



THE HOLIDAY WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN

THIS WEEKEND: A FIGHTER □ CHINA OPENS UP □ LONDON LIKES □ FEAR OF FLYING □ ISLAND IN THE SUN

DURING 1978, that shimmering enigma, the UFO, signed its nameless thousands of times in Australian skies, seas and fields.

My records, and those of Victoria's UFO Research Society, show that the total of reported sightings across the nation last year came close to double the 1957-1978 average.

This escalation in alleged saucer activity was part of a "flap," which erupted intermittently around the world.

Through AAP, in May and August, came reports of UFOs having crashed — in the Argentine jungle and a Madagascar marketplace, with the military removing the wreckage in each case.

The tiny nation of Granada was so pestered by UFOs that its President, Sir Eric Gairy, pleaded in the United Nations for an international inquiry.

He was supported by Professor J. Allen Hynek, who was astronomical adviser to the U.S. Air Force's Project Bluebook — and by ex-astronaut Gordon Cooper, who told a UN General Assembly political committee that he had seen fleets of flying saucers over Europe in 1951.

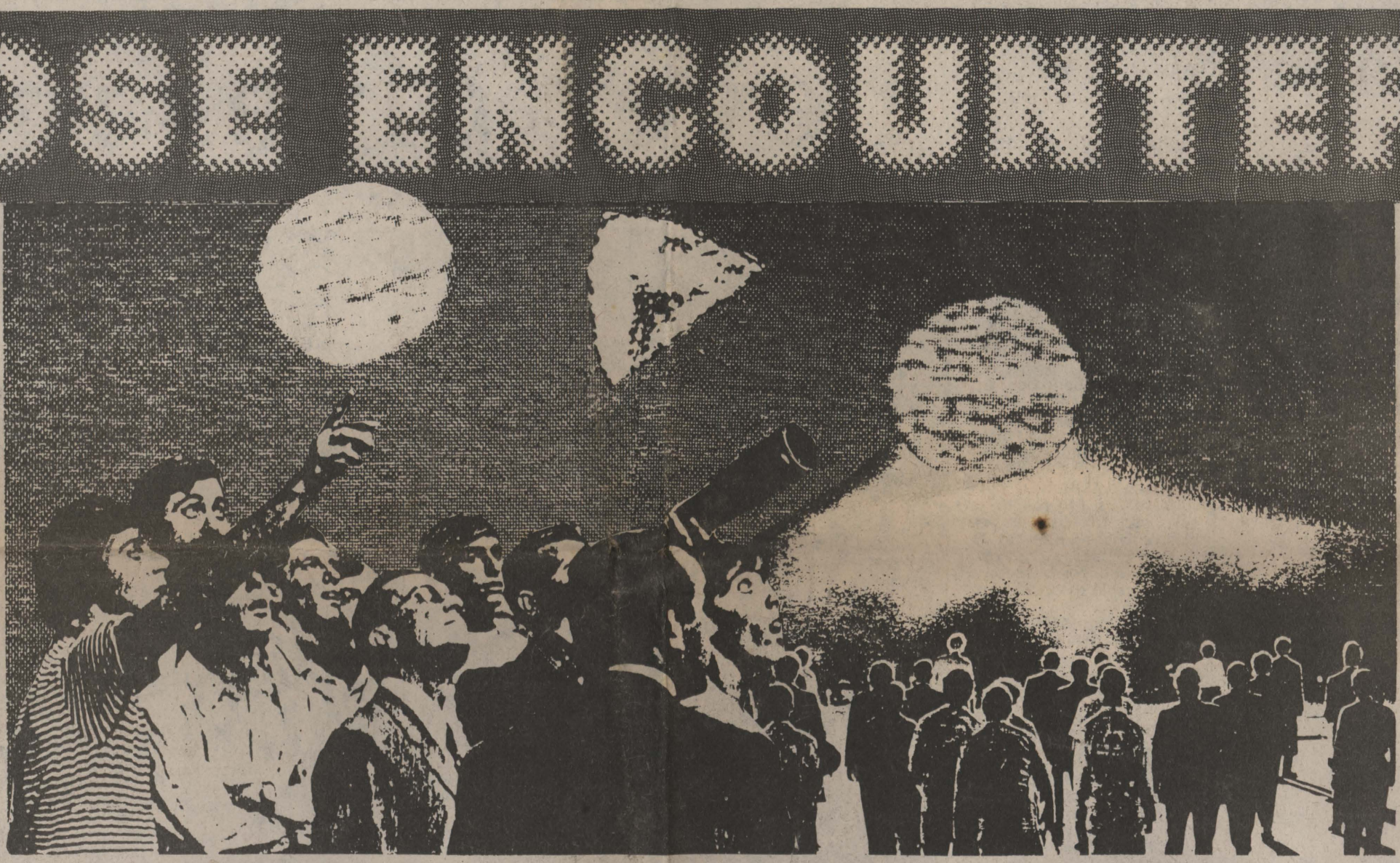
"Conventional" reports of cars being paced, and their engines stopped by hovering disc-craft continued to pour into the telephones of Australian newspapers, research groups, the RAAF, and such organisations as Professor J. Allen Hynek's centre for UFO studies in Illinois.

