

ANCIENT ASTRONAUTS, MODERN MYSTERIES

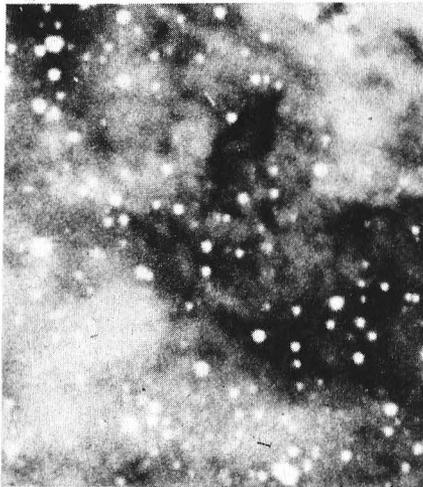
By John A. Keel

THOSE STUMBLING STUDIES

The U.S. Geological Survey conducted a superficial study of dowsing—the art of finding water with a forked stick—back in the 1920s and announced that the whole business was nonsense. That official study has haunted dowsers ever since. Dowsing has become so accepted that it was widely used by the Marines in Vietnam to locate enemy tunnels and supply caches. It has been scientifically proved that one person in every seven has dowsing ability even though no one fully understands how it works. Nevertheless, whenever a writer churns out an article on dowsing he always manages to quote that 50-year-old study, particularly if he's writing a skeptical piece.

The Geological Survey's attack on dowsing was by no means unusual. Following the pro-dowsing publicity of the 1960s, the British Army conducted a study of its own and, like the earlier U.S. Geological Survey, concluded it was not a valid method for finding water. However, dozens of professional dowsers manage to make a living doing just that. A good dowser can often locate a well after teams of professional geologists and well-diggers have failed.

The first official government study was devoted to finding out why steamboat boilers had a habit of blowing up. They determined the cause was too much pressure. Since then, government studies have become a major enterprise employing scores of universities and private research companies. Millions of tax dollars are squandered each year on scholastic boondoggles to find out why children fall off bicycles (it cost us \$25,000 to learn it was a problem of balance), why frisbees fly (that one cost over \$200,000), or why a certain type of African bug walks sideways. Generous government grants are doled out to Ph.D.'s studying silence, sweat, and—



believe it or not—soap bubbles. Huge organizations, founded specifically to siphon off tax dollars, labor to analyze the principle of the rocking chair and the hereditary factors of the gnat. When most of these studies are completed they consist solely of a pile of paper that is read by three or four government bureaucrats and then shelved in some office closet forever.

Remember the Gulf of Tonkin incident? A group of North Vietnamese torpedo boats allegedly attacked some U.S. destroyers and the incident was used to escalate the Vietnam war, ultimately resulting in the loss of 50,000 American lives. Congress held extensive hearings into the Gulf of Tonkin episode and the Institute for Defense Analysis (I.D.A.), a CIA front, was commissioned to conduct a thorough investigation. After months of expensive research and study, I.D.A.'s pile of paper was labeled super-secret. So secret, in fact, that the Congressional Defense Committee which had ordered the study was refused access to it! To this day no one outside the CIA knows what that study contained. The hapless

naval captain who was in charge of the ships at Tonkin was later ushered into a mental hospital. And the war in Vietnam grew into an historic monster.

President Johnson sought to resolve the controversy over pornography by handing out two million tax dollars to a group of psychiatrists, sociologists, and clergymen. They studied the problem for years and finally handed in a fat report filled with charts and statistical analyses that indicated that pornography was essentially harmless. They recommended that the archaic anti-pornography laws be revised, noting that the evidence suggested that if pornography were legalized it would soon dissipate. When the report reached the President's desk, Richard Nixon was then occupying the Oval office, there was an explosion. Nixon disagreed with the study's findings and actually ordered the courts to ignore it and do the reverse—launch an all-out attack on pornography. So another two million bucks went down the drain.

Expensive and generally worthless studies are conducted by every branch of government. In the little village of Woodstock, N.Y., thousands of dollars were recently spent for a study on the advisability of installing sidewalks. New York City spent millions on studying traffic lights. NASA once spent five million dollars developing an outer space razor for the astronauts—and our spacemen ended up using ordinary lather and Gillettes.

The majority of these government studies have little value and no impact. They simply provide the bureaucrats with some papers to shuffle, and they produce the illusion that something is being done. In the 1940s and '50s the U.S. Air Force parceled out millions of

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your dollars to various "Think Tanks" and universities to study flying saucers. With few exceptions, the results were so embarrassingly bad the studies were classified and buried forever in somebody's office closet. In the 1960s, the UFO question became the province of

