

OMNIBUS

NOVEMBER 1978 \$2.00



THE REAL BIONIC MAN

EXCLUSIVE: INTERVIEW WITH ALVIN TOFFLER PLUS:
 ALL NEW FICTION • UNSEEN WORLDS • COMPUTER LIB
 BATTLESTAR GALACTICA • JOHN LILLY ON DOLPHINS

classic *Shrinking Man*, for which make up artist Rick Baker is creating the "ultimate gorilla suit."

Paul Mandell
New York, NY

Pattern Watchers Anonymous

I really enjoyed Ron Goulart's *Invisible Stripes* (October *Omni*). Even though it is considered fiction, the probability of it becoming fact is not impossible. I recently read a book, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, by Jerry Mandler. The arguments were realistic and, being a former tv watcher, I could identify with them. Television has an enormous influence on the way we look, talk, the things we buy; and tv doesn't leave much for speculation or deep thought. It is the only education some people receive after high school. I haven't watched any tv in two months, and I have no urge to. And I feel my mind is starting to air out again.

Thank you for your thought-provoking story on this mass media monster.

Kathy Van
Pottstown, PA

Oberg Sightings

Let me congratulate you on *Omni's* fine first issue. I was especially impressed by the fine and well-balanced report on UFOs by James Oberg. It is probably the best report on UFOs to appear in a popular magazine. I hope you keep up this good work in reporting other paranormal stories.

Sam Piazza
Boston, MA

I was overjoyed by the UFO Update column in October *Omni*. You are the first to take a scientific approach to a tough subject. In UFOlogy there are no safe, easy answers, only the gnawing feeling that we may never really solve the question.

Charles Labbe
Woonsocket, RI

James Oberg's update on the UFO situation was engaging and, for the most part, accurate. However, I must take strong exception to the comments made about self-styled UFO debunker Philip J. Klass. Oberg's contention that Klass's investigations are somehow more careful or scientific than those of other UFO investigators is totally without foundation.

By way of example: many people are now familiar with the UFO-helicopter close encounter that occurred near Mansfield, Ohio, in October 1973, and which many UFO experts now consider to be one of the best "unknowns" on record. In that case, the four-man crew of a U.S. Army Reserve helicopter experienced a near-collision with a lighted, domed, cigar shaped object which flooded the cockpit with brilliant green light. While the object was close to the helicopter, the copter climbed 1800 feet at 1000 feet per

minute despite the fact that Captain Lawrence Coyne, the pilot, reportedly was holding the craft's controls in position for a dive. Klass, on the basis of one of his "rigorous investigations," glibly dismissed the object seen by Coyne and his crew as a fireball from the Orionid meteor shower. This "rigorous investigation" consisted of three long-distance telephone calls to Captain Coyne and a brief conversation with one of Coyne's crew members on a tv talk show! Klass and Coyne have never met face-to-face, and Klass has not even spoken with the other two crewmen who witnessed the encounter.

In contrast, a "superficial" and "unscientific" investigation conducted by Ms. Jennie Zeidman for the Center for UFO Studies and the Mutual UFO Network consisted of over 18 hours of in-person interrogation of the helicopter crew and countless hours of additional research and analysis. Her work disclosed the fact that the unknown object was in continual view by the helicopter crew for over 300 seconds. Mr. Klass's gargantuan investigative effort also failed to disclose the presence of five ground-based witnesses to the UFO-helicopter incident whose testimonies corroborated those of the crew.

I am in complete agreement with Mr. Oberg that the superficial and biased investigations of many UFO enthusiasts have clouded rather than cleared the mystery of the UFO. But I can assure you that our understanding of the phenomenon is not advanced, either, by the equally superficial and biased efforts of closed-minded debunkers such as Philip Klass.

Al Porterfield
Field Investigator,
Aerial Phenomenon Research
Organization, and Mutual
UFO Network

Mr. Oberg considers the Coyne helicopter case one of the best on record and will treat the case in his column in an upcoming issue. Everybody seems to agree the object came from outer space, but was it a spaceship or a fireball meteorite?—Ed.

