

UFOs come back in fantasy, fact

By WILLIAM J. BROAD
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NEW YORK, N.Y. — The aliens are here again, at least in terms of popular culture, if not fact.

Three books about alien visits are selling briskly; one has topped the non-fiction best-seller list for weeks. Clubs, newsletters, movies and lectures about unidentified flying objects are generating revenues at a pace exceeded only in the 1950s, during the first wave of UFO sightings.

Enthusiasts now are even charging that for 40 years the federal government has harbored physical evidence of an earthly encounter with extraterrestrial creatures, including their lifeless bodies and damaged spacecraft. That startling report, dismissed by skeptics and government officials as a laughable hoax, is contained in what purport to be top-secret government papers from the Eisenhower era.

Why the fascination with aliens, despite repeated failures over the decades to document their earthly arrival?

In interviews, psychologists, historians, philosophers and writers of science fiction said belief in alien encounters was rooted in such things as the need for secular messiahs and the search for explanations for terrestrial troubles.

"The urge to investigate and believe in this stuff is almost religious," said Ben Bova, former editor of *Omni* magazine and a writer of science fiction. "We used to have gods. Now we want to feel we're not alone, watched over by protective forces far beyond us."

But others, often sober, respectable scientists who have studied UFO reports for years, said the skeptics were missing the biggest story of the age.

"People who haven't been paying attention to this stuff are in for a shock," said Bruce Maccabee, a full-time Navy physicist in Washington, D.C., and a part-time UFO researcher. "Some sort of things have been flying around for decades, and they aren't ours."

The current UFO flurry is led by new

books: "Communion" by Whitley Strieber (Morrow), "Intruders" by Budd Hopkins (Random House), and "Light Years" by Gary Kinder (Atlantic Monthly Press). "Communion" has been on The New York Times best-seller list for more than four months.

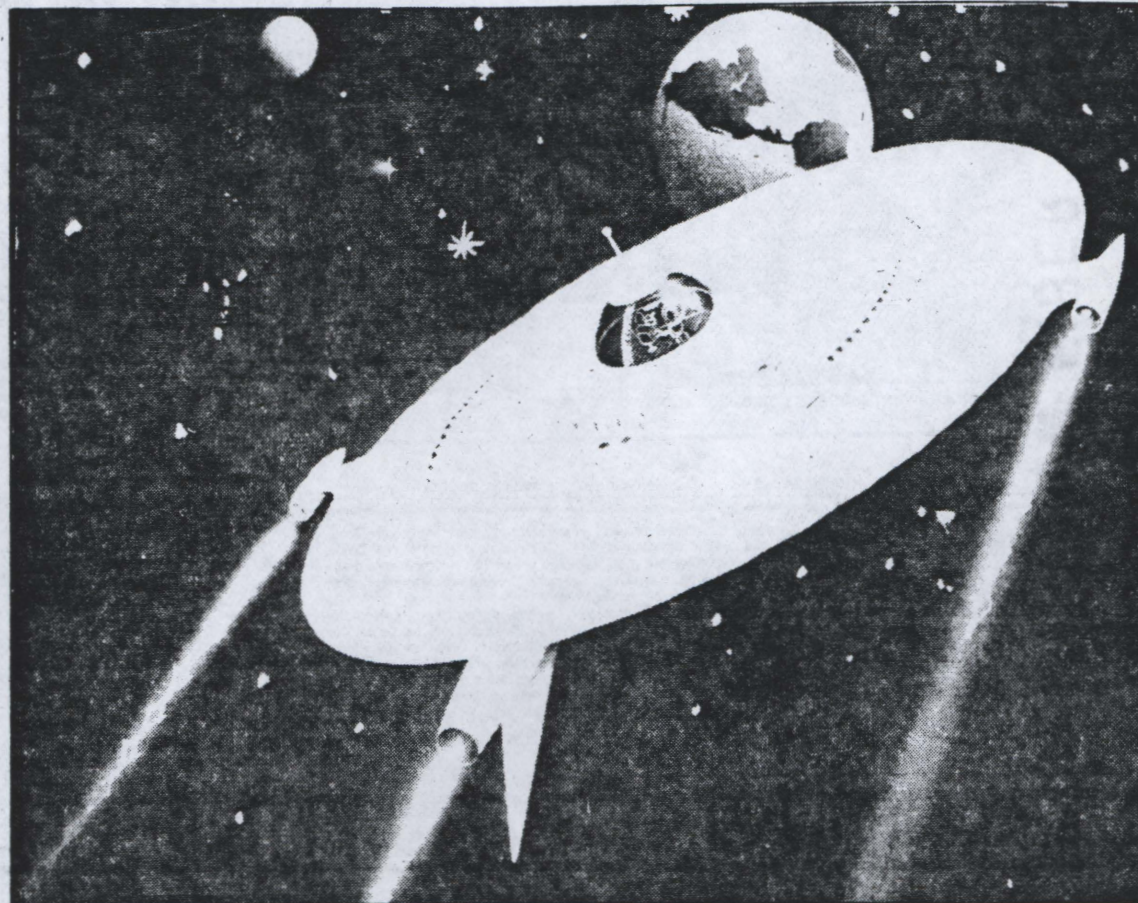
All three tell of personal encounters with aliens. In this they differ from the last great period of UFO enthusiasm, in the 1950s, said David M. Jacobs, author of "The UFO Controversy in America" and a historian at Temple University in Philadelphia. In the 1950s, UFO sightings were in vogue. Now, he said, we are in a new era in which aliens are taken as fact and attention had turned to people's experiences with them.

