

# Ancient Astronauts Modern Mysteries

By John A. Keel

## SKY LADDERS

Ancient mythology is populated with strange beings who descended from the sky and acted as teachers, educating early man in the rudiments of agriculture, astrology, and religion. Their influence lingers on even in our superstitions. For example, the popular notion that it's bad luck to walk under a ladder can be traced back to the primitive belief that the Sky People came down ladders from the sky. Those humans who were bold enough to approach those aerial ladders met with a dire fate. The Bible even mentions a ladder of this sort, witnessed by Jacob.

Over the past 25 years there have been innumerable UFO incidents in which the witnesses claimed ladders appeared from the hatches of disc-shaped objects after they landed. Deep in a French cave there's a very ancient carving clearly depicting such an object with a ladder dangling from its side.

During the massive flying saucer wave of 1957, James Cook of Runcorn, England, allegedly encountered one of these mysterious machines and was invited aboard. A ladder descended from a hatch, he said, and a voice warned him, "Jump onto the ladder. Do not step onto it. The ground is damp."

According to Cook's story, the tall, long-haired saucer occupants told him to pass along a warning about the dangers of atomic bomb tests. As he was leaving the object he didn't jump from the ladder properly and was still touching it as his feet hit the wet ground. The result was an electrical shock which burned his left hand, still visible a few days later when he was visited by English UFO investigators.

So apparently these aerial ladders can be dangerous, and our superstition about touching them—or walking under them—may be founded on fact.

## LONG HAIR AND SHORT MEMORIES

In the early 1950s, people around the world began reporting incidents of contact with flying saucers. Despite the ridicule they suffered, most of their stories did contain a number of important similarities. The occupants of these UFOs were usually described as tall (godlike?), with long, shoulder-length blond hair, and unusually long fingers.

Witnesses were often confused about the gender of their newfound friends. They seemed androgynous; that is, they appeared to be neither male nor female.

Interestingly, the descriptions of the gods and Sky People in the ancient myths of Greece, Rome, Africa, and South America were identical to these modern descriptions of flying saucer pilots.

When an engineer named Daniel Fry approached a grounded saucer near White Sands, N.M., he reported hearing a voice warn him, "Don't touch it, pal, it's hot." Fry later became one of the best known of the early contactees, founded Understanding, Inc., and is now a popular speaker on the lecture circuit.

But the most famous contactee of modern times was George Adamski. He was also the most controversial. He described meetings with the tall, long-haired saucer pilots on a Western desert and even produced some photographs to back up his claims. Several other people signed sworn affidavits declaring they had witnessed his meetings with the ufonauts.

Although Adamski's statements were strongly attacked by American ufologists, he was taken very seriously in Europe. He was the house guest of Queen Juliana of the Netherlands, and was even granted a private audience with the late Pope John.

Over the years, thousands of people have allegedly had meetings with ufonauts. In 1956, a respectable businessman named Howard Menger reported that UFOs were landing on his farm near High Bridge, N.J., and their pilots were even dropping in for coffee. He, too, produced photographs and other witnesses (including newspapermen, a physicist, etc.). One of Menger's most interesting claims was that the "space people" enlisted him as a barber, sitting patiently in his kitchen while he gave them haircuts so they wouldn't be conspicuous when they walked among us.

These episodes, and many others like them, are on record but have been ignored by a skeptical world. Yet, if George Adamski or Howard Menger had lived a few thousand years ago their stories would have been engraved in stone and handed down from one generation to the next as poems and

songs. It's probable that such incidents formed the factual backbone of mankind's early myths and legends. The Sky People have been visiting us since the beginning of time. Their long hair and fingers have supplied us with our lore of demons, angels, and gods, just as their often mischievous activities have caused them to be labeled devils, and have supported the ancient belief (which is still adhered to by millions of people) that they walk freely among us, attracting very little notice.

## THE COMING OF THE NEW AGE

The UFO contactee outbreak of the 1950s led to the creation of a whole new lore. Most of these contactees were simple, less educated people . . . farmers, salesmen, quasi-mystical "seekers." Though the majority lacked literary skills they often spent months or even years laboriously writing books about their experiences. In many cases, these books were even allegedly dictated by the long-haired entities. Legitimate publishers frowned on these amateurish efforts, so many of these would-be authors scrimped and saved and published their books themselves. Their dedication was fanatical, and many of them suffered incredible hardships to get their message across. Usually such books found an audience of a few hundred and were quickly forgotten.

One recurrent theme in this literature of the 1950s was the prophecy that we were about to enter a new age. An age when there would be a wholesale stampede to the occult, to Ouija boards, tarot cards, and astrology. This prediction seemed patently ridiculous in 1955 when we were in the midst of total materialism and preoccupied with the expansion of our technological society. Nevertheless, New Age groups sprang up around the world, issuing newsletters with messages from the Sky People and prophecies of the Brave New World.

The press and establishment science snickered. Flying saucers and long-haired space pilots were so much rubbish. And the world was now too scientific and too technically oriented to ever again take a serious mass interest in such phenomena.

The New Age people and the UFO contactees are having the last laugh now.

## REVOLUTION OF THE MIND

The 1960s became one of the most important periods in human history, not because the world embraced the occult anew (though it did), but because the mysterious occupants of some other world began to intersect with our own, just as they had done in very ancient times. Their influence upon the human race was widespread and subtle. It engulfed a whole new generation beginning with culture, just as the ancient Sky People influenced early civilization and introduced art, storytelling, even dance. (Man's earliest dances and art were designed solely to pay tribute to the gods.)

