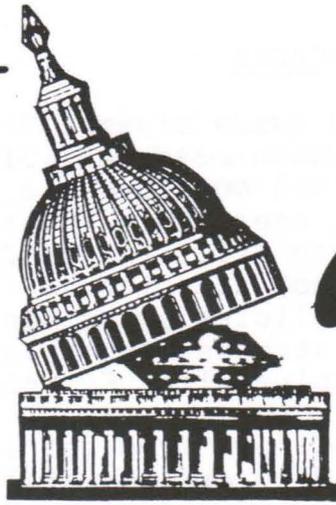


JUST



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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the fiftieth issue, which happens to fall on the 50th year of the modern UFO era. This publication, being small as it is, was not expected to go this far when it was begun back in 1984. Many of us expected that as the century drew to a close, much of what is mysterious about UFOs would have been settled by now. Some mysteries have been solved but many others remain. As the public face of UFOlogy becomes yet more bizarre there are still a sea of details waiting to be explored which make up the serious side of its history. "Serious side?" some would say as they scan the recent news. Yes, it still exists, buried under the headlines decrying "UFO Kooks" and "Saucer Wackos" and beneath lurid television treatments. Much in the sea of details can become murkier over time, which makes it all the more compelling for anyone choosing to do research into UFOs to keep a clear head and a thick skin and not allow fantasy to spring from reality.

Details! We have accumulated a half-century of details. If the UFO controversy has not yet been solved with all of this, then what good are those details? Is it all just a vast assemblage of endless cubic feet of paper, of interest only to social historians? What does it all prove?

The fact is that truths are hidden in the mass, as well as being partially obscured by the incompleteness of the details gathered. The truth in this case requires a lot of hard work and expense to discern because the fifty year history of UFOs is awash with false prophets pretending to know the truth and dragging hapless souls along with them on a sorry quest into the world of make-believe. Reality may not be as exciting to some as Hollywood portrays but it allows you to think for yourselves instead of letting others think for you.

There is plenty of information out there detailing the fiftieth anniversary of UFOs so I don't plan any commemorative retrospectives. This publication does retrospectives on UFO information anyway most of the time, in the hope that some mistakes are repaired. But what would really be beneficial would be to see the second fifty years of UFO research get more serious than the first fifty. It would be a shame if the pioneers who worked so hard to make UFO research credible (Hynek, Ruppelt, Keyhoe; etc.) became victimized by second generation blunderers who bound from one extreme to the other like so many squirrels in a field looking for their hidden nuts.

The time to fix things is now.

NEW DOCUMENT FAKE SURFACES

According to the enclosed issue of Spot Report, another false UFO document has been revealed. Since its author, Robert Todd, goes into considerable detail on how this came about, it needs only to be re-emphasized here that UFO research still treads dangerous ground on what is or is not accepted as fact.

One of CAUS's published policies years ago (see CAUS Bulletin, Dec. 1987) stresses the solution to what has become a common problem with UFO research today:

"Government documents must come from certifiable government sources, endorsed in writing officially or from reliable public archives or institutes for us to consider accepting them as genuine historical papers. The lack of official endorsement presupposes the possibility of "disinformation" or fraud by an individual or group of individuals, in or out of the government, acting on his/her/their own. This does not rule out the possibility of officially-hoaxed information but this would be a matter of case-by-case consideration. Generally the more bizarre and unusual the information, the more scrutiny it will receive and the more care we will take in accepting it as genuine."

Now this policy was published ten years ago on the heels of the MJ-12 debacle. Since then the traffic in, and enthusiasm about, unpedigreed government papers has flourished. CAUS enacted such a policy to protect itself and other researchers from being taken in by unauthenticated material. It may be fun to believe that some fantastic piece of official-looking paper is real but the fun leaves quickly once you realize that if you don't know from where the information came, some con artist could be the source, profiting either with your money or your admiration at how wonderful this individual was for obtaining such information that was so tantalizing for you. Good science fiction is wonderful too - but not real!

However if you nevertheless choose to accept such questionable documents as genuine, please send me your name and address. I've been contemplating starting an exploding cigar business and need a solid list of potential customers! (Cigars guaranteed to be wrapped in genuine false government UFO document paper.)

