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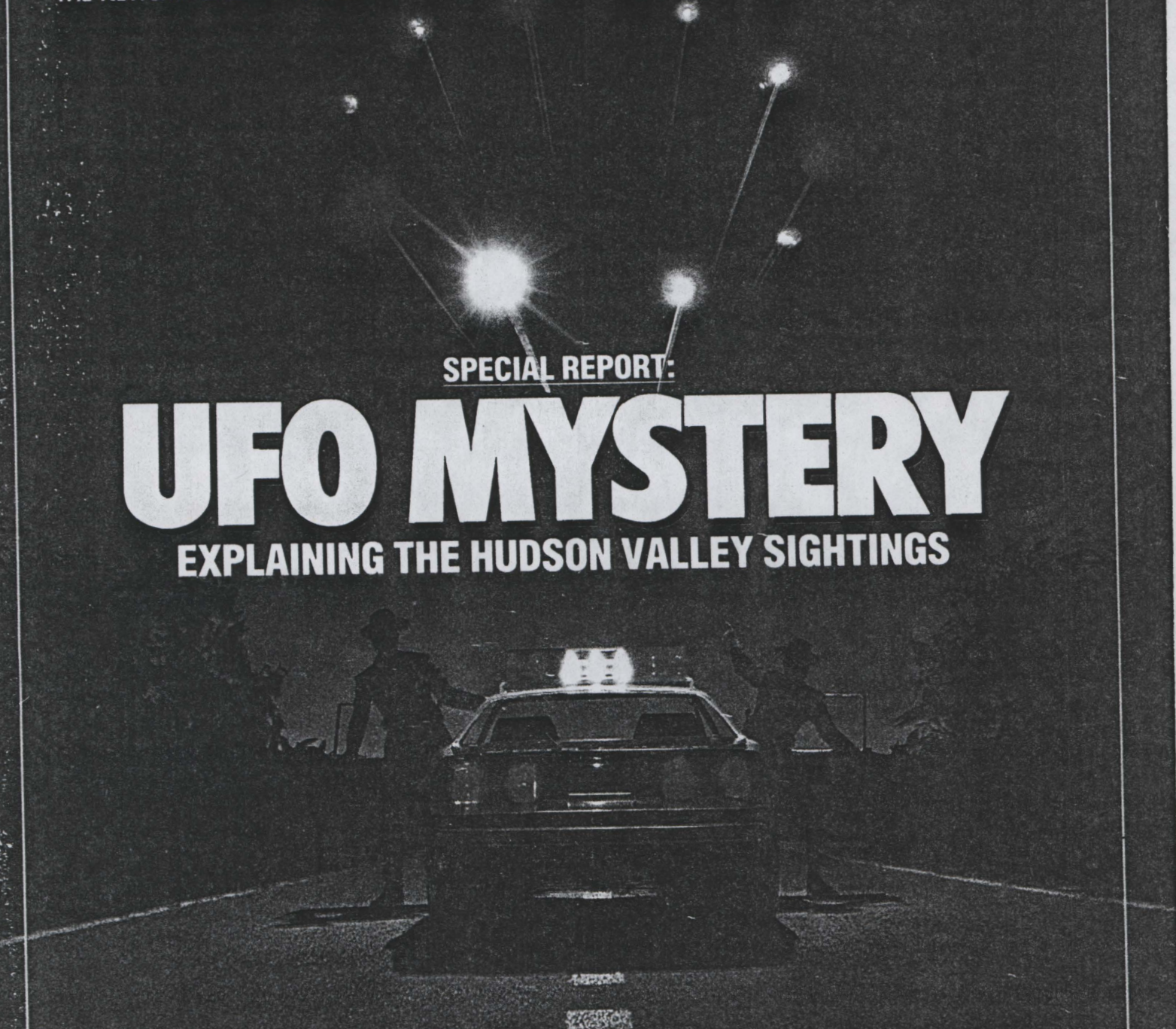
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SPECIAL REPORT:

UFO MYSTERY

EXPLAINING THE HUDSON VALLEY SIGHTINGS



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SPECIAL REPORT

THE GREAT HUDSON VALLEY UFO MYSTERY

As saucer buffs hold a mass meeting, pilots provide the answer

Brewster, New York, had never seen anything like it. Late in August hundreds of people invaded the Hudson River Valley town 40 miles north of New York City and jammed into the Henry H. Wells Middle School. Swelling the crowd were reporters from wire services, small-town weeklies, and New York City's major newspapers, as well as television camera crews. The occasion was a twelve-hour conference on unidentified flying objects, and it drew several of America's leading UFOlogists, including the dean of them all: J. Allen Hynek, retired chairman of the astronomy department at Northwestern University, technical adviser to the movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, and one of the few scientists who take UFO reports seriously.

But why Brewster? Since early in 1983, thousands of people in

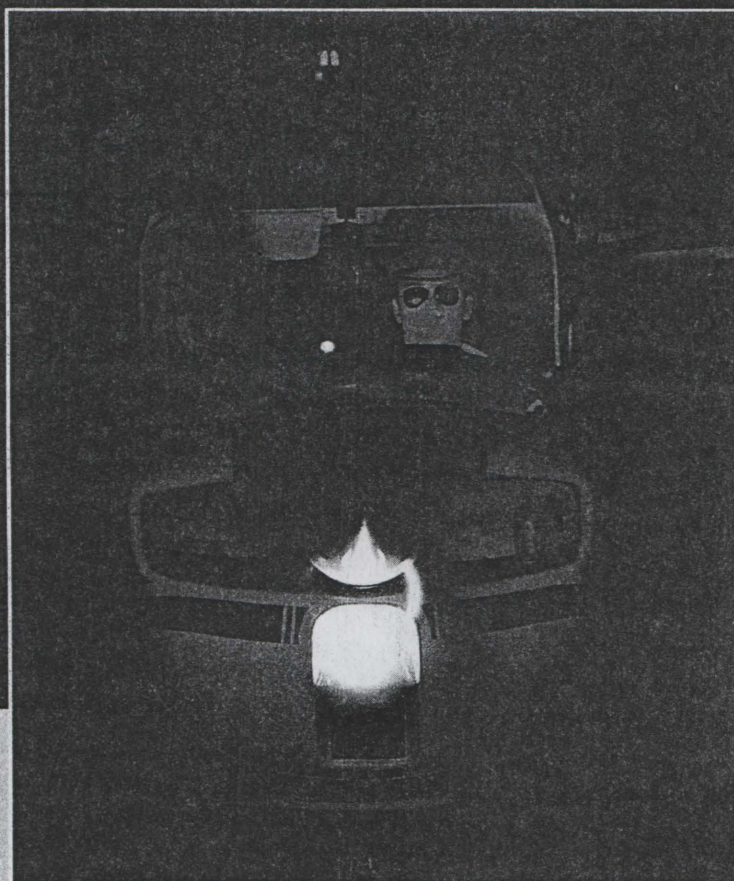
the surrounding regions of New York state and nearby western Connecticut have reported—and a few have photographed—some startling sights in the night skies. Beyond any doubt, most of the witnesses have seen *something*, and many are convinced that what they saw was unearthly, in fact extraterrestrial. Local newspapers have contributed to the excitement. One proclaimed "We Are Not Alone"; another headlined "These Things Are Real." A UFO telephone hotline, set up early this summer by attorney and UFO buff Peter Gersten, had received more than 600 calls by mid-September. Since the summer of 1983, four issues of the bi-monthly *International UFO Reporter*, a publication of Hynek's Center for UFO Studies in Evanston, Illinois, have featured long, front page stories about a mysterious "boomerang-shaped UFO" making repeated visits to the skies of New York. Even before the Brewster meeting (which Gersten organized), it was evident that the Hudson Valley sightings were among the most numerous and well corroborated since Americans in large numbers began reporting flying saucers in 1947.

