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THAT COULDN'T**



Star Flight disks
will add untold chapters
to the notorious
history of the UFO hoax.

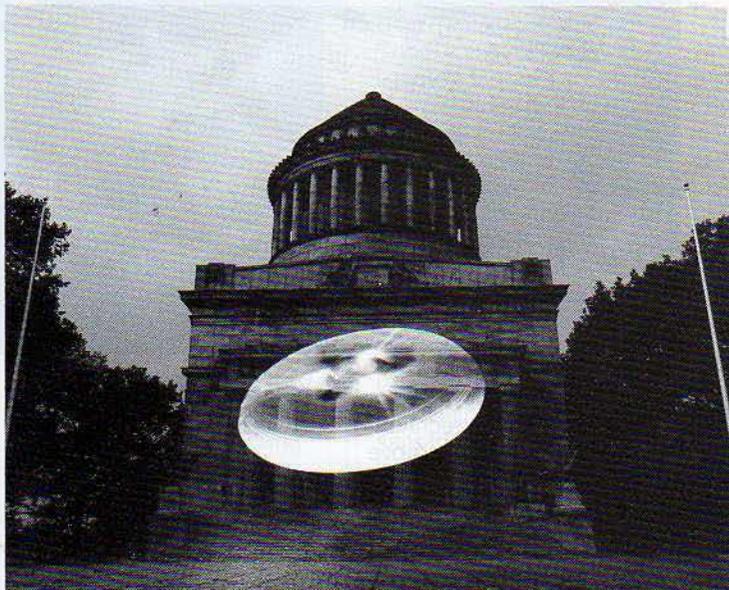
ANTI MATTER

UFO investigators have had a slow year, but things should pick up once Terry Gudgel starts selling his illuminated frisbee. Gudgel, president of Heatherland, Inc., in Rochester, New York, designed the Star Flight disk so that people can play frisbee at night. The disk's resemblance to a flying saucer, he adds, "is just a happy coincidence."

Gudgel says that any observer watching his spinning disk from the ground will see trails of light that connect three glowing centerpoints to nine glowing spots at the rim. Tiny batteries at the center of the disk power three red diodes that are far brighter than those found on watch faces and calculator displays. Optical fibers transmit the red light to the rim of the disk, where it emerges from nine small portholes.

With the disk's striking appearance, it's no wonder that people can be fooled. Last year, when Gudgel demonstrated a six-foot-diameter version of his disk at the New York State Fair, its resemblance to a UFO was remarkable. On a clear night the standard 9.5-inch-diameter model should be just as convincing, particularly if the Star Flight is launched away from trees and other objects that could aid observers in gauging its true size. Right now a few Star Flight disks are available in the Miami and Rochester areas, but once Gudgel expands his efforts nationwide, many new chapters will be added to the already-long, if not particularly honorable, history of UFO hoaxes.

Successful launching of home-made UFOs has generally required technical skill. During the Sixties and Seven-



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ties, for example, savvy teen-agers filled garment bags with hot air and generated hundreds of reported sightings. (Gudgel himself attempted to launch hot-air UFOs when he was a teen-ager, "but they always bombed out at about fifty feet.") Sophisticated students at Caltech launched "UFO" weather balloons, including one with four highway flares rotating beneath.

Gudgel's new disk, however, will make it simple for any technical ignoramus to perpetrate a UFO hoax with a flick of the wrist. A fleet of Star Flight disks, at \$9.95

apiece, might cause as much havoc as the Caltech effort.

According to UFO skeptic Philip J. Klass, many of the sightings might never even be traced to Gudgel's disk because observers may fail to get the details straight. For example, when the Caltech students launched their flaring weather balloon, reports attracted widespread attention until the hoax was revealed. Even so, there were no consistent observations of the balloon or of its four rotating lights. According to Robert D. Parker, one of the Caltech hoaxers, "Some people even said the UFO played strange music and emitted some kind of perfume."

In his book *UFOs Explained*, Klass labeled the problem "Ufological Principle Number 1": "Basically honest and intelligent persons who are suddenly exposed to a brief, unexpected event . . . may be grossly inaccurate in trying to describe precisely what they have seen." If the Star Flight disks soar aloft, we may have a chance to learn exactly how inaccurate. —JEFF HECHT