Indeed, the hottest topic among UFO enthusiasts is what they describe as the federal government's experience with aliens, especially the "Roswell Incident," one of the oldest UFO episodes on the books. Timothy Good, a British UFO researcher, and a group of UFO investigators in the United States say they have documentary evidence that the government hid its knowledge that a flying saucer crashed in 1947 near Roswell, N.M., killing its crew of extraterrestrial creatures. The charges are contained in Good's book "Above Top Secret: The Worldwide UFO Cover-Up," to be published in Britain in July.

The government says the 1947 incident was nothing more than the sighting of a weather balloon. But the UFO researchers say a newly discovered document, dated Nov. 18, 1952, proves that explanation false. The document, purportedly a top-secret briefing paper for President-Elect Dwight D. Eisenhower, discusses a secret federal team of a dozen experts known as Majestic-12, or MJ-12, established by President Harry Truman on Sept. 24, 1947, to investigate the remains of the spacecraft and its crew.

"It appears to be genuine," said William L. Moore, who wrote a book about the incident and who investigated the document for more than two years after a colleague received it anonymously in the mail. Having looked at records from that time, he said, "There's nothing we've been able to discover that shows it's a fraud."

"Nonsense," replied Philip J. Klass, a leading UFO debunker and chairman of the UFO



Are they for real? Interest in UFOs and alien life forms is on the upswing again.

subcommittee of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, a respected group of scientists that publishes "The Skeptical Inquirer." Klass said he had seen the document and considered it "an outright hoax."

The document, several pages long and marked "copy one of one, eyes only," purportedly recounts a secret briefing to President-Elect Eisenhower by Rear Adm. Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter, the first director of the Central Intelligence Agency, who is now dead. According to the document, Hillenkoetter was a member of Majestic-12. The brief-

ing begins with a chronology of a crash near Roswell.

"On 07 July, 1947," it says, "a secret operation was begun to assure recovery of the wreckage of this object for scientific study. During the course of this operation, aerial reconnaissance discovered that four small human-like beings had apparently ejected from the craft at some point before it exploded. These had fallen to Earth about two miles east of the wreckage site. All four were dead and badly decomposed due to action by predators and exposure to the elements during the approximately one week

time period which had elapsed before their discovery."

"A special scientific team took charge of removing these bodies for study. The wreckage of the craft was also removed to several different locations. Civilian and military witnesses in the area were debriefed, and news reporters were given the effective cover story that the object had been a misguided weather research balloon."

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biggest story of the age.

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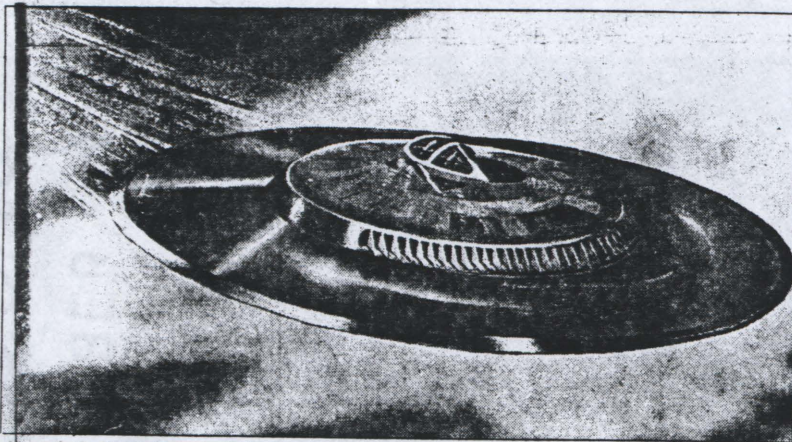
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An artist's depiction of a flying saucer as most commonly described

Happy birthday First UFOs were sighted in US 40 years ago

By DICK O'DONNELL
Special to The Journal

FLYING SAUCERS were sighted for the first time 40 years ago — at about 2:45 p.m., Pacific time, on Tuesday, June 24, 1947, to be exact.

Kenneth Arnold, a businessman from Boise, Idaho, was flying his two-seater plane from Chehalis, Wash., to nearby Yakima, when he saw "nine peculiar looking objects flying from north to south at approximately 9,500 feet" over Mount Rainier.