THE HEAVEN'S GATE CULT

As this is written the story of the Heaven's Gate cult is a week old, but its effect will be with us for a very long time. The wheeling and dealing of junk UFOlogy can be no more dramatically demonstrated than in this unfortunate tale. Part of the impetus for the deaths appeared to be belief in a yarn making the rounds in UFOlogy for many months of a spaceship companion to Comet Hale-Bopp, despite the fact that not a single professional astronomer would confirm such a sensational revelation. This spread to the Internet with reckless abandon and could have been picked up by any impressionable person without qualification.

The unfortunate effect, besides the deaths, is that despite the fact that the cult represents the most extreme elements of UFO belief, the taint of what they had done to themselves will stick to anyone doing any kind of research favoring UFO existence. To the public, a UFO researcher is a potential "nut" or "kook" ready to go over the edge at any time.

Do not believe in UFOs. Investigate reports and use common sense.

U.S. Has Stopped Tracking U.F.O.'s

WASHINGTON, April 1 (AP) — Convinced that there is no extraterrestrial threat, the United States military long ago stopped keeping track of U.F.O.'s, a Pentagon spokesman, Kenneth Bacon, said today.

The suicide last week of 39 members of Heaven's Gate, a high-tech U.F.O. cult, prompted a question at today's Pentagon briefing on whether the military tracked U.F.O.'s.

Mr. Bacon said the Air Force investigated reports of unidentified flying objects from 1947 to 1969. He said it stopped because, out of 12,618 reported sightings, investigators found no evidence of extraterrestrials or even of any aircraft representing exotic technology or a threat to the United States.

Virtually all the U.F.O. reports investigated were explainable as aircraft or weather phenomena, he said.

New York Times 4-2-97

JEROME CLARK
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January 17, 1997

Barry Greenwood
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Dear Barry:

The new *Just Cause* is, as usual, full of good stuff -- along with some commentary that can only be called baffling. A case in point: your starry-eyed Sagan obit.

While Sagan's passing is sad, it hardly merits the sort of hyperbole that has you envisioning a "great black hole ... in the human race" now that he's gone. A more realistic assessment of Sagan's career comes from an academic friend of mine: Sagan, in his estimation, "saved a great many people from feeling the need to do any real thinking." For specifics, see the marvelously skeptical essay on Sagan's last book, by Harvard biologist Richard Lewontin, published in the January 9 issue of the *New York Review of Books*. Lewontin exposes Sagan as anything but the critical thinker he liked to pretend he was and you apparently believe he was. In fact, as Lewontin demonstrates to devastating effect, nearly everything Sagan says about "pseudoscience" can be said as well about "respectable" science.

Where rational, informed commentary on science and anomalies is concerned, I'd take one essay by David Hufford or Marcello Truzzi over the entire body of Sagan's work.

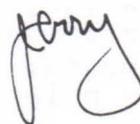
You concede that Sagan knew little about the UFO phenomenon, yet fail to ask the obvious question: why did he nevertheless make authoritative-sounding public pronouncements on a subject he was clearly unqualified to write about? Following that reasoning, shall I assume that in your judgment you and I have every right to render authoritative-sounding public pronouncements on astrophysics?

The nearest you get to addressing this obvious point -- which to more critical-minded observers would be prima facie evidence of abuse of authority on Sagan's part -- is to blame ufologists. According to you, Sagan would have been more sympathetic if it were not for those of us who are actually tracking the phenomenon in all of its inconvenient and embarrassing manifestations. Sagan's book, however, tells us otherwise. It tells us that he had no clue to the thinking of ufologists. His ignorance was so vast that at one point he represents Vallee as a supporter of the ETH, then (hilariously to any reader who knows better) goes on to criticize him for it! He never read the serious literature and clearly did not even know it exists. His reading of even the sillier UFO literature was minuscule. Where the real issues, debates, and controversies within ufology are concerned, Sagan was utterly clueless. This is the scientific method? I hope not. As Hufford once observed, scientists often forget they're scientists when they're writing about anomalous phenomena.

