

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
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