

UFOCAN & MSU

On May 16th, 1981, John Musgrave and David Haisell came to Winnipeg to chew the fat about UFO's with several associates and myself. Actually, they primarily came to attend the western half of the first Project UFOCAN meeting, for which Dave is chairman. It looks as if the foundations for PICUR (Provisional International Committee for UFO Research) are well set, and that the task of sorting and compiling UFO data is off to a good start.

But, there are problems to be considered by the international members. At the forefront is, of course, the financial problem. To put UFO data on disk for easy retrieval and storing will be relatively expensive, since the analyses to be done would require selective hard-copy printouts. Most ufologists are "poor", and a personal computer is necessary but unaffordable for their data analyses. Who will pay for computer time, and how much? Other expenses, such as report publications and mailing costs need to be considered as well.

But that's on an international scale. At the local level, it will be enough to convert the cases on file into machine-readable format, similar to the UFOCAT coding. Fortunately, I have already datacoded about 300 of my cases, but have recently acquired listings and files from several sources, including Grant Cameron and Norman Beattie. These will take a considerable time to decipher and add to my files.

John Musgrave's files, for another example, are truly voluminous. Not only did he remark that his literature collection was about three times the size of my own, his files are from across Canada, not just a single Province. and are in several filing cabinets. The conversion of his files alone would constitute a mammoth undertaking; John is just one of a large number of ufologists with huge collections. The point of PICUR, of course, is to act as a "central repository" for UFO data. The practical problems dictate that only current cases will be coded and added to the files as a test, then older cases could be added at a later date.

At the Manitoba Conference on Ufology, held in the afternoon of the 16th, discussions centered more on the current status of UFO research, and where ufologists appear to be heading. Present were: Richard Bochonko, Ian Cameron, John Musgrave, Richard Gordon, Martin Clutton-Brock, Harold Sawatsky, Wally Nilsson, Vladimir Simosko, Guy Westcott, Daveid Haisell and myself. No new ground was broken at the meeting, although it was observed that ufologists seem to be more compilers of data catalogs than actual "scientists", due to the nature of the information they handle.

Dave Haisell mentioned that Ray Stanford has abandoned Project Starlight International after he finally obtained nocturnal light spectra but could not find anyone to interpret the data. Richard Bochonko, an astronomer, said that he would look at the spectra if they were given to him. Perhaps Stanford's efforts were not in vain.

It seemed the general consensus was that the study of nocturnal lights adds little to the bulk of UFO knowledge. They are, in the strictest sense, only reports of lights in the night sky. Allan Hendry, in his UFO Handbook, made possibly the most advanced observation in ufology in a few years, when he stated that the assumption that nocturnal lights are distant sightings of close-encounter-type objects is not valid. That is, a bobbing red light is not necessarily a disc-shaped craft at a distance.

The two types of UFO's could be entirely separate phenomena, with different mechanisms and principles.

However, there appears to be a relationship between flaps of nocturnal light sightings and close encounters. An example of this is the "Charlie Redstar" flap of 1975-76 in Carman, Manitoba. Estimates by Grant Cameron place the number of "Charlie Redstar" sightings in the hundreds, though most of these were distant nocturnal lights and LATERS ("lights-at-the-end-of-the-road"). Despite this, there was a small percentage of close encounters associated with the flap. Therefore, although the value of a single nocturnal light sighting is minimal, nocturnal light flaps may be indicators of "actual" UFO activity.

I seem to recall that after Hynek had been in Winnipeg in 1976, several academics at the U of M decided to get together and study UFO's, but only the "good" ones with relatively hard evidence. No nocturnal lights at all. This was partly related to the volume of nocturnal light sightings; one has only so much time to devote to UFO's at all, so you might as well concentrate on the "good" cases.

But if UFO's represent more of a psychological or sociological phenomenon, then the ignoring of nocturnal light cases is essentially throwing out the bulk of valuable research data.

Now, then, if a small percentage of nocturnal lights are distant "craft", our problem gets rather complicated...

Live! And in Color!

An innocent telephone call at work can really start things jumping. I try to keep a low profile, but occasionally they find me. When I sent out a PR sheet asking the media to notify me of UFO reports, I was careful to omit any phone number, giving only an impersonal mailing address. After having people call me at all hours about their sighting of Venus, an unlisted number appeared to be best.

A month went by, and I only heard from a Brandon radio station, and saw one notice in a newspaper from Baldur, Manitoba. CKND-TV, however, did what most of the media did, and placed my letter in their "miscellaneous" file, waiting for a slow news day. June 11, 1981, came along, and they decided to contact UFOROM. Rather than wait for the mail, they contacted the Planetarium. Ed Barker then gave them my work number, something I explicitly told him never to do. CKND called and wanted to interview me "in two hours", at work. Vladimir vetoed the idea, so I called them back and told them I'd meet them at my place. (Incidentally, if you ever have a spare moment, call your wife and tell her that a TV film crew will be at her door in an hour and a half. If your house is even the slightest bit untidy, it'll be a real scream.)