Belying allegations that they were sensationalising the subject, the world's major papers were unable to find room for more than a fraction of this purported evidence.

By failing to laboriously chronicle the sheer mass of UFO claims, the press gave continuing relevance to a speech made by atmospheric physicist Professor James McDonald to the Society of Newspaper Editors in Washington in 1967.

McDonald, who during a visit to Australia for the U.S. Navy described us as "probably the most intensely UFO-plagued nation in the world," said: "Only one or two per cent of locally reported American sightings are read beyond the area of the nearest small-town newspaper.

"If each day's paper in each major city carried an adequate account of all



THE wave of UFO sightings once again raises the question — are we alone? Probably not, says JOHN PINKNEY.

would be up in arms in a week, demanding that Congress find out what is going on."

THOSE who believe that the U.S. and Australian governments already know more than they are telling us had their convictions strengthened by events following the disappearance of Cessna pilot Frederick Valentich over Bass Strait on Saturday, October 21.

Before Melbourne lost radio contact, allegedly at 7.12 pm, Valentich said a huge, brilliantly-lit craft was hovering above him.

Moorabbin airport employees have told me that next morning, Department of Transport officials visited the 'drome, and said no one was to relay any rumors to the media

However, the news was leaked to the air media by a pilot who had overheard the radio exchange between Valentich and Melbourne.

Under intense pressure from the newspapers the D.O.T. then released a "transcript" of the tape, which was officially presented as running from 7.06 pm to 7.12 pm — a total of six minutes.

When I timed this so-called transcript on a stopwatch it ran for only 89 seconds.

The department then conceded that it had released only the "highlights." A spokesman told me it was "against official policy" to allow the press to hear the entire radio exchange — although, apparently, it was "policy" to release part of it.

The vanished pilot's father, Mr Guido Valentich, is dissatisfied, too. At Melbourne's Channel 0 this week,

no means convinced that the tape the D.O.T. played him was the full one.

The Bass Strait case inspired some ingenious attempts at UFO debunking.

According to one widely-published theory, Valentich was disorientated and flying upside-down.

This shaky scenario sidestepped the fact that the DSJ Cessna has a gravity-feed fuel system, and will, if inverted, stall after five seconds.

DURING a study of *The Australian's* back files, I discovered some eerie overtures to the Valentich incident.

On May 5, 1977, 20-year-old pilot Manuel Jose Lopez Ojeda (same age as Valentich) took off, also in a Cessna, from Eldorado Airport in Bogota, Columbia.

More than 100,000 listeners to

surrounding radio stations heard him describe the ensuing daymare.

At 10 am, the Cessna began shaking violently. Ojeda looked up and saw "an oval object, the color of a dark cloud, surrounding yellowish and red phosphorescent lights, shining with high intensity."

The lights grew brighter until they blinded the pilot. For 45 minutes, as radar tracked the huge UFO, the tower painstakingly guided him, totally sightless, to a landing.

Tough-minded American engineer Paul Norman, whom I regard as Australia's premier UFO investigator, has spent two months, and inches of Goodyear rubber, compiling a dossier on what scores of people say they saw on the day Valentich and his Cessna vanished.

A particularly impressive report comes from an entire cricket team at Corio, who stopped play to watch an immense "craft" moving slowly above them.

But the most impressive testimonies are those published before the event.

For six weeks before the Bass Strait incident made headlines in a host of languages, the tiny King Island News was chronicling a wave of UFO sightings.

Some have been confirmed to me by police. King Island, of course, was Frederick Valentich's destination.