Has it occurred to you that your unnamed physicist kept quiet about his sighting precisely because people like Sagan have made it impossible for scientists to deal openly and reasonably with the UFO phenomenon? Is it just possible that ufology is a fringe subject because the likes of Sagan gave it no other place to reside?

We do agree on one point, however. You write, "It is one thing ... to think [as Sagan did] that intelligent life exists in space and wholly another to believe [as Sagan did not] that life forms are coming to Earth and interacting with the human species." It certainly is. For the first of these, there is no evidence to speak of, as Sagan's critics long pointed out. For the second there is an abundance of intriguingly suggestive evidence. By eliminating the UFO phenomenon from the discussion, Sagan revealed himself as a kind of religious fanatic willing to embrace a favored belief on faith alone. History will judge who the critical thinkers in the debate were, and I doubt seriously that its verdict will be much like yours.

Cheers,



RESPONSE TO THE LETTER TO THE EDITOR ON SAGAN OBIT

(I appreciate Jerome Clark taking the time to comment on the Carl Sagan obituary in the last Just Cause - ed.)

I am sorry that my memory of Carl Sagan's influence on not just my own interest in the search for extraterrestrial life but on science's as well has bothered you. It is however precisely what I had expected from a good chunk of the UFO community. Sagan was critical of the notion that aliens are visiting the earth. He did not deny that UFO reports should be investigated. In fact in his essay from UFOs: A SCIENTIFIC DEBATE (ed. Sagan and Page, 1972), Sagan argued for judgement to be withheld on UFOs, that "there isn't enough data...and that an open mind should be kept." After that scientific symposium was held, 25 years passed. Making a pro-ET judgement on UFOs is contingent upon whether evidence is provided by researchers to support such a conclusion. For Sagan to make a statement favoring UFOs as extraterrestrial he would have to have proof. Anything less would be dabbling in probabilities, possibilities, educated guesswork, just plain guesswork, or personal beliefs. If Sagan were off base in his negative views on alien visitation, then one case, only one example need be provided to prove so. Which one is it? Or several? Do you care to put yourself on the line on this matter?

You cite Richard Lewontin's criticism of Sagan as demonstrating his lack of critical thinking. If Lewontin is such a champion of truly critical thinking as you suggest, and as I'm sure he is, it might be interesting to get his opinions on UFOs. As a Harvard biologist he could surely confirm the "intriguingly suggestive evidence" of alien visitation from all of the eyewitness reports on record and that there would be an impressive academic on the side of UFOlogy. In my monitoring of the SETI debate I've noted that some of the most critical opponents of extraterrestrial intelligent life have been biologists. If Lewontin is as critical of UFOs as Sagan, then you might argue that his criticisms of Sagan on critical thinking do not apply to his UFO statements.

I did not say Sagan knew little about UFOs, after all he did help edit a book on the subject. I said he was not as involved in the subject as many would have liked in terms of investigating cases or being interactive with the UFO community. As such he would not be as familiar with personalities and their exploits as insiders are.

Does this mean that he cannot comment on UFO evidence presented by those people? The UFO community presents UFOs as evidence of extraterrestrial visitation, for which you have conceded has "an abundance of intriguingly suggestive evidence." Carl Sagan was an astronomer, in fact a specialist in exobiology. He is not qualified? He has written best sellers in the SETI field as well as on the origins of the cosmos, and has won a Pulitzer Prize for his writings on the evolution of human intelligence. While on the topic, how does one become a "UFO authority"? How may they become credentialed? Believe me I don't worship so-called authority figures in any topic but who can arbitrate UFOlogy?

I seem to recall that you have conceded to me saying things about UFOs in print for which you are now embarrassed, particularly from your books during the 1970s. You are very knowledgeable about UFOs, as most anyone I know will grant. As you have done with some of Sagan's miscues in UFOlogy, shall I now judge your work based upon those certain number of embarrassments or upon the large body of your work, the broad picture of the subject that you have presented? I don't know of anyone in UFOlogy who doesn't live in a glass house. I'm not trying to be critical personally but I am trying to make a point. If the UFO community had flawlessly presented correct, refined UFO information, which was inarguably in favor of

a particular hypothesis, to the scientific community (Carl Sagan or whomever it might be), then the reception might have been a bit more positive. But the information presented has very often been half-baked, erroneous, poorly-investigated or produced in a sensational context which the information could not support. And this comes by way of books, UFO journals; etc., i.e. the UFO community. In the whole body of UFO literature how much of it has been produced with scientific standards in mind? How much of UFOlogy is amenable to scientific testing? In both cases not much.

