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EDITORIAL

"BRING ON THE EMPTY HORSES" - IF YOU MUST -

"UFOS THE AMERICAN SCENE" by MICHAEL HERVEY

Incorporating a book review into an editorial is a somewhat unorthodox action, but the publication of some recent books has given rise to a new phenomenon, that of the self styled "expert", which should be brought to the attention of all those interested in the UFO Phenomenon.

The tenuous credibility held by those involved in original research is becoming threatened by the proliferation of "pulp" literature on the subject, which is rapidly generating the type of myths and pseudo-scientific folklore that have already overtaken subjects like the "Bermuda Triangle" and "Ancient Astronauts".

Michael Hervey's UFO books are an example of this pattern. A writer who has produced two rather shallow literary efforts (UFOS over the Southern Hemisphere and UFOS, the American Scene) has been represented as "one of the world's leading authorities on UFOs" in his publicity. A study of these books would suggest that they and he, are nothing of the kind.

With the publication of a book such as this, which comes with all the trappings of pseudo-scholarship, the media sees the author as being an "expert" on the subject. It is irrelevant to what depth the author has researched his subject.

Sadly, Hervey's books on UFOs are a case in point. In a recent radio interview on Station 2UE (in which he also claimed that the famous 'UFO' sightings at Taree in 1972 were never explained and implied that the RAAF had conducted a cover-up. Everyone, except Hervey, knows that they were observations of Venus), he revealed that he has yet another 4 books in the offing. These are (surprise!) "UFOS - The South American Scene", "UFOS - the World Scene), and "Strange Creatures from Outer Space".

The title of one of David Niven's new books, "Bring on the Empty Horses" brings to mind the perspective in which Hervey's books should be considered - something which has the pretense of being authoritative and yet fails to come up to even the most shallow of expectations.

It was thus with some mixed feelings of dread and misgivings that I approached the act of reviewing Mr. Michael Hervey's second book on UFOs, namely "UFOs - The American Scene" (Robert Hale 1976). Members may recall my review of his previous book "UFOs Over the Southern Hemisphere" (Hals 1975) (see UFOIC Newsletter No. 46) which concluded with the following somewhat charitable comments:

"this rather shallow book presents an unfortunate contradiction. It is an entertaining compilation of sorts of the UFO phenomenon 'down under' on one hand, but on the other it falls far short of providing an accurate, well-researched look at the UFO problem."

These comments apply equally as well to "UFOs - the American Scene". Errors and mundane sightings abound. As for containing "some of the most authentic and startling UFO reports ever to be captured by a camera", the following may help the prospective reader to maintain an objective outlook. The cover of the book carries a photo purporting to show "UFOs over the Capital, Washington D.C.) and several photos and part of the text refer to it. Hervey quotes from Kolman S. Von Keviczky's report on the "UFO formation", implying without foundation, that the photo demonstrates "the evasive tactical defence of the Space Squadron". Great stuff! But unfortunately the "UFOs" are nothing more than lens-flare from the prominent lighting around the cupola of the Capitol building. When Von Keviczky's photographic analysis originally appeared in print ("Canadian UFO Report) readers were quick to point this out and it appeared that it was with some diffidence that Von Keviczky accepted this explanation. Von Keviczky's views on the UFO phenomenon (see also "Official UFO") ring clear in the foreword he was charming enough to write for Hervey's book:-

"After 30 years of wilful misinformation the world's governments and the scientific community must after all seriously assume that the galactic powers operation clearly indicates a centrally conducted 'interstellar reconnaissance' with the ultimate objective of a landing operation on earthly soil. Any confrontation with inadequate weaponry to an immensely superior scientific and military technology, to force their departure, could ruin the whole world - solely because of governments' and countries' lack of foresight."

Enough of this - to the book proper. The text records sightings 'ad nauseum' in rough chronological order up to 1972, with little attempt to decide what is relevant as a real UFO event. A good example is the famous Socorro "occupant" sighting which is afforded only a few lines. The controversial Michigan "swamp gas" complex of sightings are somehow noted as occurring in two consecutive years - namely 1965 and 1966. Here Hervey has repeated himself, producing a rather glaring error in doing so which doesn't say much for his proof reading.

Hervey provides no real critical evaluation of the sightings he uses, preferring it seems to rely heavily on the validity and evaluations drawn by the sources of each case. If the readers manage to find their way to the last chapter, they will be confronted with the title: "The Most Fantastic Sighting on Record" So, with breathless anticipation, I read on to find that the observation of two aerial "haystacks" constituted what Hervey (or his source?) regarded as being "rightly described as the most fantastic sighting on record". Well, I'd be the first to admit that flying "haystacks" are quite rare, but the observation hardly justifies its magestic title.