Bill Hutchinson and his sidekick cameraman came by and set up in my basement. Bill interviewed me in front of my books, and asked me only two questions: "Is Manitoba a good place for UFO sightings?" and "Are there many hoaxes?" Having a bad case of foot-in-mouth disease, I replied, "No, UFO is not a good place for Manitoba sightings." The rest of the interview went much better, although I had to be on my guard as I discussed the problem of hoaxes and liars. Knowing how they could edit and put everything totally out of context, I hoped it wouldn't sound too bad.

After the interview, they needed "visuals", so they scattered books across my desk and instructed me to "pretend" I was doing UFO research. Resisting an urge to moon the camera, I started writing up a case I was working on, entering codings on a log sheet with the camera looking over my shoulder. I even answered a non-ringing telephone when they asked me to. My ufological ethics prevented me from extending the travesty beyond that, but they got their visuals.

Bill noticed a book on Ogopogo on my shelf, and asked why it was there. I explained my fortean interest, and told him some of the stories about Manipogo. By luck, I had an old newsclipping and the Manipogo photo on my desk to show him. He and his companion were quite interested to see that Dick Vincent (who works for CKND) was directly involved with the Manipogo photo incident. Vincent had refused to discuss the sighting with me when I last tried a year or so ago, but I suggested they could talk to him for some info.

I showed them the report of the CKY "Charlie Redstar" film taken by Alan Kerr, another CKND employee, who has apparently now left that station as he wished to go back to University.

Hutchinson was impressed enough to suggest doing a feature news story some time in the future, but it was strictly "don't-call-us-we'll-call-you". They were heading off to the Planetarium to film the UFO map and talk to Ed Barker. Ed had told them he was associated with Hynek, but I told them how I was a CUFOS investigator and associate, and even flashed my ID card. I knew that thing would come in handy some day.

I rambled on about Project UFOCAN, PICUR and all sorts of current UFO research, but I saw that it was no good. They had become saturated with UFO lore and were getting prepared to do an interview with some politician, already glazing over in readiness.

Episodes like mine are common for ufologists. Slow news days, combined with the slightest provocation, provide good human interest fillers for newscasts. And, with a 90-minute newscast, CKND has a lot to fill. Thank goodness there aren't any current cases for the media to attack. Because of their nature, media will often interview witnesses in a hurry, consult the wrong experts and latch on to the totally wrong phrase for attention. And if there's a way to get a chuckle out of a story, they will strain to find it at any cost. UFO's fit their criteria quite nicely, so it is a favorite subject of news editors. Therefore, the media must be handled with kid gloves; the most useful tool for the UFO researcher is the media, since they often receive valuable UFO data long in advance of UFO organizations.

The end result of my latest escapade was the best interview I've had to date. I sounded official and sincere in my efforts, and the newscaster made no effort to ridicule the story whatsoever. Must be new at his job.

Book Review

Genesis
by W.A. Harbinson
Corgi Books, 1981

At one time in ufology, the Cover-Up Theory was given little concern, and often rejected outright without qualifications. It was common to observe that since the Government is often blatantly incompetent, it was ludicrous to suggest that they could successfully cover-up a secret such as UFO's.

The military, on the other hand, are expert at closed-mouth attitudes, so a nagging doubt existed in many people's minds. But then Keel and Vallee (and others) came forth with their ideas of the "cosmic choreographer" and

and manipulation theory, requiring a superintelligent entity secretly toying with mankind.

Genesis is over 600 pages long, including notes and bibliography, and is often found in a large SF display. Harbinson has a genius named Wilson invent airships in the 1890's, and develop them into flying saucers using the resources of various governments, mostly the Germans. Some ufologists get fed up with cover-ups and closed-mouth experts and set out to uncover the truth before they are transformed into zombies by the ruthless inventor. Genesis is a paranoid chase that covers the globe in a deeply-researched tale that is, unfortunately, often plausible, given the facts. However, for some reason, the characters engage in totally unbelievable dialogue, and lust after female UFO witnesses.

The character named Stanford, for example, continually gets erections every time he interviews a girl whose dress is swirled by the wind, described in detail. The result is a poorly-written version of a good story, dragged out too long for its own good. It's too bad, considering Harbinson appears to have researched the history of UFO's a great deal.

Basic UFO Studies

In October, if all goes well, I will be teaching a course on UFO's at the University of Manitoba for their Department of Continuing Education. Although the class is scheduled to run one evening a week for ten weeks, there must be a minimum of ten students registered before it can be held. The cost is \$55, in my opinion a large fee for such a course, but I could not persuade the Department to lower the amount. But then again, you have to pay for quality; look who you'd be getting as an instructor.