CAUS has caught a number of government UFO document fakes over the years, endorsed by prominent UFO researchers as real. Your own organization, CUFOS, had as a chief investigator and Roswell UFO crash authority a man who was a habitual liar. Even things in my own CLEAR INTENT proved to be suspect over time (Kirtland AFB UFO incidents via Richard Doty). So before attacking science for ignoring UFOs, UFOlogy needs to give science something that isn't steeped in polluted water. Just recently in the supposedly refereed publication "Journal of Scientific Exploration" a council member, Dr. Robert Wood, in a review of Stanton Friedman's TOP SECRET MAJIC, endorsed the existence of an MJ-12 group despite the fact that mounds of evidence have appeared in print showing the whole thing to be a hoax.

My unnamed scientist kept quiet about his sighting because he could not prove anything. The UFO came and went and he didn't know what it was. The UFO community is responsible for putting UFOs in an alien context, not science, so that his fear was that in reporting an unknown he could not verify, he would be pigeon-holed into a category made popular by UFOlogy and as such find his status hurt with scientists. "He advertised a bizarre event he could not prove, how can we trust his work on theoretical physics?", the thinking might go.

It is true that science is not always what scientists do. But Sagan should not be the UFO community's scapegoat for its frustration in dealing with science. You practically say that Carl Sagan had nothing of value to say about the UFO controversy. He advocated declassification of relevant UFO information from decades ago (Demon-Haunted World, pg. 89). Under the threat of high-level government criticism, he advocated the American Association for the Advancement of Science UFO debate in 1969 (Demon-Haunted World, pg. 93). I hope you are not suggesting that there is no sound advice about critical thinking on UFOs in any of Sagan's works, as the last paragraph of your letter suggests. If so you are sadly deluded. The flaws and foibles of UFOlogy are pointed out not by a particularly brilliant turn of a phrase but by simple common sense. Sagan is not even the first to point these out. But in his unique position as a popularizer of science, he was able to reach large segments of the population already being reached by junk media.

Maybe it is time to revive an old notion. I recall many times in the past when I worked with local investigatory organizations on UFOs that one question would frequently be asked, one that would make me cringe. "What are your ten best UFO cases?"

"Cringe" because I knew well the possibility that the unexplained case of today can be the explained case of tomorrow with even the simple admission that someone lied about a story. The "ten best" is always a loaded question for this reason. If any of your ten came apart, your credibility goes up in smoke for not seeing that an incident was not what you believed it to be. Many UFOlogists like to evade a direct answer by saying that the body of UFO reports are the proof, the cases fitting together like pieces of a puzzle, no one story giving a whole picture of the phenomena. It is an ineffective answer to say the least. Who says that the pieces fit together? Each report that comes out surfaces of the heels of each other report which had surfaced before it, forming a possible basis for contamination. And each story must stand on its own merits -

if it can't resist rational scrutiny then it is weak evidence and becomes irrelevant. If a story can resist scrutiny then it is only unidentified and can't prove anything beyond being unidentified. Apparently we have not yet seen the story that is not only unidentified in conventional terms but is proof of an exotic answer, extraterrestrial or otherwise, or we wouldn't be sitting here debating. If this is so then why should science get excited about UFOs? Science awaits the evidence that UFOlogy has not yet supplied. So let UFOlogy provide it as a carefully considered group of incidents which resist scrutiny and provide proof. Each believer in UFO reality must have a core of cases which rise above all others. And if there is a consensus among many of particular stories then those stories should be submitted to science.

Even the five best cases would do for now.