I would like to correct the impression James Oberg gives that Philip Klass and his UFO Subcommittee have satisfactorily explained away all or most "best case" sightings as natural phenomena. Not all UFOs are seen as nothing more than mysterious lights in the sky at night, behind which one can imagine anything. Many are daytime and/or close-up observations by reliable witnesses, from several angles, of what are reported to be artificial "craft." They are seen distinctly, often observed for many minutes, and sometimes on or near the ground. And they *cannot* be explained in terms of understood phenomena.

R. Peet Brown
Upper Montclair, NJ

Split-Brain Decisions

Thomas Hoover is quite correct in his article in your excellent first issue that intuition is a vital factor in scientific creativity, as well as in creativity in other fields. However, his identification of creativity with the right hemisphere—and some sort of slavish, noncreative mode of thought with the left hemisphere—is a prime example of the naive hemispherizing that has recently become so common in popular writing. In fact, there is not one bit of evidence that the left hemisphere is any less (or more) creative than is the right, even though the evidence that the two hemispheres have different modes of thought or cognitive styles is unequivocal.

Left hemisphere specialization for speech production probably arose from the rather mundane need to have one and only one center for the exceedingly complex commands to the vocal apparatus. Interference would take place if both the left and right hemispheres had the capability to control speech output. In terms of motor control needed to realize it, bird song is almost as complex as human speech . . . and in several species of songbirds so far studied, song has been lateralized to the left half of the avian brain. Happily, however, no one has (yet) suggested that the left half of the avian brain is some sort of bird-brained IBM360.

One final thought on Hoover's "holistic phenomenon" (a statement flatly contradicted by numerous studies of hemispheric differences): Does Hoover seriously believe that Da Vinci could have produced his masterpiece or that Beethoven could have written the Ninth Symphony had the left side of their brain been cut out?

Terence Hines, Ph.D.
Research psychologist
Boston, MA

Since Dr. Hoover regards *Star Wars* as a dramatization of the split-brain theory, I would remind him that Darth Vader was "seduced by the dark side of The Force," as were many of history's most notorious—and intuitive—villains. Roger Sperry's "proof" of a dual consciousness in humans does not convince me. He seems only to have proved that when an organ is cut in two, it behaves like an organ that's been cut in two.

James Morrow, Director
The Institute for Multimedia Learning
Westford, MA

The Praise of an Astronaut

You can be proud of this magazine. I have read most of the articles already and am impressed with the quality of authorship and artwork. It is absolutely the best magazine I have ever read. The report on UFOs was most timely and accurate.

James B. Irwin, Pres.
High Flight Foundation
Colorado Springs, CO

BETTY HILL

UFO UPDATE

By James Oberg

Among the most influential and widely known UFO incidents is the story of Barney and Betty Hill, a middle-aged New Hampshire couple who in 1961 were returning from vacation. Driving late at night through the White Mountains, the Hills encountered a UFO whose alien occupants reportedly took them on board and subjected them to a thorough medical examination.

Several factors seemed to argue strongly in favor of the authenticity of the case. First, the narrative of the abduction was not consciously remembered by the Hills but was extracted by a psychiatrist using hypnosis. This fact seemed to rule out any chance of a deliberate hoax. Second, one particular piece of information (similarly retrieved from Betty Hill's subconscious) was a "star map," which was subsequently deciphered by experts to indicate the alien ship's home solar system.

Over the years, the "Barney and Betty Hill UFO Abduction" has become accepted as a "classic" close encounter of the third kind. Since then, dozens of similar cases have been reported. A best-selling book (*Interrupted Journey* by John Fuller) and a made-for-tv movie (NBC's *UFO Incident*) have boosted the case's fame. Betty Hill (Barney died in 1969) has become a popular feature at UFO conventions nationwide.