The course will cover the history of UFO's, the theories, basic concepts, government involvement, groups, investigation techniques and hopefully some actual case investigations. It is designed to give the average person a better-than-average knowledge of the subject, so they can interpret new developments correctly. The development of critical attitudes can also help the student in the study of other fields.

Also included will be a brief consideration of the role of science fiction in the history of UFO's, as the two areas have had a close association over the years.

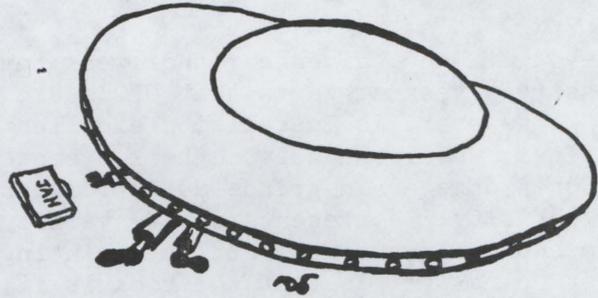
Under the Dome

Some time this summer, the Lockhart Planetarium at the University of Manitoba will present a UFO show written and designed by several members of UFOROM, myself among them. The show will use many slides and special effects, and will discuss misinterpretations, unknowns, classic cases, local cases, SETI and UFO theories. I'm crossing my fingers for this one.

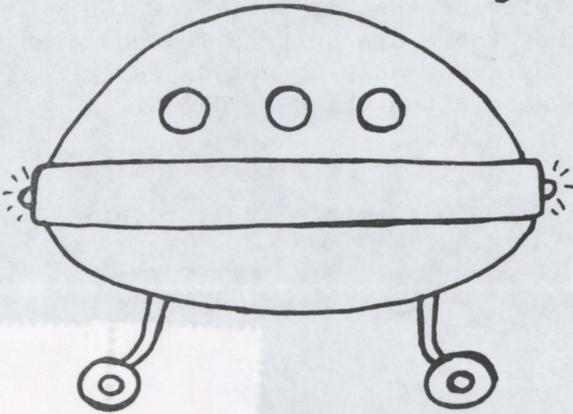
"Watch who you're calling a 'Moo', Earthling!"



At right: Dr. H. demonstrating a Close Encounter of the Closest Kind.

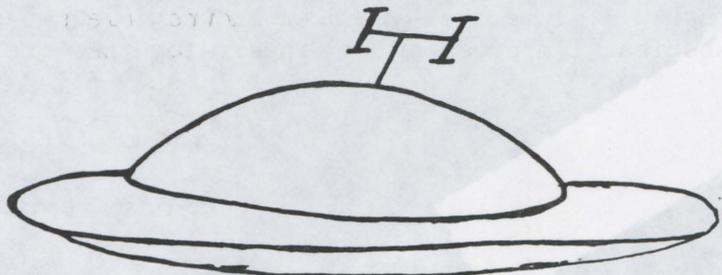


BEEP BOOP BIP BOP BEEP



"Zog Calling Mars! Zog Calling Mars!
I am continuing to monitor the Earthlings' broadcasts. I believe that their main religious leaders are named Laverne and Shirley..."

Above: Nothing in particular.



Ch.

More Book Reviews

Creatures From UFO's
by Daniel Cohen
Dodd, Mead & Co., 1978

Unidentified Flying Objects
by Jim Collins
Raintree Children's Books, 1977

Monsters From Outer Space?
by William Wise
G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1978

When my daughter dragged me into the children's section of the public library, I was surprised to see an assortment of children's UFOlit on the shelves. Their quality, unfortunately, varies as much as "grown-up" UFOlit. Of the three reviewed, it is difficult to select one as the "best" of the lot. Collins does a relatively good job of presenting cases, and his book is the most visually attractive of the bunch. His writing style, however, is a bit too sensational and uncritical, and is far too pro for his own good. Wise, on

the other hand, gives a rather weak text, that leans heavily to the right, and conservatively suggests that UFO's are either hoaxes or misinterpretations. His book, however, is loaded with excellent original illustrations by Richard Cuffari, which enhance the book's contents to a passable level.

Cohen once again grinds out a fortean-related book with his usual brand of objectivity. He presents a wide variety of entity cases, giving equal space to pro and con arguments, but not pointing out the flaws in either argument. A disturbing fact is that the book is filled with photos from science fiction movies (Invaders From Mars; Close Encounters) and TV series (Star Trek) which for the most part have absolutely nothing to do with the text.

For a child to get information at his or her level about UFO's, it would be advisable to get all three books for an overall view of the subject, from the three different approaches. It is interesting that there are quite a few children's UFO books listed in Books in Print, so that kids are now able to get an early introduction to the subject. What will the next generation think of UFO's?

That's all for this issue. Special thanks to Marg Boyle for tactlessly pointing out grammatical errors.

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