FRENCH physicist Jacques Vallee believes that UFO's are deliberately offering us just enough evidence of their existence to condition us, and change our cultural attitudes.

But, knowing that we will grow more swiftly on conundrums than on certitudes, they always leave themselves an escape clause.

We see something moving at 28,000 km/h on radar. But could it be some natural magnetic phenomenon?

The object on Channel 0's film resembled a domed and rimmed craft.

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us as "probably the most intensely UFO-plagued nation in the world," said: "Only one or two per cent of locally reported American sightings are read beyond the area of the nearest small-town newspaper.

"If each day's paper in each major city carried an adequate account of all the U.S. UFO reports for the preceding 24 hours, the citizenry

at 1.12 pm, Valentich said a huge, brilliantly-lit craft was hovering above him.

Moorabbin airport employees have told me that next morning, Department of Transport officials visited the 'drome, and said no one was to relay any rumors to the media about the manner of Valentich's disappearance.

it had released only the "highlights." A spokesman told me it was "against official policy" to allow the press to hear the entire radio exchange — although, apparently, it was "policy" to release part of it.

The vanished pilot's father, Mr Guido Valentich, is dissatisfied, too.

At Melbourne's Channel 0 this week, before we appeared together on a panel discussion, he told me he was by

The \$3 million aliens question

THE alleged occupants of UFOs are carrying a colossal ransom on their bulbous heads.

Currently, firms are offering prizes totalling almost \$3 million to anyone who can provide "positive proof" that intelligent aliens are visiting earth.

The most wallet-watering cosmic carrot (\$1.8 million) is being dangled by Scotland's Cutty Sark whisky company. Recently, a spokesman soberly commented: "We do not

expect to have to pay anyone."

Nevertheless, Cutty Sark has, with commendable Scottish caution, taken out \$20,000 insurance with Lloyds of London.

Lloyds are apparently as confident of keeping their cash as are the London bookmakers, Ladbrokes. This week (despite that intriguing New Zealand film) the firm continued to offer 250-1 against aliens touching down outside Cutty Sark's bottling

plant — or anywhere else — and demanding: "Take me to your litre."

A more modest UFO prize (a mere \$1 million) has been announced by an American weekly, the National Enquirer.

But the consensus among lawyers, and students of UFO ransoms generally, is that no one will get his elbows into either jackpot unless he can produce the actual body of a sentient extraterrestrial — alive or dead.

It's all quite natural say our space men

AUSTRALIAN space experts were almost unanimous this week in condemning the UFO sightings over New Zealand as nothing more than another example of natural phenomena not yet fully understood by human science.

Space specialists interviewed said a lot more evidence was required before anyone could scientifically support the theory that the planet earth last week experienced its first fully evidenced close encounter.

And an international authority on research into extra-terrestrial life said the film of the alleged sighting was almost certainly not of craft from another civilisation in the universe.

Professor Ronald Brown, head of the department of chemistry at Monash University in Melbourne said present evidence tended to disprove the sighting was of anything but natural phenomena.

"As experience has shown, there have been many examples in the history of science where research has later provided mundane explanations," he said.

"Looking at the film of the New Zealand sightings, I think it is quite feasible that an unusual shower of meteors could have had a similar appearance."

Professor Brown is one of the world's leading specialists in galactochemistry and has made a special study of the origins of human life and their relationship with prospects of life elsewhere in the universe.

"All my training as a scientist tells me that the spacecraft theory is extremely unlikely," he said.

"From what we already know about the solar system, it is hard to believe.

"It is possible that lifeforms exist elsewhere in the universe, but I do not believe that other creatures would be able to shift a solid object such as a

BILL BEMISTER finds there are many people who are more sceptical.

spacecraft at such enormous speed. This is in view, of the distances involved and the time required to cover them.

"An incredible amount of energy would be required to propel such a craft, and science already knows that the universe, as we scientifically experience it through our research, contains only a limited amount.

"Dismissing the theory that fuel could be carried aboard a craft over such a distance, any flight would be required to take on fuel in transit.

"Space contains a small amount of hydrogen which could be utilised for this purpose, but to pick up enough, the craft would have to have a snout many kilometres wide. If this were the case, it would be possible to convert the hydrogen by fusion to propellant.

"We have been unable to do this on earth, but one must presume a civilisation capable of travelling such distances would have solved the process."

Professor Brown added: "My hypothesis is that a craft from even the nearest solar system which could considerably support life, would have to be so large as to show up on radar as many times larger than the objects sighted over New Zealand.