Arnold sold firefighting apparatus and had just installed some equipment at the Central Air Service in

Chehalis. Prior to taking off at 2 p.m., he had heard about a lost C-46 Marine transport that had gone down in the mountains. Enroute to Yakima, he decided to spend some time searching for the plane.

"I was flying a specially designed mountain airplane, and having had considerable experience in this type of flying, I felt qualified to undertake the dangerous search," wrote Arnold, who died two years ago at 71. "I took off from the Chehalis airport... with the intention in mind of delaying my trip to Yakima for at least an hour, which I would spend on top, in and around the high plateau of Mount Rainier. I flew directly toward this plateau, which has an elevation varying from 9,000 to over 10,000 feet."

The sky was clear, and Arnold later would say the air was "so smooth it was a real pleasure flying." He sat in his plane and carefully studied the sky and terrain as he moved along at about 14,000 feet. He noted in his flight journal that he had spotted a DC-4 to his rear, off to his left. Other than that, he was all by himself.

Then, quite suddenly, a bright flash reflected on his airplane.

Arnold searched the horizon to determine the source, and to the left and north of Mount Rainier he saw nine objects moving in "a strange weaving motion."

"They seemed to be alive at the

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Central Aircraft, which had its offices at Yakima's airport. Baxter, in turn, called in several of his flight pilots and helicopter instructors to hear the story. When all was said and done, the consensus was that what Arnold had seen was a flight of guided missiles from Moses Lake, a nearby military installation.

A short time later, an Oregon newspaper printed an account of Arnold's adventure. The rest is history. A government investigator interviewed the pilot, and the first UFO probe was launched. Arnold stuck to his story, but nothing much came of the investigation.

The objects were not the traditional flying saucers most people visualize today. Rather, Arnold described an aircraft that had a body in the center and two giant wings spreading out on each side.

Arnold said later: "I have never claimed to have seen little men in them. Others have; not me. I didn't want to exploit anyone, and I didn't want to be exploited."

Over the years, Arnold disclosed that he had been questioned by such agencies as Military Intelligence, the FBI, Internal Revenue Service, CIA, Marine Intelligence, private detective agencies "and just plain busybodies."

With a trace of bitterness, he also revealed he had been "subjected to ridicule, much loss of time and money, newspaper notoriety, magazine stories, reflections on my honesty, my character, my business dealings. In short, the amount of actual persecution that has come about — whether intended as such or not — because of my accidental involvement in what has become the strangest story ever told, has been a contin-

ual source of amazement to me."

Since Arnold sighted his UFOs, many people have come forward and admitted having seen something similar.

A bibliography compiled by George Eberhardt of the Center for UFO Studies in Glenview, Ill., documents thousands of flying saucer sightings. More than 15,600 reports and books on the subject are listed in the 1,300 page, two-volume work.

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center, to have the ability to change their density," he said later. He said

that every few seconds two or three of the objects would dip or change course slightly, causing the sun to strike them.

It was this reflection of the sunlight that had bounced off his plane. Had it not been for this reflection, he might not have spotted the "nine shiny, pulsating objects," as Arnold later described them.

At first, the objects seemed far away, but as they approached Rainier, he was able to see their outlines

clearly. Arnold said they "flew like geese, in a rather diagonal chain-like line, as if they were linked together." He estimated they were about 25 miles away, and said they seemed to hold a definite direction as they swerved in and out of the high mountain peaks.

As he watched them, Arnold for a minute or so assumed they might be some type of jet aircraft. But as he studied them, he became convinced they were not. At first, he estimated

the objects to be approximately two-thirds the size of a DC-4. However, the objects were stretched out between two snow-covered peaks, and a later measurement made by government investigators determined that the two peaks were five miles apart, which would seem to indicate the Unidentified Flying Objects, as they were later called, were much larger than Arnold had believed.

Arnold calculated the speed of the strange craft and determined that

they were traveling at more than 1,000 miles an hour. In those days the fastest aircraft could do only 700 miles an hour.

Then, almost as suddenly as they appeared, the UFOs vanished over the horizon. It was impossible for Arnold, in his two-seater, to track them, or even come close to them.

When he landed, he told his story to Al Baxter, general manager of

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ed "that although these creatures are human-like in appearance, the biological and evolutionary processes responsible for their development has been quite different from those observed or postulated in homo-sapiens."

Stanton T. Fjeldman, a nuclear physicist in Frederickton, New Brunswick, who is investigating the document with Moore and who lectures widely on UFOs, said, "We're dealing with something of extraordinary importance," he said. "What this means is that we humans are not the big shots we think we are." He said that the reason for the 40-year cover-up was that "no government wants people to have their allegiance to the planet rather than themselves."

Reflecting on the scope and intensity of the current flurry of interest, Jerome Clark, vice president of the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies in Chicago and editor of "International UFO Reporter," said: "What's interesting is that all this is happening in the absence of a sighting wave. There hasn't really been anything sighted since the 1970s. If I were paranoid, I'd say it's quiet, too quiet."

RICHARD HEIDEN via COUD—I