

SAT - SUN

March 5-6, 1983

St. Louis Globe-Democrat 17A

UFO specialist could use little green dollars

2616 EVANSTON, Ill. (AP) — Hard times have hit Dr. J. Allen Hynek, an astronomer and once the nation's leading UFO guru, who's finding the only close encounters he's facing these days are with his pocket-book.

Hynek, who was scientific adviser to the movie "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," says he receives 80 reports of unidentified flying object sightings each month but, he doesn't have enough money to look into them.

Hynek, who founded the Center for UFO Studies in north suburban Evanston and coined the term "close encounter," relies on an annual budget of \$40,000 collected from the center's 2,000 members around the world.

But it's far from enough. Two years ago, the 72-year professor emeritus at Northwestern University had to close his office and move his documents into his home. Last year he was forced to disconnect a toll-free UFO hotline number.

Yet the phone calls still come in — even from the White House.

A few weeks ago a Michigan City, Ind., man and his sons reported they came across three aliens with large heads who were whisked away into the clouds when they were spotted.

The man called the White House to report his sighting. The White House, in turn, checked the national index under 'UFOs' and called Hynek.

Hynek says that report may have had its origins in an over-active imagination, but he can weed out those with a tendency to exaggerate.

In fact, he says "only 5 percent of the 70,000 reports in our files are 'close encounters of the third kind' (actual encounters with alien beings)."

Still, Hynek, who has never seen a UFO himself, says he needs money to translate reports coming in from Finland, Japan and Portugal that lie unread on his desk.

"Scientists will say to me, 'Where's your hard evidence?' I say if we had the hard cash, it would not be difficult to get the hard evidence. We could respond to UFO sightings immediately, we could interview witnesses scientifically."

Hynek has asked for grants from agencies such as NASA, but no luck. About 100 volunteers work part-time on a shoestring budget.

"We never would have gone to the moon if it were left to people who could only work on weekends and had to work at other jobs, so how can we expect to solve the UFO mystery with no money and no full-time commitment?"