Reported by Glenn Garelik

We are not alone: UFO expert details area sightings

UFO talk is flying again
Conferees describe what they say they saw

By WARD POORE
BREWSTER, N.Y. (UPI)—In the
midnight hours of a quiet town
in the Hudson Valley, hundreds
of people gathered for a twelve-
hour conference on unidentified
flying objects. The occasion was
a mass meeting of UFO buffs
and experts. The conference was
held at the Henry H. Wells Middle
School in Brewster, N.Y., about
40 miles north of New York City.
The meeting was organized by
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A circular UFO (opposite page), followed by a single light (above), moves slowly across the sky above the Hudson River Valley. Inset: A pilot, illuminated only by cockpit light, demonstrates night flying without navigation lights.

The rumors and excitement reached a climax in the crowded auditorium of the Brewster middle school where, one after another, witnesses took to the

podium to recount their experiences. Most often they reported seeing a huge object, circular or V-shaped, bearing red, green, and white lights, hovering noiselessly or with a slight hum, performing abrupt maneuvers, then suddenly disappearing.

One of the more dramatic accounts came from Monique O'Driscoll, who told the group that while she was driving home from her mother's house one night, the voices on her CB radio were suddenly drowned out by static and she saw something approaching in the night sky. "I was not afraid of this thing," she said. "It started toward the headlights very slowly, sailing toward me. I started to feel uncomfortable." Nonetheless, she followed the object as it veered away and hovered over a nearby house. "I looked at the belly of this thing. It was a dark grey metal, like the framework of a bridge. After a few minutes it started going away. It was really exciting and I didn't

want it to go away—and then, zip, it was gone."

Eugene Bauer told of a V-shaped object about the size of a 747 jet, with four

lights on each side and one in the middle. It was drifting over some high-tension wires and making a crackling sound. "Maybe it was getting power from the power line," he said. "All the lights turned from red to purple, as if it were trying to say 'Look at us, we're here.' There was not a sound. These things are real, and they are out there. I think the government is covering up and not telling the public what's going on."

Another UFO encounter was described by Michael Faye, a commercial airline pilot, who spotted a strange flying object shortly after he took off from Newark Airport one night in June and was heading north along the Hudson River. It had six or eight lights that went out all at once as he drew near. "It was a moonlit night and I could see," he said, "but it had disappeared."

Descriptions like Faye's were what particularly impressed Hynek. "Here we are in an urban area with highly educated peo-

SPECIAL REPORT

ple," he said. "IBM executives, pilots, naval officers—you don't call this type of person a liar. You'd be subject to a libel action if you did." That theme was echoed by Lieutenant George Lesnick of the New Fairfield, Connecticut, police department, who has been following reports of UFOs for 32 years. "Something has to be going

Loose groupings of planes became tight formations with as little as six inches between wing tips

on here," he said. "These reports are being made by reliable people, not by drunks. I'm definitely a believer."

But many of the local police are not. For two years, they have been responding to UFO reports by reassuring callers, telling them that what they saw were probably lights from small aircraft. In fact, one resourceful state policeman, spotting a UFO one night, chased it until it descended—in the form of several small planes—at the Stormville Airport, a 3,300-foot strip be-

hind an old estate house 15 miles from Brewster. That revelation did not satisfy most UFOlogists. Investigators from the *International UFO Reporter* visited the area and allowed that some of the sightings might indeed have really been small planes, probably flying in formation. But for most of the sightings, especially the giant boomerang, the publication insisted, the "plane formation theory" was "completely untenable."

What particularly impressed the *UFO Reporter* team, and frightened many Hudson Valley residents, was the fact that the UFOs often just hovered, sometimes with a slight hum, sometimes noiselessly. They made abrupt right-angle turns, disappeared and reappeared suddenly in the sky, their lights changing colors. Could any kind of earthly aircraft duplicate those feats? Gersten, for one, does not think so. He claims that government documents he acquired under the Freedom of Information Act provide "overwhelming proof that UFOs do exist. These documents show us that the objects perform in ways that are beyond the range of present-day technological development."