Two questions come to mind concerning this famous case. First, can anything really be concluded about the authenticity of the original incident? Second, have UFO organizations and the news media generally handled this case in a responsible fashion?

While no final conclusions can be drawn (as in most UFO cases there is enough uncertainty and doubt to hide the Seventh Fleet), some very interesting insights about the UFO phenomenon can be gained by examining the Hill incident.

The case would almost have to be labeled authentic if the hypnotic interrogation of the Hills had turned out to be based on true subconscious memories of real events. Also, the case would be very strong if the astronomical information

revealed in Mrs. Hill's "star maps" was valid. And, of course, any corroborative testimony on the part of other possible witnesses would lend further credibility.

Indeed, as reported in the books and magazines that cover the Hill case, all these criteria have been satisfied. But have they really been?

Hypnotic regression (or abreaction) can be a useful tool in psychoanalysis and has been gaining wider acceptance as an interrogative technique in police investigations. Cooperative witnesses can recall details about an event they may have forgotten or may never actually have noticed consciously.

But the technique has its pitfalls. A subject in the highly suggestible state may actually concoct fictitious details or an *entire imaginary theme* to please the subconsciously sensed desires of the interrogator.

Researchers in California recently hypnotized subjects with no previous UFO experiences or interests and asked them



Betty Hill, whose close encounter of the third kind made UFO history, holds star map that depicts solar system of her alien hosts.

leading questions about a nonexistent UFO abduction that the subjects were led to assume they had just undergone. They responded with a wealth of details conjured up from their imaginations. The stories sounded no different from any of the classic abduction cases already on record, including Betty and Barney Hill's.

Dr. Benjamin Simon, the Boston psychiatrist who conducted the hypnosis sessions with the Hills 15 years ago is still convinced that the entire UFO abduction story was this kind of phenomenon, an innocent fabrication based on subconscious anxieties and vivid imaginations. Dr. Simon, whose psychoanalytic expertise is generally portrayed as the backbone of the Hill case's authenticity, does not believe the incident as reported ever took place!

Under hypnosis, Betty Hill drew a pattern of dots, lines, and circles that she said was a star map shown to her by the UFO commander. Several years later, an amateur astronomer in Ohio produced a view of nearby stars that seemed to match Betty's drawing. Astonishingly, the map's viewpoint was from deep in space, looking back at our solar system. Most of the identified stars on the map were similar in size and brightness to our own sun, although such stars (the only kind likely to have planets with intelligent life orbiting them) are a distinct minority in the galaxy.

The alien home system was identified as a double star called Zeta Reticuli.

Skeptics claimed that an "identification" of the alien world could be made with any random collection of dots and lines and that the predominance of sun-like stars on the decoded map should not have been surprising since to shorten the work all others had dropped from consideration. Some sun-type stars should have shown up but didn't; the remaining dots on the drawing were assigned to handy non-sunlike stars or dismissed as "background" decoration.

With that, any number of different (and mutually exclusive) map interpretations could be made. And so they have. At last count, four different interpretations had surfaced, all very convincing.

It's also odd that Betty Hill recalls her UFO abductors telling her that earth is off the beaten galactic track and is rarely visited. Where are all those other UFOs coming from?

Mrs. Hill's ability to accurately reconstruct events and details became suspect when UFO investigator Robert Sheaffer showed that she was unable to draw a reliable chart of the alleged UFO's position in the sky. In place of the moon and two bright planets that were actually there, the Hill account shows the moon, a bright planet, and the "starlike" UFO. Sheaffer concludes that the original UFO sighting, which so frightened the sleepless Hills, was a not uncommon "car-chasing UFO" phenomenon caused by the sporadic appearance of the bright planet Jupiter from behind clouds.