The book ends as if the publisher lost the closing chapters. Apparently unknown to Hervey, the United States experienced one of the most extraordinary UFO flaps of all time in 1973 and considering that the book was published in 1976, it would have been better, I would think, to finish it there rather than abruptly during 1972.

To be charitable, I did find part of one chapter ("The Lights That Crawled") fairly interesting. Here Hervey relates the bizarre events that descended upon the Reeve family in Oregon during 1969. These sightings, although documented elsewhere, are refreshing in that their content - being observations of craft-like objects, pulsating doughnut-shaped lights that crawled along the walls of the Reeve house to strange stump-like creatures - stand out from the almost mundane and unoriginal array of material Hervey had used up until then. He seems to allow apparent mundane events (misinterpretations etc.) and genuine UFO events to vie for attention on almost equal footing. Hervey does manage to detail the significant Delphos landing case in some 8 pages, which is somewhat disproportionate to the treatment of the other important sightings he alludes to.

In conclusion, "UFOs - The American Scene" by Michael Hervey would perhaps prove

interesting to a reader unacquainted with the real extent of the UFO phenomenon, as it has occurred in the United States. But I certainly would not recommend it in preference to several other books about the American scene, such as Dr. Jacob's 'UFOs - The American Controversy' and the Lorezen books "UFOs - The Whole Story" and "UFOs over the Americas" which provide much better value for money.

Bill Chalker

GENERAL

Meeting Dates for 1977

Four Meetings have been planned for 1977 at the McMahons Point Community Centre, Blues Point Road, North Sydney. The dates are Wednesday, March 9th, Wednesday May 11th, Wednesday, August 31st and Wednesday, November 30th. The meetings commence at 7.30 p.m. Coffee and tea are available afterwards.

Some future topics will include:- Uri Geller, The Sirius Mystery, and The Magazines Available Socorro Case.

The ACOS Bulletin is still being offered on a subscription basis for \$3.00 p.a. All enquiries to P.O. Box 546, Gosford. 2250

New Investigators

We are pleased to announce that three new investigators have joined UFOIC:- Mr. Mathew Dick (BSc. Hons), Ms Anne Brown (B.A.) and Ms Moira McGhee.

THE FIRST 25 YEARS

1977 marks the end of the first 25 years of UFO research in Australia, the first group, The Australian Flying Saucer Bureau, being formed in 1951. UFOIC originated with the demise of this group in approximately 1955 and has had its ups and downs over the years but has remained in existence, thanks mainly to the small band of dedicated people who have seen it over the lean periods.

A quarter of a century should have amassed a huge amount of data on UFOs and one could be forgiven for suggesting that it is ample time to be allowed to "solve" the UFO question.

Unfortunately, we have little to show for those 25 years, and in fact, have broadened our horizons so much that we appear to know "less" than we did back in the fifties.

Perhaps the turning point in UFO research can be traced back to what many people regard as the most "anti-UFO" event, the publication of the Condon Report which has ultimately had the opposite effect on the scientific community that it was intended to have.

Many of the events that have taken place in the last six years have sprung from the backlash against the negative conclusions drawn by Condon. Several of the scientists now involved with the Centre for UFO Studies and other bodies only became interested after reading the report.

The UFO subject, like most "fringe" sciences has perennially suffered from a lack of sufficient funds to do adequate research, but unlike many others, we have not let it prevent us from doing it anyway. Resourcefulness has become the trademark of the genuine UFOlogist.

Despite the considerable difficulties, both financial and otherwise, UFO groups are continuing to try to find a solution to the problem, but now, instead of fighting "science" we have some of the leading people in their fields assisting where they can. There still may not be any solution in sight, but we now have equipment and expertise to be able to conduct proper scientific investigations.

The days of the UFO "club" have gone. Anyone care to predict what the next 25 years will bring?

STRANGERS IN THE NIGHT

Because of space restrictions, we failed to include a sketch of the Crackneck creature in the report on the Bateau Bay area encounter, featured in our last newsletter (No. 49). It appears in this issue and we felt it worthwhile to give details of other UFO entity reports for 1976.

In the Crackneck encounter, all four percipients have been interviewed and their stories are consistent. Investigators from UFOIC (B. Chalker, D. Reneke and M. Smyth) and ACOS (H. Griesberg) examined the area during the initial interviews and in subsequent investigations, excursions along the headlands suggested that it would be very difficult to locate tangible evidence of the alleged creatures' existence, even if it was covertly indigenous to the area.

Two other entity cases have been reported - one from South Australia and the other from Tasmania. Paradoxically, these alleged events and the Crackneck encounter are all different, even though each has a high strangeness rating.