There was another explanation that Gersten, Hynek, and most of those in at-

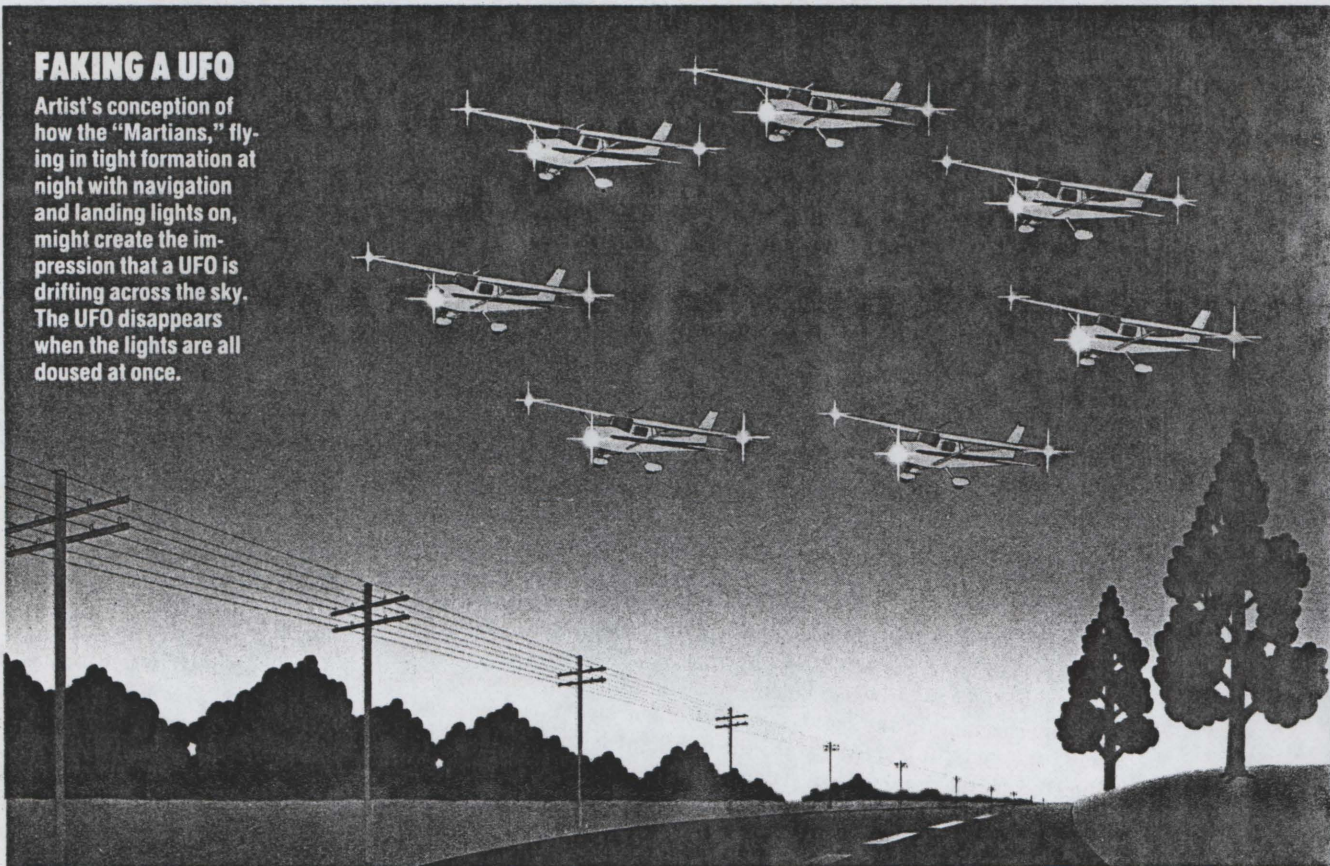
tendance at the Brewster conference seemed unable to accept. It involved one of the groups whose judgment and responsibility Hynek so greatly admires: pilots.