Experimenters with LSD discovered they could sometimes induce hallucinations identical to the visions of the earlier mystics and contactees. The frightening Drug Culture burst onto the scene. In Liverpool, the Beatles revolutionized music almost overnight. The long hair they affected in 1964 seemed silly to most of us but within 3 years long hair had become the badge of a whole generation. Eccentric dress became the norm. A new kind of nonconformist conformity swept over youth around the world, spreading out from England and reaching even beyond the Iron Curtain.

Simultaneously, in 1964, worldwide UFO sightings increased phenomenally everywhere. A new breed of contactee appeared. The long-haired Sky People were now communicating with lawyers, doctors, government officials, police officers, and newspapermen on deserted back roads. Unlike their zany predecessors, most of these new contactees remained comparatively silent. A few, like a prominent physicist in California who was contacted in 1966, tried to rationally apply the teachings of the Sky People. Interested groups of educated people clustered quietly on college campuses and institutes of higher learning.

It took a while for the press to catch on. The dam didn't burst until March 1966 when, finally, the multitude of UFO sightings began to make international headlines. Flying saucers became a 90-day wonder. National magazines like *Look* and *Life* were filled with UFO stories. The U.S. Air Force squirmed uncomfortably and handed the whole mess to a group of scientists at Colorado University.

Meanwhile, the predictions of the New Age groups of the 1950s were coming to pass. Millions of people began to explore psychic and occult liter-

ature after having UFO sightings and psychic experiences of their own. By 1970, Ouija boards were outselling Monopoly sets.

## PATTERN CHANGES

Flying saucer sightings and incidents remained at an all-time high from 1964 to 1968 and then seemingly died away. During that period UFO contacts occurred in an unprecedented number. Many people who had these experiences showed peculiar personality and life-style changes. Some divorced their spouses and abandoned their careers. Some became convinced they were space people themselves, like the West Virginia school teacher who soberly informed his students that he was really a Venusian, or the Nebraska police officer who sacrificed a promising career after his UFO experience.

On more tragic levels, there was an increase in murders and crimes carried out by people who claimed the space people had ordered them to do it. And multitudes of young people were marching to a different drummer, tuning in and dropping out, rejecting the materialism of our society, going off to live in caves on Mediterranean islands or in Canadian forests.

High schools and colleges around the country offered courses in witchcraft and the occult. Black magic and even Satanism replaced the goldfish-swallowing college fad of yesteryear. Fourteen-year-olds held serious discussions of reincarnation and their past lives. Men and women accepted or rejected each other according to their astrological signs.

All these things took place during a single epic decade. We also became collectively conscious of the horrendous damage our technology was doing to our planet (although the early UFO contactees had been warned of this very thing). Frenetic movements such as Civil Rights, Women's Lib, and the Sexual Revolution all began to make inroads during this period, altering our sociological structure dramatically and producing long-needed political reforms. Each movement had its prophets and visionaries. The term "consciousness raising" became part of our new vocabulary.

## THE WINDING DOWN

In July 1969 men walked on the moon for the first time, achieving an ancient dream and, perhaps, fulfilling some important but mysterious phase of man's destiny. That same year, Colorado University informed a weary public that UFOs were not extraterrestrial spaceships and the U.S. Air

Force closed down Project Blue Book, its flying saucer investigation group. The press rarely mentioned UFOs after that . . . although they are still being seen with astounding frequency.

Books on the occult were outselling books on such perennial topics as sex. (A mere 5 or 6 years ago no major publisher would touch an occult book because there was only a "fringe market.") The New Age has not crept up on us. It has arrived with awesome suddenness. Whereas only a few thousand "crackpots" believed in flying saucers in the 1950s, millions of people all over the world now believe we are receiving visitors from outer space. In 1971, the ambassador to the United Nations from the African state of Uganda delivered a speech in the UN about the UFOs in his country, demanding that somebody ought to do something. Dr. J. Allen Hynek, the Air Force's UFO consultant for 20 years and a leading UFO skeptic for most of that time, published a book also declaring "where there's smoke there must be fire." Some members of the Colorado UFO project, such as Dr. David Saunders, have also defected to the ranks of the believers.

Today long-haired youths in eccentric dress can be seen on every street corner. If Howard Menger's strange visitors wanted to walk among us today they could do so without attracting any notice whatsoever. They wouldn't need a Menger haircut.

Is all this accidental and coincidental? Or are we going through a repetition of history; not physical history but spiritual history. The myths and religious lore of mankind demonstrate that the arrival of the Sky People wrought great changes, often in a very short time. In some epochs these changes were for the worse. We do not have the necessary historical perspective to look back on the 1960s and accurately consider the merits of the revolution which took place. But it does appear as if the coming of the great UFO wave of 1964-68 was inexorably linked with the many changes of the period.

Are we being prepared for some new phase in our evolutionary progress, as many thinkers and philosophers contend? Or are we just reliving the chaotic confrontation between ancient peoples and the gods from the sky?

The big question, which will probably remain unresolved, is what real meaning will all this have on our lives and the lives of our children? Perhaps the situation continues century after century without real meaning or resolution to the people of any given period. The Sky People are far more enduring and durable than we are. ★THE END