

ANCIENT ASTRONAUTS, MODERN MYSTERIES

By John A. Keel

UFO'S—IT'S TIME TO FORCE THE ISSUE

A man is walking down a street in Chicago when he suddenly feels a sharp rap on the side of his head, then, to his horror, his right ear slowly slides to the ground. Panic-stricken, he rushes to a nearby drugstore and tells his story to the girl behind the cosmetic counter.

A week later, in a little village in Argentina, a woman is hanging her wash on a clothesline when a sharp wind blows a shirt against her face and her right ear falls off. Babbling in terror, she rushes to the village church and pours out her tale to the local priest.

Meanwhile, in Australia, a shepherd-er awakens one morning to find his right ear lying on his pillow. He rushes into town and reports his problem to the local pub owner.

Every few months thousands of people all over the world suddenly lose their right ears. Each victim reports to a different kind of person. Each incident seems totally isolated, freakish, and unheard of. Instead of reporting to doctors and hospitals, the "ear losers" illogically complain to butchers, postmen, lawyers, and telephone repairmen. Not a single story about a dropping ear appears in any newspaper anywhere. The medical profession remains totally oblivious of the strange epidemic in their midst.

Silly though this apocryphal story may seem—and it is completely fictitious—things like this have been taking place for centuries, and during the past 30 years UFO witnesses everywhere have been reporting to cabdrivers, vacuum cleaner salesmen, and used car dealers. Only a minute percentage have sought out local authorities or the U.S. Air Force in an effort to get their reports entered into the record and properly investigated. But, like the medical profession in our hypothetical "ear loss" epidemic, those authorities were unaware of the scope of the problem and tried to dismiss the whole thing as the work of lunatics,

publicity seekers and misguided citizens.

The result is an unbelievable mess of ignored data.

THE REPORT COLLECTORS

How should something like the flying saucer phenomenon be investigated on the official level?

Consider the basics of the situation. Since 1947 (and well before that) thousands of honest, earnest taxpayers have seen alien objects flitting about our farm fields and cities. These objects violate international law by failing to carry identifying numbers and markings. They violate federal law by landing, uninvited, in farm fields, often causing extensive damage to crops and livestock. In a few well-documented instances they have even caused serious harm to human beings. They violate local laws by landing on highways. (Did you know that private pilots can be fined \$500 for making *emergency* landings on interstate thruways?) On many occasions these things have terrorized entire communities for weeks at a time.

When a federal law is violated, the Federal Bureau of Investigation is obliged to investigate. When any one of the hundreds of specious rules governing commercial and private airplane traffic are violated the Federal Aviation Administration is required to conduct a complete investigation. If a rickety old Piper Cub collides with a tree while attempting a takeoff from an obscure private field, F.A.A. men quickly descend on the scene and inspect every part of the damaged plane. If a single-engined plane in Canada loses its way and wanders across the border into Michigan it is quickly surrounded by heavily armed U.S. fighter planes. If that pilot should crash-land in a corn field, skitter through a fence, and kill a cow, he would soon find himself in the hands of the local sheriff, FBI man,

F.A.A. agents, lawyers, and insurance investigators.

Where are all these people when a metallic disc emitting blinding lights does the very same thing?

Our blundering bureaucracies move in mysterious ways. As several recent scandals have brought out, they seem to obey only those laws and mandates that serve their purpose. Neither the Air Force nor the F.A.A. seem to be interested in flying saucers. Although FBI agents have investigated a number of UFO incidents, their Washington office steadfastly maintains their lack of interest (and the absence of any files on the UFO cases we *know* they investigated). Even the local police in many areas don't bother to record UFO reports that come their way.

So the farmer confronted by a cow killed by a flying machine bearing no markings has no one to turn to. He finally reports to a local UFO enthusiast who is, most likely, an unqualified housewife, auto mechanic, or pharmacist. An amateurish report of the incident may be lovingly written up and mailed to one of the several civilian UFO organizations where a small staff of volunteers glance at it and toss it into a big cardboard box filled with hundreds of similar reports. There it grows old and yellows with age, forgotten and forever unknown to the public and the authorities. Just another fallen ear.

Don't laugh. A good part of the horrendous deductions from your weekly paycheck is supposed to go toward the protection you allegedly receive from all those government bureaus and agencies. Protection you aren't getting!