THE EDWARDS AFB NON-EVENT OF 9-1-67

It has been a standard of thought in UFO research that for every sighting that is publicly reported, perhaps ten others never see the light of day. With single witnesses it only takes one person to stay quiet and nothing would ever be known. In the case of multiple witnesses chances are slimmer that a sighting of a UFO would remain unknown as it would be expected that if something so strange in appearance were to be seen by a group, at least one would want to talk of it. That would not however be the case with the military. If multiple military witnesses were to see something strange, regulations would generally forbid them from revealing the information to the public. Obvious reasons arise: national security, prevention of panic, weaknesses in military responses to emergencies; etc. All can combine to keep most military-originated UFO reports from reaching outsiders.

Project Blue Book was closed in 1969 and the files were made available at the National Archives in 1975. Numerous military reports can be found there; some explainable and some difficult to explain. We were assured that these were all of the reports that the Air Force had handled over 21 years, 12,000+ strong.

Do we have all of the reports that the Air Force had ever investigated? Unlikely. Stories abound of UFO incidents which were squashed at the source, records which were destroyed, gun camera films which are now missing. CAUS was told long ago that Blue Book's records were all that there was in the Air Force on UFOs, until of course thousands of pages more surfaced later through FOIA inquiries. There is not yet a complete accounting of the government's involvement in UFOs. We may never see the day when that occurs. But until then we must keep our eyes open to where the rest of the real history lies.

In September 1967 rumors reached a Condon Committee investigator, Dr. Roy Craig, of an incident at Edwards Air Force Base, California on September 1st involving the sighting of six UFOs supposedly during a flight of the X-15 rocket plane. Motion pictures were alleged to have been taken. The relay on the story was Dr. Robert Nathan of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California quoting a source that he considered to be reliable. A call to the base UFO officer, a Major Calder, revealed no UFO sighting and no X-15 flight that day, the nearest X-15 flight having occurred on August 22nd.

Craig called Nathan informing him of the denial. Nathan said that he relayed the report from a girl working for him whose father works at the base. There was apparently much secrecy revolving around the event but he would check on the story. Later Nathan said that base security would not talk to him about the incident at all but that a Colonel Johnston in charge of Plans and Operations confirmed an incident on Sept-

ember 1st not associated with an X-15 flight.

A call to Colonel Johnston by Norman Levine, another investigator for the Condon Committee, contradicted the earlier confirmation when Johnston denied knowing anything about a UFO incident. He did however promise to look into the matter when advised by Levine that Air Force Regulation 80-17 required that any Air Force UFO reports must go to the Condon Committee.

On September 15th Levine tried to contact Colonel Johnston for a progress report. Johnston was away but Levine managed to speak with a Colonel O'Neil who was familiar with the inquiry. O'Neil parroted the Air Force policy of not discussing UFO incidents with anyone over the phone and that any reports, if they existed, would have been sent to Wright-Patterson AFB, home of Project Blue Book. The Condon investigators had a difficult time cutting to the point with O'Neil but finally had him state that no incident on September 1st was filed, not that no incident occurred.

Dr. Nathan was not exactly an unreliable source of unfounded rumor to the Condon people so more than a little suspicion was aroused by the Air Force's responses. Craig contacted Nathan again for more information from his source without creating security problems. This source was a man in security who was a friend of the father of Nathan's female employee. He was said to be reticent about talking to anyone, but Nathan's employee, "Joyce," said this man, "S," was her sole source of information and that he had cited a Lt. Col. Jackson as a verification. She also said that the security officer filling in for S, who was away at the moment, had conducted his own inquiries and found people knowledgeable of the affair but who were unwilling to talk about it without clearance from Wright-Patterson.

Joyce elaborated on her knowledge of the report, saying that when she checked with her father, he discovered that an X-15 was not involved but that witnesses did include pilots and control tower personnel and perhaps ground crew. Her source filling in for S told her that he felt there was something to the story because while they were unwilling to talk, his sources would not flatly deny the report. Joyce advised the Condon investigators to get clearance from Wright-Patterson before conducting further inquiries as it was evident that no one would talk without it.

In the meantime Nathan did briefly get to talk to S, who was extremely uncomfortable, saying to Nathan that any revelation of this was "completely illegal" and that he should not have been involved at all.

