

UFO COVER-UPS CONTINUE: PART FOUR

CONSPI

JULY 1994

TARGET JUPITER



THE COMET IS COMING

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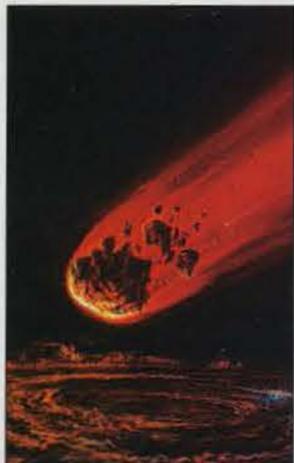
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The impending crash of a comet into Jupiter later this month offers us a glimpse into the forces of the cosmos and a reminder of the brevity of our own explorations into space. Cover art by Kim Poor. (Additional art and photo credits, page 84)

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be in the form of a carbon copy, microfilm, or rapidly degrading thermal fax paper, barely legible in the original. Other files were lost or routinely destroyed on a regular basis.

Still, one had to start somewhere, and CAUS was determined to track down and make public as many of the existing documents as it could. In its quest for truth, the new group would put out a newsletter called *Just Cause*, and, with the help of UFO researcher Brad Sparks and attorney Peter Gersten, tread legal waters no UFO group had entered before. "We were full of fire," Zechel now recalls. "We had served the government notice; we weren't going to take their stonewalling anymore, and if necessary, we would haul them into court."

The euphoria was not misplaced. As the Seventies unfurled, most UFOlogists felt that all they needed in the battle against the governmental Goliath was one good slingshot. And now that slingshot, in the form of the newly enacted Freedom of Information Act, or FOIA, was here.

Signed into law in 1966 by a Democratic Congress under President Lyndon Johnson, FOIA (affectionately called "foya") was created so the public could access all but the most highly classified government records. Nine categories of information were originally exempted from scrutiny, beginning with those affecting national security and foreign policy and then trickling down into fairly mundane materials like maps. UFOs, of course, weren't mentioned at all.

Then, in the mid Seventies, the Nixon administration gave FOIA more muscle still. Time limits were imposed on agencies receiving FOIA requests. Affordable fees for the search and reproduction of requested documents were established, and courts were empowered to decide whether or not specific documents fell within the act's guidelines.

In the real world outside the halls of Congress, however, the soldiers for CAUS found land mines strewn across the battlefield. The first CAUS célèbre, Zechel states, occurred before the Wisconsin group was officially formed. It was 1977, and Zechel, Sparks, and Gersten made their stab at wielding the FOIA through the auspices of the now-defunct Ground Saucer Watch, a UFO group based in Phoenix. In 1975, it turns out, the Phoenix group's director, Bill Spaulding, had written the CIA complaining it had withheld a vast

quantity of information on UFOs.

"It wasn't an official FOIA request as such," Zechel says, "but more like an accusatory letter. Surprisingly, the CIA responded."

Specifically, Spaulding had referenced the case of one Ralph Mayher, a marine photographer who claimed to have filmed a UFO over Miami Bay in July of 1952. Mayher went on to become a celebrated news cameraman with ABC news in Los Angeles. Not surprisingly, under the circumstances, he also signed on as consultant to one of the more prominent UFO organizations of the day—the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena, or NICAP. Only years later did Mayher learn that, unbeknownst to him, his original film had been turned over to the CIA for analysis.

Looking into the matter, the CIA's response to Spaulding was expected: Its interest in UFOs was virtually nonexistent, the Agency declared, and had been ever since 1953, when a panel of

wouldn't. As the FOIA was structured at the time, the CIA was also obligated to account for any deletions on an item-by-item basis."

As Zechel recalls, the CIA missed its original 90-day deadline by 88 days. "Then they dumped a stack of documents on our desk about two to three feet thick, heavily blacked out, and with none of the deletions accounted for," Zechel states. "We now had 30 days to try to identify and contest the deletions, which was humanly impossible."

Instead, Gersten filed a motion claiming the CIA stood in contempt of court and clearly had not acted in good faith. The motion was filed after GSW's own 30-day response deadline had expired, however, and Judge Pratt summarily dismissed the suit. "We were one day late," Zechel recalls, "and that effectively ended the suit."

But when all was said and done, the CIA decided to release some 900 pages of UFO-related documents. Indeed, like the CIA, many agencies decided to release documents even when courts did not force their hands. A request for UFO files from the FBI, for instance, netted almost 2,000 pages. By scrutinizing documents obtained from the FBI and CIA, moreover, CAUS researchers were able to identify witnesses. They could also pinpoint relevant incidents likely to be described in documents on file with a host of other

government agencies.

