over who has the right to dupe the public," said Dennis di Cicco, associate editor for *Sky & Telescope* magazine in Cambridge, Mass.

Almost none of the named stars are visible to the naked eye, but

ASTRONOMY

Star of Bethlehem was real, says astronomer

STILL EXISTS, BOOK ARGUES

BY JONATHAN PETRE

The biblical star of Bethlehem that guided the three wise men to the scene of Christ's birth was a real star that can be seen to this day, a leading astronomer claims in a new book.

Dismissing traditional theories that the celestial object could have been the planet Venus or Halley's Comet, Mark Kidger says the most likely candidate is a star with the poetic name of DO Aquilae. In

his book *The Star of Bethlehem: an Astronomer's View* he argues the star, a nova, was probably the object that Chinese astronomers recorded shining with unusual intensity in the east for 70 days in 5 BC, the year in which many scholars believe Christ was born.

His theory will be welcomed by Christians who believe that many Bible stories have a scientific basis. But it will split scientists, who have been divided over the issue for centuries.

Dr. Robert Massey, an astronomer at the Royal Observatory, in Greenwich, England, said it was the first time he had heard of a

specific star being identified as the star of Bethlehem.

"This is a very neat idea, and I like it," he said. "It certainly deserves to be researched further."

If it was a very bright nova — stars that flare up suddenly to many times their normal brilliance as they suddenly burn off their energy — it would have been obvious to the naked eye.

"If it appeared in the sky today, my phone would definitely be ringing," he said.

But Dr. David Hughes of England's Sheffield University said: "I think Dr. Kidger is barking up the wrong tree. I think that the planet

Jupiter could have been the object that inspired the Magi, who were astrologers as well as astronomers. The stars don't move, planets do."

Kidger, a British astrophysicist working at one of the world's leading observatories in Spain, argues in *The Star of Bethlehem* that the appearance of the nova would have been particularly significant to the Magi because it occurred as part of a series of strange events in the skies.

The story of the star of Bethlehem derives mainly from the Gospel of St. Matthew, which describes how the wise men saw a star in the eastern sky and followed it until they came to Bethlehem where they found the baby Jesus.

The story has long been a source of argument among scientists, who have found it impossible to

agree on an astronomical event that fits the description of "a star in the East" that moved as the Magi travelled.

According to Kidger, the Chinese who observed the nova in 5 BC, blazing between the constellations Capricornus and Aquila, recorded it as very bright.

"On the first sighting of the nova, the Magi would have known their wait was at an end," he writes. "The conjunctions had told them to await news from Judea and, possibly, to expect the imminent birth of the Messiah."

"The occultations told them that the new king was indeed the Jewish Messiah. The nova now told them that the royal birth had finally happened. The final piece of the puzzle was in place, and the Magi would only have had to act."

The Sunday Telegraph

ET CETERA: CLOUDS

NATIONAL POST, MONDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1999 •

Residents of Guelph, Ont., are still talking about a mysterious cloud that settled over part of their town last week. The cloud was of an unknown origin and made several people ill. Those who came into contact with it say it smelled like ammonia or chlorine. Provincial authorities are investigating the origin of the cloud. • According to the Old Testament, there were several occasions when God took the form of a cloud while speaking with the Israelites. And during their march out of Egypt, at times Moses and his companions were shown the correct path by a divine cloud. • Among the deities mentioned in the the Vedic epics of ancient India is Parjanya, god of rain clouds. As Parjanya made his way across the sky riding in his magic cart, his habit was to hurl bags of rain toward the Earth. Appropriately, Parjanya was the son of Dyaus, the god of the sky. • Aristophanes, a classical Greek playwright, wrote a comedy called *The Clouds* that took shots at some of Greece's famous philosophers, including Socrates. The title refers to Aristophanes' contention that Socrates and others like him who dedicated their life to thought alone had lost their heads in the clouds. *Neil Maghami, National Post*



NATIONAL POST, TUESDAY, JULY 27, 1999

POLICE END UNIDENTIFIED CREATURE'S REIGN OF TERROR

AMMAN • An unidentified creature which terrorized the people and poultry of the northern Jordanian city of Mafraq for a month was captured Sunday night by police, officials said yesterday. "Townfolk first sighted the small cat-like animal a month ago, but then it started appearing on a nightly basis, devouring dozens of hens and pigeons," said an official from Mafraq governorate. The small-headed creature with disproportionately large eyes, teeth and tail was hunted down after townfolk lodged complaints that the animal was prowling Mafraq's residential quarters by night. The official speculated that the animal could have been drawn to Mafraq, which lies on the edge of the desert 100 kilometres north of Amman, by this year's drought. The animal, nicknamed Al-Massara, has been handed to local vets to determine its species, but it was not known if it was the only such creature at large in the town.

NATIONAL POST, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1999 •

OBJECT FALLS TO EARTH IN AUSTRALIA AND SINKS BENEATH MUD

SYDNEY • Is it a UFO, space junk, a meteorite or simply frozen sewage? Whatever it turns out to be, a mysterious flying object landed in an Australian country dam, leaving a large crater before sinking beneath the mud. Police erected a one-mile "no-go" zone around the dam as curious locals and scores of reporters descended on the town of Guyra, 400 kilometres north of Sydney. "At this stage, we don't really know what the object is," said a police spokesman at Guyra. "It has made a significant depression in the floor of the dam." The object, which landed sometime between Monday and Wednesday, left a 15-metre-long and six-metre-wide crater. The object hit the dam at about a 45-degree angle and skidded before sinking. Police divers were on their way to Guyra to inspect the dam while air and water tests were being conducted. A worker discovered the crater by accident when he arrived at the dam to carry out routine maintenance.