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Astronomer convinced about UFOs

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By Peter Reich
The Phoenix Gazette

After 36 years of study, astronomer Dr. J. Allen Hynek is convinced Unidentified Flying Objects are not just "figments of the imagination."

But exactly what they are remains a mystery.

So Hynek plans to establish an international research facility in Phoenix to more closely scrutinize the elusive phenomenon.

He has called a news conference Wednesday at the Phoenix Press Club to tell about it.

Until then, he's keeping close-mouthed about the details.

Hynek is no run-of-the-mill UFO buff.

He's former chairman of the astronomy department at Northwestern University, past secretary of the American Astronomical Society, and head of the Center for UFO Studies in Evanston, Ill.

He's the author of several books on flying saucers, including "The UFO Experience," and from 1948 to 1969 worked on the Air Force's Project Blue Book, a 23-year-long official probe of UFOs.

Many consider him one of the top UFO authorities in the world.

"UFO reports continue to come in from all over the globe," Hynek noted in a telephone interview.

"In many cases, they involve highly responsible people, and the pattern of the reports is essentially the same, no matter where they originate.

"In our catalog (at the Center for UFO Studies), we have over 80,000 reported sightings from well over a hundred countries."

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UFOs

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All of this is pretty good evidence, he believes, that UFOs are "not just figments of the imagination."

Incidentally, Hynek has yet to see his first UFO.

"I've never had a close encounter," he said. "In fact, I began as a complete skeptic, back in the 1940s.

"But as time went on, I became more and more convinced there's something out there that deserves serious study."

No, he does not believe flying saucers necessarily are piloted by little green men from other galaxies.

"Belief in UFOs in no way restricts you to the 'little green men' theory," he said.

1 So what does Hynek think UFOs are — and where do they come from?

He declined to say.

"As I used to tell my students, 'If you think you have the answer in advance, you're not doing real research, are you?'" he said.

Hynek has company in thinking UFOs deserve serious attention.

"The Soviets have started a government-funded commission to investigate UFOs," he said.

"It's headed by one of their cosmonauts, Pavel Popovich."

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