



P.I.P.E. LINE

MUFON PUBLIC RELATIONS DIR.
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SYMPOSIUM NOTES

Dan Wright, please try to draft the letter to Congressmen inviting them to attend the symposium, so that we can publish that in an upcoming Newsletter and Journal, in-time for members to send similar versions of it to their respective Congressmen. Thanks.

John Schuessler has suggested that a commemorative issue of the MUFON Journal be published in 1987, containing speakers' abstracts or brief summaries of each of the papers published in the proceedings from 1975 through 1986. This will be in place of the publication of a special commemorative volume of proceedings which was proposed at the Michigan State University symposium, by Bruce Maccabee.

Since Mildred Biesele was the only one to respond to the idea of raising funds to place a large ad in the Washington Post advertising the 1987 symposium, I suppose that I may infer that the rest of our committee members are not in favor of this idea. If I am wrong, please correct me.

Mass. MUFON, under the leadership of Jim Melesciuc, is asking each member for an additional \$5.00 contribution in addition to the 1987 dues. This money will be sent to help defray the cost of the symposium. Jim and the Mass. MUFON group are to be commended for their altruistic work in this area. Do you all feel that this should be suggested to the other state directors?

Fred Whiting, please find out if the Fund for UFO Research plans to again back the award for outstanding work in UFology with a financial award, as was done last year. Thank you.

I feel very strongly that since the 1987 symposium is being held in the nation's capital, that one of the featured speakers should address the topic of govt. documents released on the UFO subject. I would highly recommend that the symposium coordinators invite someone who is very well versed in this area and is qualified to address this topic in a calm, nonsensational and unemotional manner. I feel that such a person is Barry J. Greenwood. If you agree, please suggest this to Bruce Maccabee in a letter. I have already done so, but have not received a response.

HAVE A VERY HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON AND A HEALTHY AND FRUITFUL NEW YEAR.

1987 P.I.P.E. Committee Meeting

We will plan to hold our annual committee meeting at the symposium in Washington, D.C. on Friday evening, June 26, following the reception, if it meets the approval of the symposium coordinators. (Fred Whiting, please check this out with Bruce Maccabee, and let me know whenever it is convenient, if this is acceptable with your committee). This will be a very important meeting, as I think it is time to reexamine our public information priorities and programs and perhaps make some sweeping changes and initiate a new approach. Selective public information should probably be our focus from now on, and we should concentrate our major efforts on people in positions to actually make a difference in the subject, (i.e., persons of influence, persons of scientific orientation, persons of wealth who might contribute toward funding research, media personnel, etc.). This is not to say that we will ignore the general public, as that type of public info. merits some effort, but we should not concentrate major effort in that area and neglect the other mentioned above. We will need everyone's input on this to see if we are in agreement on this. Please try to attend the symposium and plan to share your ideas with us at this meeting.

HAWAII CHECKS IN

I have just heard from John Dressler, a section director for Hawaii, who has reported on that state's events for National UFO Info. Week, 1986. Both he and State Director, Dr. Michael Brein, were interviewed on various tv shows. Also, John spent 10 hours answering questions at the Hawaii State Fair Aerospace Exhibit. (You may recall that Northern CA's UFO exhibit was a part of that aerospace exhibit at the Hawaii State Fair). It is heartening to see another state join the ranks of those doing public information in the UFO subject.

MEDIA QUESTIONED ABOUT UFO SUBJECT

Jim Spicer, State Section Director for Maricopa County, Arizona, recently put a few comments on the UFO subject and a question for media personnel on the Compuserve computer network. The responses Jim received as to why the media will not treat the subject of UFOs seriously, are interesting, but not surprising. The misinformation and total lack of information on the part of some media personnel is disgraceful. Jim has compiled an article for the MUFON UFO Journal summarizing the responses.

PUBLIC RELATIONS DILEMMA

It would seem that any serious student of the UFO subject worth his or her salt would clearly understand the need for accuracy and objectivity in all statements made by UFOlogists to the media or to the general public. It would also seem that most serious UFOlogists share common goals: to work toward acceptance of the UFO subject as a legitimate area of serious study, and to work toward a solution to this intriguing enigma. Keeping these things in mind, then, it is very difficult to comprehend why there is so much contact with the tabloids on the part of serious UFOlogists. The tabloids are noted for sensationalism and for entertainment rather than for information. Why do our colleagues keep insisting on shooting themselves in the foot (to borrow a phrase from Dan Wright)?

Two recent tabloid articles featuring Walt Andrus and Stanton Friedman have stirred the ire of many of our members, who have called or written to demand action on the part of the PR office in this matter.

This situation poses a dilemma for the PR office, and presents a rather painful set of circumstances. Since our organization is comprised of volunteers, it is rather difficult to dictate to them what is considered acceptable and what is not, as far as media interviews are concerned.

On the other hand, who, if not the public information office (or P.I.P.E. committee,) is the appropriate person(s) to offer a suggested policy for such interviews?

Some time ago, four members of our P.I.P.E. Committee authored a suggested media policy for MUFON, which met with general approval from the other members of our committee. The policy draft then was submitted by Walt to the MUFON Board of Directors for its input. From this group, we have received a wide range of responses. These vary from total approval to total disapproval. One person even suggests that the tabloids, although usually sensational, are the only source of getting UFO material published, and should, therefore be used. Another expresses the feeling that the media policy is an ego trip for the P.I.P.E. Committee, although the person feels that the intent of the policy is honorable.

Perhaps we are out of line suggesting a media policy to volunteers. Perhaps it is even a form of ego-trip, although that was not the case, as far as I know.

One can go back and forth ad infinitum pondering these comments, but the fact remains that we are left with a situation which is very negative for our organization and for the UFO subject itself.

First of all, all of this lack of agreement on the part of UFOlogists serves only to keep the subject at status quo and to detract from both our credibility and our professionalism as an organization.

Secondly, whether right or wrong, there are several good persons in our field who are expressing an interest in leaving the organization and beginning a new organization for UFO research.

This would be a very sad state of affairs should it come to pass. So many UFO organizations have grown and flourished, only to later disappear from existence, perpetuating the myth that UFOs are a passing fad. MUFON will observe its 20th birthday in 1989. It would be rather tragic if some of our more active persons were to leave prior to that date and dilute our resources even more. There aren't that many good, dedicated investigators and researchers around. We need to work together, not go off in separate directions.

That is definitely not to say that we should stick together and ignore the problem for the sake of the subject. It is to say, however, that we should stick together to correct the problem and make the organization better and stronger.

The dilemma remains, though. How do we go about correcting the problem of public information which is not credible, when we are dealing with volunteers? Also, how do we do this in such a manner that we are not viewed as a power group by our members?

I have always considered UFO work to be of utmost importance, and it has been a true labor of love on my part., I am in this for life. However, this situation has really been a great source of frustration and personal turmoil for me. It has made me see why so many good people in the past have given in to frustration and have left the UFO field.

This situation must be dealt with. It apparently requires a new approach, since the past efforts involving correspondence, and articles in the Newsletter and Journal and personal conversations have not changed the situation to any noticeable degree. On the other hand, I am not in favor of dealing with the problem in a public manner. This sort of dissent among us provides fuel for the fires of the skeptics, and that serves no constructive purpose.

This edition of the P.I.P.E. Line is to be kept within the P.I.P.E. Committee. It is not to be published elsewhere or shared with your membership in your states. I think it is important that our committee begin a frank and honest dialogue as to how best to handle this situation before the topic leaves the confines of this committee. Your cooperation in this matter is appreciated. Above all, please share your views on this situation with me as soon as possible.

Marge Christensen