As DISCOVER reporter Glenn Garlik found during extensive interviews in the Hudson Valley region, the area abounds with amateur pilots who fly private planes out of a number of airports, including the strip at Stormville. Several years ago, it seems, a few of the Stormville pilots began practicing formation flying, first in daylight, then, as their skills improved, at night. Before long, other pilots joined them, and what began as loose groupings of planes became tight formations of aircraft with as little as six inches between wing tips. Wasn't this a bit reckless? Perhaps, some pilots say. But by keeping their eyes on the navigation lights (green on the right wing tip, red on the left) of adjacent planes, communicating by radio, and obeying the signals from a lead plane, it was easy for them to coordinate their movements. (Their radio conversations have been overheard by other pilots on the 122.8 and 122.9 megahertz aviation bands.) Also, some pilots point out, should two planes flying close together at the same speed accidentally brush wing tips, the impact would be rather gentle, not particularly dangerous. →

MICHAEL ROWE

FAKING A UFO

Artist's conception of how the "Martians," flying in tight formation at night with navigation and landing lights on, might create the impression that a UFO is drifting across the sky. The UFO disappears when the lights are all doused at once.



SPECIAL REPORT

By early 1983, when the number of planes in the night formations occasionally reached eight or nine, police switchboards in Brewster and surrounding New York communities were jammed with calls from people reporting UFOs. When local newspapers began printing stories about strange sightings and experiences,

"Well, I guess it's got to be a flying saucer," said someone at Stormville. "I don't believe in planes"

and television stations ran tapes of the mysterious lights in the sky, the pilots were incredulous, then amused. If people wanted to believe in UFOs, they decided, why not give them something to talk about? More pilots—and not just from Stormville—joined in, and, according to some, the group began calling themselves

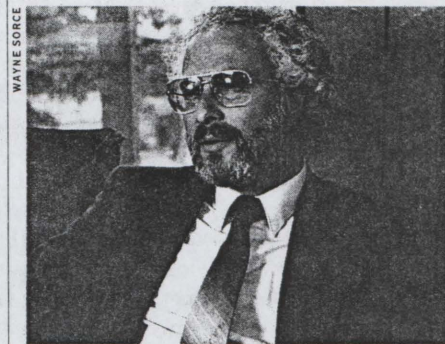
the Martians. People at Stormville began clipping articles about the UFOs, and posting them on the bulletin board at the airport's operations center. Joining in the fun, the airport snack bar began offering "UFO burgers," a \$1.75 concoction of barbecued beef, melted cheese, and "a number of unidentified flying ingredients." In an effort to divert reporters who flocked into the area, the pilots began a "disinformation" campaign, attributing the sightings to "those military folks over at Stewart Air Force Base," or to "some kind of—whaddaya call it—hologram they're working on over at IBM."

Among themselves, the Stormville people made scornful remarks about the UFO sighters. "Hogwash," said one. "They all ought to be in Wingdale [the site of a nearby psychiatric hospital]." "Well, I guess it's got to be a flying saucer," said another. "I don't believe in planes." Indeed, the public reaction seemed to spur them on to even more intricate maneuvers and deceptions.

Flying Cessna 152s and other single-



Astronomer J. Allen Hynek



UFO buff Peter Gersten

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL NEED FOR FLYING SAUCERS

Many people, it seems, weave from their own experience, hopes, fears, and deepest desires a fabric of conviction in UFOs that is so strong it cannot be ripped apart. Even in the face of solid evidence to the contrary, they cling to their faith in the extraterrestrial origins of unidentified flying objects.

According to the last Gallup poll on the subject, in 1978, 57 per cent of adult Americans believed that UFOs were real rather than imagined. When asked if they had ever seen an unidentified flying object, one American in ten said yes.

