



The Science Fiction of UFOs

Robert P. Swiatek

Fund for UFO Research



The reaction of most scientists and academicians to the subject of UFOs has been strikingly consistent for almost 50 years. Condescension tempered with disgust, of the type once levelled against Orville and Wilbur Wright when it came to flying. A remark noting the ignorance of the populace with regard to meteorological and astronomical phenomena may be thrown in for good measure. Yet the facts seem to belie a casual dismissal of the UFO puzzle and to argue for the existence of unknown flying objects in this nation's skies.

Fallacies abound where UFOs are concerned and are repeated until they assume the status of facts. According to this view, only the inebriated see UFOs and physical traces are never left. If UFOs appear on radar screens, the equipment must be malfunctioning. It comes as a surprise, therefore, that the best reports come from the most qualified witnesses, that landing traces number in the thousands. A cache of UFO photographs, passing analytical muster, is available for all and sundry to study.

The Fund for UFO Research seeks to advance understanding of the UFO phenomenon by providing grants for scientific research. Receiving its income from private donations and document sales, it has raised in excess of one-half million dollars since 1979. Its board of directors consists mainly of researchers and scientists.

Rob Swiatek, a member of the Fund's executive committee, began studying UFOs in 1968 and has been associated with the Fund for nine years. He has degrees in physics and earth science and is currently employed by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office in Arlington, Virginia.

Saturday, February 17, 1996 Davis Library, 6400 Arlington Road, Bethesda, Maryland

Free Admission; All Welcome - Members and Nonmembers

Call the NCAS Skeptic Line at 301-587-3827 for further info.

Talk on Spiritualism

NCAS Board member Chip Denman will speak on *If the Spirit is Willing: a brief history of seances and spiritualism* at the Elkridge, Howard County, (on Route 1) Maryland library on Tuesday, February 13 at 7pm. Spiritualism, the movement which held that we can turn the lights down low and converse with the spirit world, was embraced in its heyday by some of the most prominent scientists and intellectuals of the 19th and early 20th century. We'll turn up the lights a bit to get a closer look a society and some of the movers and shakers of the day, as well as glimpse at their modern counterparts.

Science and Pseudo-Science

Johns Hopkins School of Continuing Studies, in cooperation with NCAS, is presenting a series of lectures at its Columbia, Maryland center on Thursdays, from March 21 until May 2 (except for April 4) at 8:30pm. The cost for the series is \$90 (\$70 for NCAS members).

- Mar 21 -- Chip Denman & Strange coincidences and probability
- Mar 28 -- Sean O'Neill & Hypnosis and recovered memories
- Apr 11 -- Walter F. Rowe & Psychic detectives
- Apr 18 -- Jamy Ian Swiss & The illusion of psychic powers
- Apr 25 -- Chip Denman & Spiritualism and psychic investigation
- May 2 -- Robert Park & When scientists fool themselves

Call JHU at 410-516-4842 for information. Call 410-516-8516 to register.

NCAS DIRECTORS INVITE YOU TO JOIN THEM IN A FUN THING...

NCAS has a large Board of Directors to emphasize that critical thinking can be expressed in many ways. That belief has helped to develop a well-rounded organization that is recognized as a national leader. New ideas help keep it there. NCAS members vote each year for at least eight directors to plan our monthly programs, special presentations, bulletins, newsletters, science fair critiques, and educational outreach programs. Why not help make it all happen? No pay, but the satisfaction of doing something useful while having fun is hard to beat.

Degrees and technical experience aren't essential; membership in NCAS, lots of interest in critical thinking, and a little time are. If interested we need a short biography for the ballot. Take a look at previous ballots for examples or contact Joe Himes, NCAS President for a copy and for general information. Joe can be reached at home via telephone (703/280-2503) or e-mail (75460.60@compuserve.com). Please send your ballot-ready bio by March 10 to Marv Zelkowitz, NCAS Secretary, at 10058 Cotton Mill Lane, Columbia, MD 21046 or via e-mail to mvz@cs.umd.edu.

NCAS Joke of the Month



Sorry to say that the supply of good skeptics jokes has been depleted. If you have any contributions for this column, please send to Marv Zelkowitz, 10058 Cotton Mill Lane, Columbia, Maryland or by e-mail to mvz@cs.umd.edu.

Renewal time?

Is your membership to NCAS due for a renewal? Check the date on your mailing label, and if so, send \$20 for 1 year (\$30 for 2 people at same address) to NCAS, 8006 Valley St., Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Last Change: February 5, 1996