INVESTIGATING THE INVESTIGATORS

To be fair, the U.S. Air Force did make a data collecting effort in the early 1950s and computerized 3,000 unexplained reports. In 1966, Dr. James McDonald expressed rage when Dr. J. Allen Hynek admitted he was sitting on files containing some 8,000 unsolved cases. The cardboard boxes of the various civilian UFO organizations contain thousands more. Still more thousands of reports sit in garages and attics all over the country, compiled by individual UFO enthusiasts who eventually lost their enthusiasm and gave up flying saucer chasing in disgust. Dr. David Saunders of the University of Colorado has tediously sifted through hundreds of UFO books and magazines covering the past 30 years and extracted no fewer than 50,000 sighting reports which he has programmed for computers. Dr. Jacques Vallee has cataloged over 900 landing reports covering the past 100 years.

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ANCIENT ASTROS

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Independent groups all over the world are now painstakingly compiling similar catalogs of all known sightings in their respective countries. So today we have more sighting reports available than ever before. But, ironically, we still don't know much more about the phenomenon than we did in 1947.

A large part of our problem is the unpleasant fact that the wrong people have been investigating flying saucers. An amateur Fortean could collect 10,000 vague stories about ears dropping off and never understand *why*. A medical specialist might study those same 10,000 cases, become interested, and personally investigate *one single case* and solve the whole mystery! Epidemic diseases have been cured only when doctors looked beyond the mere symptoms and carefully studied the victims, their environments, and the many other subtle factors involved.

At some point in the 1950s someone in the Air Force must have realized that it was futile, and very expensive, to

collect endless thousands of UFO sighting reports—the symptoms—and so the data collecting effort was disbanded. Project Blue Book became nothing but a halfhearted public relations gimmick.

WHO REALLY CARES?

Who should really be responsible for investigating the almost daily reports of unmarked aircraft violating our airspace? First, the problem properly belongs to the Defense Department and military intelligence. Astronomers, astrophysicists, meteorologists, exobiologists and other professorial types know nothing about aircraft (or spacecraft), military strategy, or the collection of military intelligence. Their disciplines have not even trained them in the subtle art of interrogating witnesses. If your ear fell off you wouldn't go running to an astronomer, you would visit the best ear-nose-throat specialist in your town. If a mysterious flying machine burned a big hole in your wheat field, you would welcome a visit from a team of military intelligence experts, wouldn't you? And you would patriotically cooperate with their investigation in every way possible.

Unfortunately, there is absolutely no

indication in the many thousands of cases on record that any military intelligence team has actively been investigating the UFO phenomenon since the late 1940s. (Beginning in 1947, experts from the Air Technical Intelligence Command did carry out such investigations, but their efforts were disbanded in 1949.) In my travels I looked long and hard for even a slight hint that some covert intelligence group was working on UFO cases. Although I uncovered many strange Men In Black cases, and cases in which innocent taxpayers were unduly harassed by mystery men, these affairs were senseless and did not suggest a thorough, professional investigation by intelligence experts. I unhappily decided that the government was genuinely disinterested and was not taking the phenomenon seriously. If UFOs were really machines from the Soviet Union spying on us we are pathetically vulnerable. The record proves that an armada of enemy aircraft could easily invade our borders and blow up Detroit or Oklahoma City while our generals and astronomers argue about whether or not they are coming from Venus!

There has been a succession of new UFO waves in the U.S. in the past year.

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It is time to force the issue. Witnesses and civilian investigators should begin a campaign to *force* the F.A.A. and FBI to act in new cases. The law requires them to act. If they refuse, or fail to show up after an incident has been formally reported to them, complain to your local newspaper and write to your Congressmen and Senators. If something lands on a highway near your

home and burns a hole in the pavement (this has happened many times in the past), protest to everyone from your local Division of Highways to the F.A.A. in Washington, D.C. Call the State Police as well as the local sheriff. You're paying road taxes every time you buy a gallon of gas. Complain to the Tax bureaus. Call out the National Guard.

Too many of us have been sitting quietly on our butts for the past 30 years, mumbling about governmental conspiracies and cover-up. If we howl loud enough and long enough to the proper authorities we can mobilize our inefficient bureaucracies and get a real official investigation underway. Otherwise we may simply become a nation without right ears. ★