Psychologists wallow in theories about UFOs. In a little-known 1959 work called *Flying Saucers*, Carl Jung, one of the founders of modern psychoanalysis, proposed that round objects seen in the sky are symbols of the very important archetype of wholeness. Like the Eastern mandala (a circle divided into four or eight parts), he said, the flying saucer represents the order that people long for in times of confusion, perplexity, and threats to the existence of humanity. To Jung and many of his disciples, the UFO was

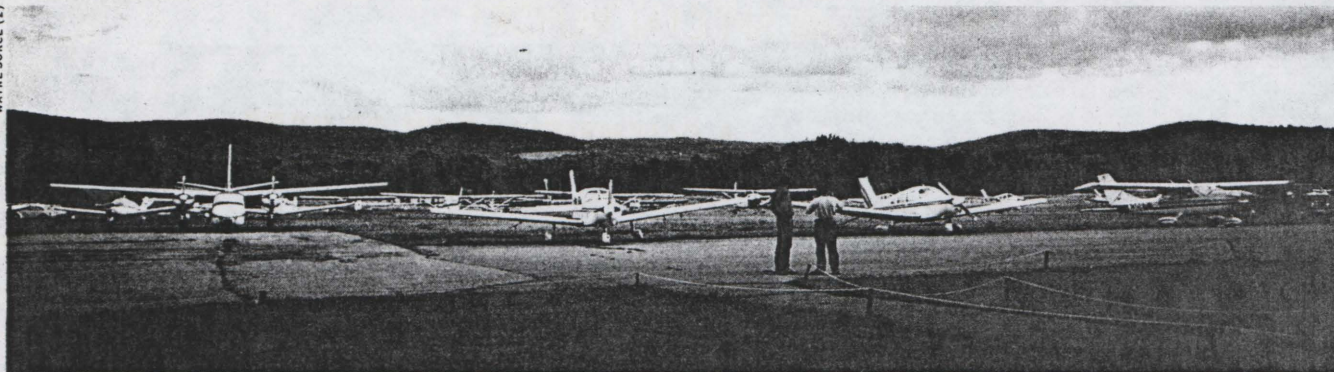
a symbol, offering an illusion of hope that the universe is meaningful, safe, and just.

More recently, a professor of psychology at the University of Tulsa, Warren Jones, suggested other reasons for the belief that extraterrestrial beings visit the earth in flying objects. One group of believers, he says, uses faith in UFOs as a substitute religion: "We find that those who believe really strongly in UFOs were raised in strict fundamentalist backgrounds and have given up their faith. It's a substitute form of reassurance." There is almost always a religious theme to their UFO reports, Jones says, and "the beings they see tend to be all-powerful, all-knowing, benevolent creatures who will protect humanity from our own suicidal tendencies, from nuclear war."

Another, very different, group of people who believe in UFOs, according to Jones, are those completely immersed in science—"scientists run



In Close Encounters of the Third Kind, a giant UFO prepares to land. Inset: aliens lead earthlings onto the craft for a far-out trip. Psychologists note that extraterrestrials are usually described as benign.

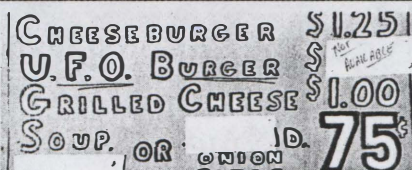


Among the light planes parked at the Stormville Airport are several used in the Martians' night forays. At right: Menu at the airport snack bar includes a sign of the times

engine planes in tight formations, they might all douse their exterior lights at the same time, keeping track of each other's positions by switching on their dim red cockpit lights (which cannot be seen from the ground). This would result in reports about UFOs that suddenly disappeared from the sky. They varied their formations, from crescents and circles to crosses that looked from the ground like diamonds or V's, giving rise to reports about different and sometimes startling UFO shapes.