As for the current credibility of Betty Hill, she has become something of an embarrassment to the UFO movement. Her latest stories tell of a secret UFO landing field, of her car being blasted by a UFO's heat ray, of UFOs with their undersides painted to look like ordinary airplanes, of the local plunderings of a supernatural chicken mutilator, of her neighbor's levitating cat, of her own precognitive and clairvoyant ESP powers, of her continual harassment by sinister government agents, of the visit to her home by the capricious poltergeist of a dead six-year-old orphan, and other equally unbelievable tales. UFO buffs find these fables hard to swallow, but they swallow hard and point to the details of her original testimony. Skeptics suggest these new stories simply underline her vivid imagination and her propensity for fantasizing whether conscious or under hypnosis.

Moreover, studies critical of many aspects of the original Hill abduction have reportedly been circulating among pro-UFO groups for several years. According to people who claim to have seen these documents, they are stamped with the UFO equivalent of TOP SECRET. That is, there are embarrassing facts about the original Hill case that some UFO groups believe the public is better off not knowing.

Defenders of the original Hill abduction case dismiss Dr. Simon's incredulity by suggesting that the Boston hypnotist was unaware of other similar reports and thus believed the Hill testimony was an anomaly. Proponents defend the legitimacy of the decoded star map (but they disagree on which interpretation is the legitimate one). They believe there were many corroborative radar reports of UFOs that night, though the reporter who revealed that information in a local newspaper has since lost his notes and cannot now say where he learned those facts.

So there is adequate uncertainty to warrant further study of the Hill encounter. What is apparent, however, is that the most publicized accounts of this case are

heavily biased in favor of its unsolvability, even to the extent of deliberately helping the case stay "unsolvable" by slanting key pieces of evidence and omitting others.

As long as this remains the standard approach to UFO documentation, so will UFOlogy remain an unborn science. The Betty Hill case is an excellent touchstone against which such standards of behavior can be measured.

...

Ex-astronaut L. Gordon Cooper has become something of a celebrity recently with his tv talk show accounts of personal UFO sightings in Europe and California in the 1950s and his present cooperation with international UFO investigators.



Aerial Phenomena Research Organization



Robert Sheaffer

The UFO phenomenon has produced thousands of photographs. Typical of the more stunning (and controversial) are top, a metallic disk spotted over a Yugoslavian field in '74, and below, two UFOs flying side by side in the night sky above Santa Ana, California.

Books and magazines are full of detailed accounts of Cooper's encounters with UFOs in space during the *Mercury* and *Gemini* programs.

An exciting and provocative UFO revelation attributed to the astronaut appears on the package of a "Close Encounters Alien Doll," distributed by Columbia Pictures Industries as part of the commercialization of the famous UFO movie. Says the quotation, "Intelligent beings from other planets regularly visit our world in an effort to enter into contact with us. . . . NASA and the American government know this and possess a great deal of evidence. Nevertheless, they remain silent in order not to alarm people. . . . I am dedicated to forcing the authorities to end their silence."

The problem is, claims Cooper, he never said that and never even attended the New York City UFO conference at which he is alleged to have made those comments. And to express his profound displeasure at having his name exploited by Columbia, he is suing them for two million dollars. Columbia, meanwhile, refuses to comment on which UFO buff gave them the alleged quotation and why they never tried to verify it.

Nor did Cooper see any UFOs on his space flights, it turns out. "Complete fabrications," he calls the stories that for more than 15 years have enlivened UFO literature.

Cooper does remain intrigued by the real UFO problem, he maintains, and his own UFO experiences remain uninvestigated and unexplained. But the UFO movement evidently was unsatisfied with the honest realities of an astronaut's UFO stories and piled fantasies and fabrications upon them. Cooper's legal action against Columbia may help de-

termine just how far the media can go in carelessly perpetuating profitable UFO frauds.

...

WRONG ENCOUNTERS: Navigation across the vast gulfs of interstellar space would require the most precise computations imaginable. If UFOs are coming to us from hundreds or thousands of light-years away, their location-finding skills must be honed to a sharpness unimaginable in contemporary terms.

But the UFO pilots of Steven Spielberg's epic *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* must have become lost in a galactic fog bank when they attempted to make contact with human representatives at Devil's Tower, Wyoming.