In Daw Park, South Australia, at about 0200 hours, May 30th, 1976 a young man, Trevor W. noticed extensive static on his radio. Then his dog, a German Shepard, started barking, which prompted him to go to the porch outside the bedroom.

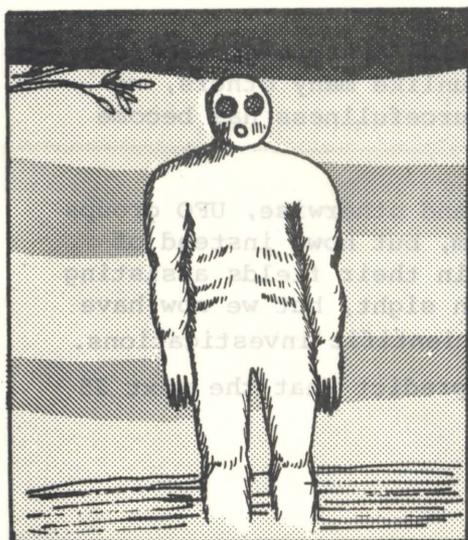
He saw a normally proportioned humanoid figure in the backyard, some 165-175 cm tall, wearing a silver suit, with a box-like object attached to his chest by straps. On this "box", a symbol like a geometric eight, with a line at 45° was discernible (see sketch below). The figure's face was not visible because of a black visor-like object. (See the Newsletter of UFO Research Inc. for further details).

The Occupant report from Tasmania is quite different from anything else reported in Australia, but does have parallels with overseas reports. A lone man, driving near the bottom of Ten Mile Hill, outside Hobart on a wet night had just commenced the climb up the hill as the rain eased and finally cleared. Suddenly, in front of the car he saw a large yellow area like a picture screen. On the right hand side of the screen was a man, standing side on, apparently wearing a form of tight fitting clothing - black jacket and off-yellow trousers. No facial features could be seen, but the witness noticed close cut curly blonde hair. On the left of the "screen" was a dull yellow light.

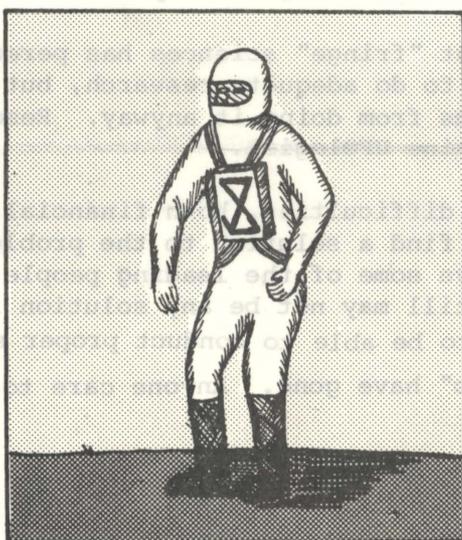
Fearing that a collision with the "screen" was imminent, the witness put his foot on the brake and almost at the same time a very loud "music" started up as he passed "through" the screen and the whole thing vanished.

Quite shaken by the experience, the witness continued home, without seeing any other cars or people during the remainder of the trip. In recalling the event for investigators from the Tasmanian UFO Investigation Centre, the witness noted that the "screen" appeared to fill his entire field of vision in front of the car (a 1965 Land Rover). The short duration of the experience, about 4 secs, the strange loud noise and the sudden disappearance make this one of the most unusual "occupant" reports of the 40-plus Australian cases on file.

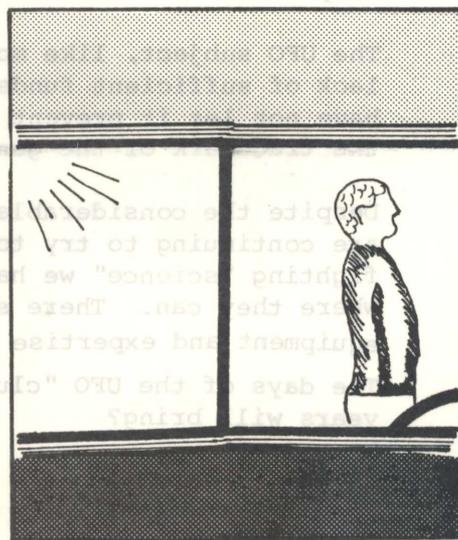
Credits: ACOS, UFO Research Inc. (S.A.), Newsletter No. 23; Tasmanian UFO Investigation Centre; Mr. M. Smyth & Mr. B. Chalker, UFOIC.



"CRACKNECK" N.S.W.
OCTOBER 1976



DAW PARK, S.A.
MAY 1976



TEN MILE HILL, TAS.
AUGUST 1976