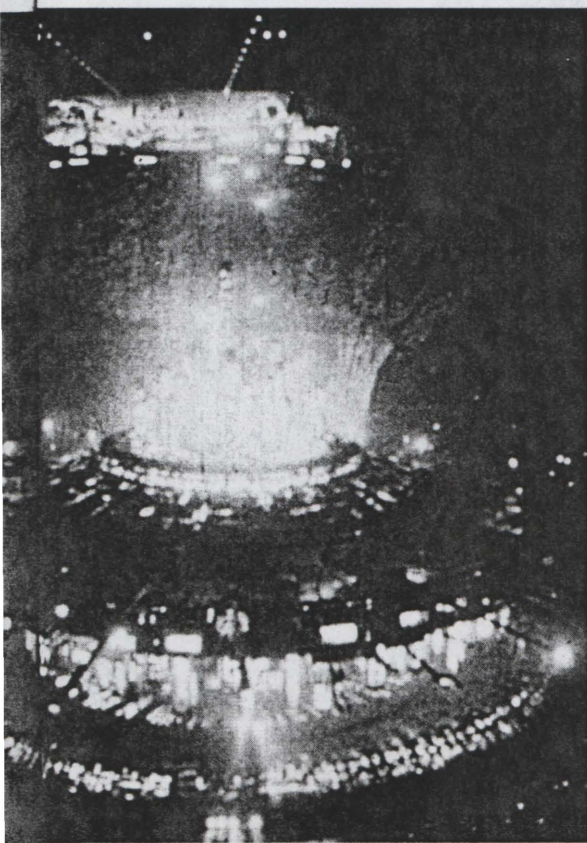
Occasionally, the pilots might all turn

their landing lights on and fly slowly toward, say, the busy Taconic State Parkway, which runs parallel to the river. To alarmed motorists, these oncoming bright headlights formed the outline of a giant UFO that seemed to be suspended in the sky. When the Martians all turned off their landing lights at once, the UFO suddenly disappeared, sending motorists racing toward the nearest phone booth to report their experiences to the police. And what about the changing colors of the UFO lights? Observers on the ground to



the left of the flight might see only the red navigation lights on the left wing tips; the fuselages of the planes could block the green lights on the right wings from view. If the formation circled back, the same observers might see a moving pattern of green lights, but no red ones.

And what about the silent or gently humming UFOs reported by so many people? Cessna 152s, especially, have excep-



amuck." These well educated people think that it makes perfectly good sense to suppose that science and technology are more advanced elsewhere. Says Jones, "They hope that the basic limiting principles of science—like the impossibility of traveling faster than the speed of light—are discredited in other worlds."

Sociologist William McCready, of the National Opinion Research Center, sees other reasons for the UFO faith. First, he notes that "as people learn more about space exploration, more and more of them are saying that the odds are high that there must be life elsewhere." For these educated people, it's simply a matter of probability.

A second motivation, according to McCready, is the ever-present and universal need for an element of fantasy in life—the need for things that remain forever unknown and mysterious, like the Loch Ness monster, or the angelic figures in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. In addition, McCready says, "we all have a strain toward hopefulness; our psychology is structured so that we hope for the best. The

seed of optimism is in us all, the hope that goodness will triumph over evil, that there are beings who are smarter and better than we are." He also points to the religious nature of this sentiment, the hope for a utopia, a better world somewhere.

Hopefulness about the passengers of UFOs is reflected, says McCready, in recent movies like *Close Encounters* and *E.T.*, in which the visitors are both benevolent and powerful, as they were in the 1951 movie *The Day the Earth Stood Still*.

Finally, McCready points to a rather contrary reason for belief in UFOs. "There is a whole segment of the population who disbelieve official denials," he says. "If the government says it's not true, then they believe it must be true." This group firmly believes that "the government wouldn't be denying it if it weren't true—they are suspicious of 'officialspeak.'" The paradoxical result, says McCready, is that the more the government keeps denying the existence of UFOs, the more likely these people will be to say that there must be something there.

tionally quiet engines; but any single-engine plane, even if directly overhead, is barely audible from the ground when it flies above 3,000 or 4,000 feet. And "above five thousand feet," says one pilot, "there's no noise at all—especially when they're two miles away." If the observer happens to be upwind of a plane, says another, it may be inaudible when it is just 1,000 feet above the ground.