Ultimately, CAUS would be responsible for the release of between 7,000 and 8,000 UFO-related documents from a who's who of official entities, including the Air Force, Coast Guard, Navy, Defense Intelligence Agency, North American Aerospace Defense Command, Federal Aviation Administration, and others.

Among the major tidbits revealed were a series of sightings reported from October through November 1975 by the northern tier of Air Force bases from Montana to Maine; several of these sightings involved personnel stationed at Minuteman silos. CAUS also uncovered a September 1976 file on an Imperial Iranian Air Force jet that reportedly locked its radar onto a bright UFO only to have its electronic weapons system fail.

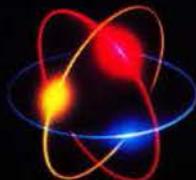
CAUS's most celebrated suit, however, was the one it launched against the supersecret National Security Agency (NSA) in December 1979. The case was not fully resolved until March

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scientists met in Washington to declare the phenomenon a public-relations problem, nothing more. But much to Spaulding's surprise, the spy agency also released two documents relating to the Mayher case. "The Agency had blacked out about 70 percent of the documents," Zechel states, "and also referred to three other related documents still in their possession."

Zechel retained Gersten, who in 1977 filed a suit seeking full release of all five documents. The case wound up in federal district court as *GSW vs. the CIA* under the jurisdiction of Judge John Pratt. After protracted legal maneuverings, lawyers for both sides finally met with representatives of the attorney general's office in Washington in July of 1978.

"At that meeting," according to Zechel, "I had threatened to have the CIA prosecuted for making false replies under the FOIA. Ultimately, the Agency agreed to search all of its files for UFO records and to stipulate which ones it would release and which it



ANTIMATTER

UFO UPDATE:

A Harvard psychiatrist says alien encounters, while traumatic, may be our gateway to God

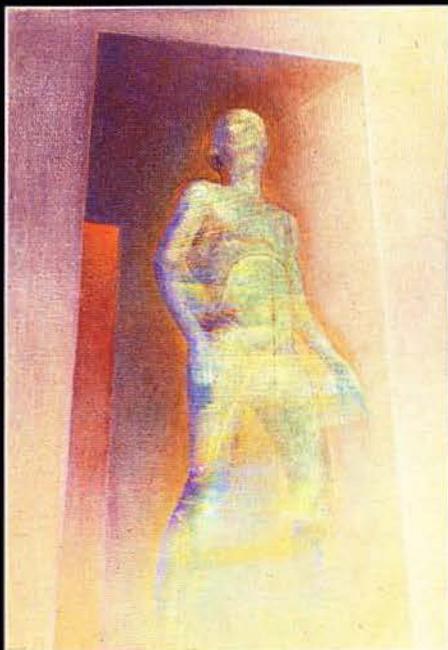
For the past three decades, students of UFO abduction have hailed from outside the scientific community. Their ranks include an historian, a social worker, and an artist. Despite the diversity of their backgrounds, these researchers have all agreed on one thing: The aliens, they say, are evil, inflicting on their human victims only misery and pain.

But now, Dr. John E. Mack, professor of psychiatry at Cambridge Hospital, an affiliate of the Harvard Medical School, and a Pulitzer Prize winner, has broken the mold. The first world-class scientist to jump on the abduction bandwagon, Mack agrees that alien abductions do, indeed, take place. But unlike other researchers, he says the abduction experience can be spiritually uplifting, a key to inner growth.

To back up his theories, Mack has recently published *Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens* (Scribner's), the chronicle of eight male and five female abductees whose stories have been elicited through hypnosis. The tales they tell, says Mack, who has worked with 80 abductees in all, "reveal many examples of great personal growth, a reexperiencing of past lives, and a deepening concern for the fate of the earth."

Joe Noonan, for instance, is a 34-year-old psychotherapist who runs a professional development and training business. As quoted in Mack's book, Noonan says his alien abductors are "midwives" who help him stay connected to his divinity. "Unconditional acceptance and understanding are always an integral part of my E.T. experiences," Noonan explains.

Eva, a mother of two, says that for her, abduction has been "a process of awakening." The aliens "need us for their own reasons," she says, but they are also "helping us to evolve as a race."



But if aliens connect us with the cosmic realm, why do they cause so much pain? "It's possible," says Mack, "that the alien presence, however traumatic, may be part of a larger process bringing us back to our common source."