The latitude and longitude given in the UFO movie were grossly in error. The aliens asked to be met at 104-44-30 by 40-36-10, a location near Lone Tree Creek, about 80 kilometers north of Denver, Colorado. Devil's Tower, where the spectacular ending of *Close Encounters* took place, is 451 kilometers farther north.

Presumably, the UFOs swooped over Lone Tree Creek and found nothing but a few hungry coyotes and a lost reporter. They then frantically circled the entire Rocky Mountain area until they just happened upon the human base camp at Devil's Tower.

The rest is history—or, if you will, hysteria. But it was the biggest navigation error since Columbus thought he had hit China.

...

Any popular mystery attracts all sorts of solutions and insights, usually contradictory. The UFO phenomenon has had more than its fair share of opportunists, among the most common being the psychic

fortune-tellers. People interested in UFOs love to read thrilling predictions about future sightings, imminent final confirmations, and impending diplomatic recognition of aliens. So a continuous stream of new predictions distracts the public from ever checking up on the old.

Jeanne Dixon, billed as "the world's most phenomenal seer," made such a prediction in the summer of 1976. Said the famed psychic, "I know that these aliens, who are really just better developed humans from a planet on the opposite side of the sun, will begin transmitting their secrets to us no later than August 1977. They will also land by then. Their help will enable us to eventually cure everything from cancer to heart disease,

feed the world's hungry, and end war."

These are certainly beautiful forecasts, and one might be forgiven if one hopes they will come to pass. But, sad to say, the deadline is more than a year past. Nor is there any secret planet "on the opposite side of the sun," a favorite gimmick of UFO buffs and science fiction writers alike. Its natural gravitational forces on other planets would have made it abundantly evident centuries ago.

Well, UFO devotees can respond, perhaps Jeanne Dixon's predictions did come true but the government is hiding it from us. This theory (and of course it is barely conceivable—but better still, it cannot be disproved by skeptics) is the motivation behind the recurring cycle of predictions that "this year" or maybe "by next year" the government will finally admit that it has been in contact with UFOs.

Understandably, UFO clubs and authors have been the main source of such reports, which began as early as 1952. But from time to time a more reputable (presumably more responsible) press source stumbles on the story again.

The latest reincarnation of the government secrecy story appeared in *US News and World Report* early last year. Said a brief note in the "Washington Whispers" page, "Before this year is out, the government will make unsettling disclosures about what it knows about UFOs."

But once again, the time limit ran out, and nothing showed up. As it turned out, Jody Powell had made some incoherent and poorly researched remarks about the ongoing declassification of the old Air Force "Bluebook" files.

By the time this present column is in print, readers should be able to judge the accuracy of some additional predictions.

A year ago, various tabloid newspapers listed the following prognostications:

"Top psychic" Clarisa Bernhardt told the *National Enquirer* in December 1977 that "within one year, sightings by government officials will be made public." Also, famed Miami psychic Mickey Dahne told the tabloid that "the first real concrete evidence that there are such visitors from outer space will be with us next year."

Top UFO expert Leo Sprinkle of the University of Wyoming was even more hopeful last January when he announced that "we expect 1978 to be the year that mankind takes its biggest step forward to solving the mystery of the UFO. We will learn more about UFOs in 1978 than everything we have learned about this phenomenon in the last fifty years."

As 1978 draws to a close, these psychics and UFO experts are running out of time to be proved right. Sadly, the repeated failure of such predictions never seems to prove anybody wrong. There is surely going to be a new spate of predictions and "informed sources" for 1979 being the "big UFO year." And if these guesses, too, fail to materialize, there is always next year. . . . ☐



Aerial Phenomena Research Organization



Aerial Phenomena Research Organization

Microscopic blowups of UFO photographed over Brazil (top) show an equally distributed grain pattern, which rules out darkroom retouching. Could be genuine, unlike the below UFO, which experts call a rare, needlelike cloud formation photographed near White Sands, N.M., in 1957.