

UFO expert seeks funding

by Howard Witt
Chicago Tribune

34104

AMERICAN ALASKA TIMES 25 AUG. '84

Chicago — Unearthing research money in the Chicago area for the study of unidentified flying objects, J. Allen Hynek has found, is about as easy as getting water from a lunar rock.

So the nation's premier UFO scientist (he's the nation's only UFO scientist) is moving his research facilities to Arizona, where funds seem to flow more freely.

"People are more open-minded in Arizona," Hynek, 74, said in a telephone interview from his new Center for UFO Studies near Scottsdale, which, like his old Center for UFO Studies in north suburban Evanston, is a few rooms in a private home.

"There's more of a willingness to accept new ideas out here than in Chicago, which is a hotbed of inertia," Hynek said.

In addition to the use of someone's home — the owner wants to remain anonymous — the Northwestern University professor emeritus says he has lined up \$2 million in research donations from people in Arizona.

The man who coined the term "close encounter of the third kind" and served as scientific adviser for the blockbuster film of the same name has spent the latter half of his academic career researching UFOs.

It is a curiosity that was spawned in 1948, when the Air Force asked him to sort through a growing number of postwar UFO sightings, most of which Hynek quickly deduced were aircraft or natural atmospheric reflections.

It was the few sightings he couldn't explain that intrigued him. Another 80,000 or so he has since accumulated continue to fuel his interest.

On the UFO center's old \$40,000 annual budget, collected from 2,000 die-hard members, "we could only manage to keep the pot simmering on the back burner," Hynek said. "Now, in Arizona, we hope to do much more."

At the moment, Hynek is investigating a case in New York, where last year and again this spring 900 people independently and in geographically diverse locations reported seeing "a boomerang shape of light as large as a football field."

He is also investigating sightings in Italy.