The pilots were trying to "deceive and confuse the public, diverting attention away from the real UFO"

As word of the night flyers began to spread, the UFO buffs were not amused. Said the *UFO Reporter*, "Apparently, a number of the pilots and the staff connected with the [Stormville] airport were deliberately doing a little leg pulling . . . but this formation flying cannot explain the bulk of the March reports described in the last issue." Gersten was incensed. The pilots, he said, were trying to "deceive and confuse the public, diverting attention away from the real UFO." He offered a reward of \$1,000 to anyone who could identify them. In mid-September, presumably acting on complaints about the night flyers, a Federal Aviation Administration team paid a surprise visit to the Stormville strip to examine the planes parked on the field and look for illegally rigged navigation lights or other violations. (The planes passed muster.) Several men suspected of being Martians began getting mysterious telephone calls from strangers, and one received an outright threat.

The sudden attention has made the Martians and their allies wary. It has been a lot of fun, they say, but not worth losing their licenses for an FAA infraction. Turning off navigation lights during a night flight, for example, is illegal. Then, too, they are worried about the possibility of violating local "criminal nuisance" ordinances or being sued by people who have been frightened or distracted while driving. The bulletin board at Stormville has been cleared of its UFO clippings. In the snack bar, a "not available" sign has been pasted over the UFO-burger listing. And the number of UFO sightings in the Hudson Valley has dropped precipitously. □

A SCIENTIFIC LOOK AT UFOS

Under pressure from Congress to explain the growing number of UFO reports, the Air Force commissioned a team of scientists from the University of Colorado, led by the late physicist Edward Condon, to study the phenomenon in 1967. Two years and \$500,000 later, after its work had been reviewed and approved by the National Academy of Sciences, the team released its findings in the 1,465-page *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects*. Much to the dismay and anger of flying-saucer buffs, the so-called Condon Report methodically demolished most of their pet theories and presented rational explanations for many of the famous UFO sightings.

Conceding that a few events could not be explained (because not enough information was available), the Colorado team attributed most sightings to optical illusions, stars, atmospheric inversions, meteors, flocks of birds, airplanes, balloons, and outright hoaxes. The search found absolutely no evidence that UFOs were emissaries of extraterrestrial civilizations. Consequently, the team concluded, there was no scientific justification for further investigation of the phenomena. It recommended shutting down Project Blue Book, a unit set up by the Air Force in 1957 to log and evaluate UFO sightings.

Physicist Edward Condon with a model UFO and his 1,465-page report



Saucer over a house in Ohio

Among the Condon Report's more notable findings:

- After analyzing a fragment of magnesium that UFO buffs said had come from a saucer that exploded over Brazil, the scientists found that it was not, as the believers had claimed, purer than any magnesium ever made by man. In fact, it contained more impurities than most commercially refined magnesium.

- Shown a picture of a ringlike UFO photographed in 1957 near Fort Belvoir, Virginia, Army technicians immediately identified it as a vortex ring formed when a mixture of diesel oil, gasoline, and white phosphorus was exploded by TNT at the base to simulate atomic bomb explosions.

- Night-flying UFOs with flashing lights, unearthly maneuverability, and extraterrestrial occupants, reported over Colorado by 30 witnesses, turned out to be a candle-heated hot-air balloon launched by two high school boys.

- A "claw-shaped" impression on the dry sand of a beach—supposedly made by a UFO, and featured in a *Look* magazine special issue on flying saucers—was found to have been created by urine. "Some person or animal," the Condon report stated, "had performed an act of micturition there."

Apparently convinced by examples like these, the Air Force terminated Project Blue Book in December 1969, putting an end to government involvement in UFO investigations.