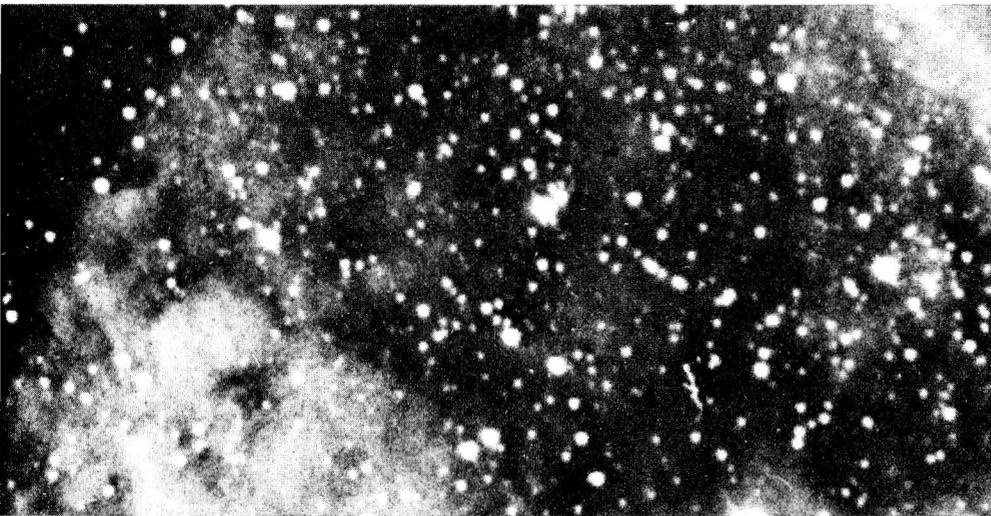
together by people who had no role in the original study. For his part, Dr. Condon voiced his negative attitudes publicly only weeks after the Air Force check had been deposited and was rarely involved in the actual investigative effort—which was slipshod, naive, and far from objective.

who called me constantly throughout that period and told me everything that was going on. A copy of the Low memo fell into my hands long before it was passed on to Dr. James McDonald, Maj. Donald Keyhoe, and author John Fuller. It seemed to me then—and I still believe so today—that someone intentionally set out to disrupt the project, even to destroy it, so I treated "Deep Throat's" gossip with caution and did not repeat his claims to *anyone*. I was afraid of launching rumors which might further disrupt the project. However, I did write a single newspaper feature about the collapse of the project in January 1968 and *not a single newspaper published it!* Several months later John Fuller published the Low memo and the story of the collapse in a national magazine.

The negative Condon Report really had very little impact. Most newspapers devoted only a few paragraphs to it. Many ignored it altogether. The paperback edition of the study, that had cost the taxpayers half-a-million dollars, sold for \$1.95, a lot of money for a paperback in 1969. It was a dismal failure. Only a fraction of the 200,000 copies printed were sold. In an extraordinary move, the 900-paged study was copyrighted. Traditionally, and by law, studies financed with government funds can not be copyrighted and become public domain. I tried in vain to find out from the publishers who was to receive the royalties—if any—and who authorized this legal precedent. One effect of the copyright was that it discouraged magazine publishers and others from reprinting entire sections of the study. If it had not been copyrighted you can be sure that the more interesting passages (such as the chapter on the UFO sightings of the astronauts) would have been widely reprinted. The copyright effectively censored the document. Today everyone interested in UFOs has heard of the Condon Report but few have seen it, and fewer still have bothered to read it.

Like the dowsing study of an earlier era, the Condon Report still haunts UFO advocates. Some, like Dr. J. Allen Hynek and lecturer Stanton Friedman, have practically made a career of publicizing it, writing about it, and lecturing about it. Perhaps if they simply ignored it, the study would quickly be forgotten.

Both Condon and Low are dead. The other participants in the debacle have melted into the academic woodwork. My mysterious "Deep Throat" could be anywhere. Who knows? Perhaps he was promoted after his fine job of destroying the UFO project. Maybe he was even assigned to a cushier job—like the White House. ★



I.D.A., and in February 1966, I.D.A. set up an Ad Hoc Committee to discuss what should be done—if anything. The Committee decided that a major university should be hired to prepare a formal "objective" study of the UFO phenomenon. Several major universities were subsequently approached, including M.I.T. and Columbia. They all turned the offer down. The subject was, they felt, too controversial and too unscientific. Finally, almost as a last resort, the Air Force turned to Colorado University in Boulder where an eager dean had written a memo urging Colorado to bid for the study, implying that he would be the logical choice to head it. The rest, as they say, is history.

The Air Force and I.D.A. were not too enthused about handing Colorado \$300,000 for a UFO study. Dr. Edward Condon, a top physicist but a maverick who had frequently battled with the Washington bureaucracy, was ensconced there and the logical figurehead for the project. The memo writer, Robert Low, actually set the "project" up. Before they were finished they had squeezed another \$200,000 from the Air Force. Most of this money was spent on worthless and irrelevant things like a silly essay by a professional writer on historic sightings (he was paid \$3,500 for that boondoggle), and a boring review of how radar works. As everyone knows, the Colorado committee fell apart early in 1968. Two members were fired for leaking the Low memo to the press. Others quit in protest. One was arrested on a drug charge. The final report was slapped

There were several offshoots of this project. The Library of Congress was given \$30,000 to prepare a bibliography of UFO literature. The task of collecting, studying, and summarizing this mountain of material was given to a single person—Ms. Lynn Catoe. She worked hard and diligently, even traveling to Europe to interview foreign UFO authors. She prepared hundreds of entries on index cards. Eventually all these cards ended up on my living room floor in New York where we spent many hours organizing them by categories, authors, etc. I then wrote the introduction to the bibliography (it was published with her byline). I did not ask for, and did not receive a penny for my small role in this.

When the cards were returned to Washington they were handed over to a typist for preparation in final manuscript form. The typist took one look at the enormous stack of cards, peeled off a big chunk of them and tossed them in the wastebasket to lighten her chore! When Ms. Catoe discovered this she frantically tried to salvage the project but the published bibliography contains many glaring omissions because of the typist's blatant act. Her task completed, Ms. Catoe quietly left the Library of Congress and joined the Systems Development Corporation (S.D.C.), a well-known CIA front.

Dissident members of the Colorado project were convinced that there were undercover CIA agents in their midst... and there probably were. I had my own "Deep Throat," a person