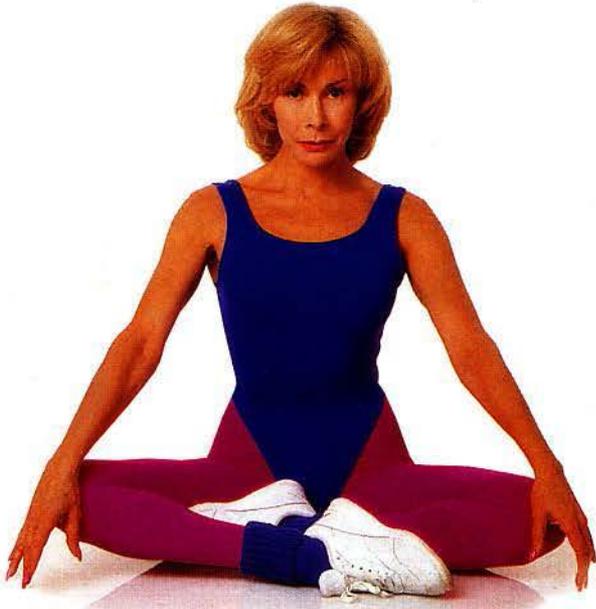
But most of Mack's fellow investigators put little stock in his ideas. "I haven't seen the positive spiritual components that John Mack reports," says David Jacobs, an historian at Temple University and author of the book *Secret Life*, a step-by-step examination of the abduction process. "Most abductees don't like this phenomenon, feel that it's a detriment to their lives, wish that it had never happened to begin with, and hope that it never happens again."

Many abductees also vehemently disagree with Mack's findings. According to Wendy, a food manufacturer who says she has been repeatedly abducted, "I've been forsaken by God, not enlightened by him. Why isn't he answering my prayers and stopping this?" Adds Sheila, a 32-year-old mother of three, "Saying I benefited spiritually from being abducted by aliens is like saying an Auschwitz survivor benefited spiritually from being treated like a laboratory animal."

And how do Mack's colleagues in psychiatry feel about his abduction research? John O'Brien, CEO of the Cambridge Hospital, has only praise. "John," he says, "is a nationally recognized clinician and researcher, and we encourage him to pursue his interests, whatever they are." As for the American Psychiatric Association, it does not endorse Mack's work. But Dr. Michael S. Aronoff, spokesperson for the New York county district branch says, "the Association generally views any responsible scientific research into human behavior as useful for the progress of information."—ANITA BASKIN

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COSMIC

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 56

1982 when the Supreme Court refused to hear Gersten's appeal. Although the agency admitted to having approximately 57 documents pertaining to UFOs in its files, it successfully refused to release them, citing national-security concerns.

Despite the progress, Zechel can't help wishing that CAUS had been able to do more. "I felt we could inflame the public and marshal tremendous popular support," Zechel says, "but we never got beyond four or five hundred members. We were constantly hampered by a serious lack of funds and the usual personality conflicts."

As for Gersten, he expresses disappointment that not every known document was turned over to CAUS, especially those from the CIA and NSA, but concedes that "they were probably withheld for legitimate reasons. I suspect they were protecting their own intelligence sources and technology." Gersten performed all of his work for CAUS pro bono, but estimates that his fees would have come to nearly \$70,000. "And that's in 1970 dollars," he says.

As the decade of the 1970s came to a close, Zechel left CAUS and has since founded the Associated Investigators Group. CAUS, meanwhile, continues under different officers and still puts out its publication, *Just CAUSE* on a regular basis.

"What's changed most is the FOIA itself," says Barry Greenwood, the newsletter's editor and current CAUS director of research. "The act was essentially gutted by Executive Order number 12356, signed by President Ronald Reagan. Among other changes wrought by Reagan's general secrecy order," according to Greenwood, "is the fact that agencies are no longer required to respond within a reasonable period of time. Searches, when they do them at all now, routinely take between six months and two years. The fees have gone up, too," Greenwood complains. "One agency cited us the enormous search fee of \$250,000. It's very discouraging."

Pennsylvania researcher Robert Todd was also involved with CAUS early on, but his experiences have left him disillusioned with both David and Goliath. "The UFO community won't be satisfied until the government admits it's behind a vast cover-up," says Todd. "Is there a lot of material still being

withheld? Without a doubt. But does that prove the government is engaged in a massive conspiracy, or that it's merely a massive bureaucracy? I can't state this strongly enough: I don't believe there's a cover-up at all."

A spokesperson with the CIA's Freedom of Information office in Washington, DC, refused a telephone request to talk to someone regarding the agency's Freedom of Information Act policy, explaining that all such inquiries would first have to be submitted in writing to John H. Wright, information and privacy coordinator. Following agency guidelines, *Omni* has submitted a written request for explanation of CIA policy as well as UFO documents, past and present. The request is still pending but remained unanswered at press time. Results of our inquiry will have to wait for a future edition of the magazine.

As far as the UFO community is concerned, the work of CAUS, Zechel-style, remains undone. These days, says Todd, "getting any kind of document out of the government is a lengthy, time-consuming process. First, they consider the FOIA an annoyance; after all, they're understaffed and saddled with budget constraints. Second, the nature of any government is to control the flow of information." **□**