On September 22nd Dr. Craig managed to speak to S directly. He said that everything was turned over to the Director of Information, a Colonel Smith, and that he could not involve himself anymore. He told Craig that there should not be any problem in getting in touch with Smith.

Several attempts were made to contact Colonel Smith before he was eventually located. He denied everything that happened!

S was contacted in May 1968 regarding any further developments shedding light on the September 1st report. He said he was told to "Stay out of it" by Colonel Smith. That was it, nothing more could be said. Craig asked if S personally felt there was any reason why the Colorado Project should be interested in the story. "No comment," was S's response.

It became clear to Colorado project officials that the Air Force was giving them a run-around. Project coordinator Robert Low, of the infamous "Low memo" which UFOlogists have cited as evidence of the negative bias of the Condon Committee, even objected to the way that the Air Force was evading direct questioning.

This is just one sample of the many lost incidents lurking out there. Frustrating, isn't it, to have no details on the report. Welcome to the UFO investigative world. (File from Condon Collection via Jan Aldrich)

NEW USAF FILES ON MICROFILM

by Jan Aldrich

Attachment 11 to Colonel Weaver's Roswell Report details a search of the records of the Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell AFB. The search found that there were UFO files for the 4th Air Force at Hamilton AFB, Ca. on microfilm roll 33764. This roll was requested and did indeed contain such records under the file number 319.1, Reports General, Reports of Unidentified Flying Objects for 1947-1949.

These files contain about 300 pages of reports, investigations and administrative material. Much of this material is contained in the Project Blue Book files or in other releases. However, new light is shed on known incidents. For example, the item on General Vandenberg's desk calendar about a disc found in Houston is explained in a letter from Intelligence Office, A-2, 10th Air Force, which informed Lt. Col. Springer, A-2, 4th Air Force, that the incident was a hoax. The report was made verbally to Vandenberg and therefore no written record exists. A number of incidents in this file are not listed in the Blue Book printout and there is some correspondence with the Air Defense Command, the 4th Air Force's superior headquarters. Some material from Kenneth Arnold, or about him, are in the files. Letters, telegrams and reports concerning Arnold and his activities are here. A letter from Ray Palmer requests that Arnold investigate the Maury Island sighting (a 1947 incident in Washington State where it was alleged that a boat was hit by mysterious metal from a UFO). David Johnson, the aviation editor of the Boise, Idaho Statesman, a UFO witness himself and an early investigator, telegraphed Lt. Col. Springer that the Air Force should look into Palmer.

The 1947 material contains a number of other items on Maury Island: an FBI report, an accident recovery report and the Air Force report on the incident.

On the chance that the files might continue on into other rolls of microfilm, reels 33763 and 33765 were ordered. Roll 33763 contained no UFO files. Reel 33765 did contain a continuation of the 4th Air Force UFO files, 1950-1952. Compared to the earlier files these were rather sparse. Also on this reel is the Secretary of the Air Force Office of Information file on UFOs, 1947-April 1952. (Both files on roll 33765 are not listed on the index of the microfilm). The AFOI file contains information on Sidney Shallet's 1949 two-part article in the Saturday Evening Post which debunked UFOs. Mr. Stephen Leo, chief of the Office of Information, called Shallet "our friend." However, Major General Cabell, chief of the Directorate of Intelligence, had other ideas, saying that he was unhappy with Shallet and press interest in general. The Directorate of Intelligence drafted a letter for the signature of the Secretary of Defense concerning press activities. Major General Cabell believed that if Shallet was given access to the Air Force's material, then in fairness others could not be denied such access. Cabell thought that press coverage would lead to another spate of UFO reports that would flood the intelligence network and make analysis difficult.

Other items of interest: Before press writers go to Wright Field, the location of the Air Force's UFO records, the Air Force asked for concurrence from the Army and Navy because while the Air Force is the executive agency in this matter, both other services have records involved. Another memo indicates that Wright Field is directed not to show Sidney Shallet any "Top Secret" material (Does this confirm early TS UFO files or is it a typical admonishment in this type of situation?). An April 1952 request for a briefing from the Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman, Richard Russell, ends the file (Senator Russell would be involved in a UFO incident three years later, according to FBI files)