"I believe these things are another example of natural phenomena which come from within our solar system, but we don't have enough evidence to make a scientific judgment."

The director of the Science Museum of Victoria, Mr F. J. Kendall supported Professor Brown's hypothesis.

"To conclude from the few unexplained sightings of UFOs, particularly the recent New Zealand sightings, that, without any

corroborative evidence, members from another civilisation have entered our atmosphere is not scientifically acceptable," he said.

"It is more likely that as further studies are made, those sightings not yet explained will be understood in the terms of known laws of physics and chemistry.

"For many years there have been reports of UFOs seen moving in the sky. To date there has been no scientifically acceptable explanation for many of them.

"A great number have been shown to be aircraft on non-scheduled flights, debris from space launchings, and planets seen in unusual atmospheric conditions."

Meanwhile, Australian military experts say they are sceptical of the latest UFO reports.

The RAAF claims almost 90 per cent of UFO sightings which have been investigated so far prove to have natural causes. Those few remaining reports which the air force has been unable to explain, often prove to be hoaxes.

The Directorate of Air Force Intelligence in Canberra — the organisation responsible for collation and evaluation of UFO reports — has received no evidence from satellite co-ordination centres that support the New Zealand or any other sightings.

A directorate staff officer said this week that it was usual for allied agencies controlling satellite surveillance to exchange information for defence purposes. None of the sweeps of American satellites have shown any UFO activity.

The officer said: "Because of the resolution of the land resources satellites, it is unlikely they would pick up anything smaller than four times the size of a Boeing 747. But what we can see from defence satellite reports and other aerial surveillance, there is no evidence to confirm the UFO sightings."

ARDA NEW PR



YOU CAN'T BUY 25^S FOR

Ardath 25^s still have the & size but now they're

than in the case of his predecessor, Ian Viner. Chaney, as a senator, depends for his pre-selection on the WA Liberal Party council — an institution in which

Chaney jnr was ecstatic at the time. "It just shows that it is possible to beat money and resources," he said.

Although a relatively

after deputy Phil Lynch ran into trouble over his private financial arrangements. It was the lawyer Chaney who helped

Crown Prosecutor. During that time he became increasingly offended by the racial attitudes shown by some

There comes a point of time when you have to become self-sustaining if you are ing, Chaney's political future looks good.

Cosmic pranksters

But could we be making some simple mistake?

Across Australia, there are hundreds of known "saucer rings" in which grass has never grown again. Obviously something has landed there. Or does it only seem obvious?

Vallee also theorises that the UFO is never noticed — but always arranges to be seen.

He would find supporters among the people of saucer-haunted St George, Queensland, which last year resembled a location for Close Encounters.

The St George saucers have a penchant for pursuing people.

Among those who have seen them individually — and on different dates — are former MP Mr Eddie Beardmore, Mr John Beardmore, farmer and former alderman, and local newspaper editor Mr Max Pringle.

On September 29 last year, Murray Beardmore, Tony Wilson and William Strofield were spotlighting for pigs when a bright orange ball hurtled out of the sky and hovered metres from their car.

They said it was oval-shaped and the size of a large refrigerator. Terrified,

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they turned around and drove for home.

THE object followed them — swooping down in front of the car several times, so they had to brake to avoid it. On one swoop, the motor stopped. The friends took five minutes to get it going.

At the farm gate, Murray Beardmore shot at the arcane intruder. It spun around and headed for the west.

This incident — variations on which have occurred in St George dozens of times since 1968 — was also witnessed by Messrs Eddie and John Beardmore.

Months earlier, the thing had followed editor Max Pringle's car. He peered at it through binoculars. It seemed to be covered with red and green spots.

Biologist Ivan Sanderson theorises that mischievous UFOs of this kind

are not craft at all, but biological entities — as playful, or vicious, as dogs.

Whether or not Sanderson is right, I believe the notion that UFOs are spaceships, from another planet, will prove (if ever anything is proved) naive and simplistic.

I share Vallee's view that something of an order unimaginable to us is involving us in an elaborate game.

I have never yet met an Australian UFO debunker (and this would include Phillip Adams) who has bothered to look further than the end of his daily newspaper.

I would, contrariwise, be surprised if anyone who bothered to interview, say, 200 witnesses first-hand, study radar reports, and look at rings and computer-enhanced photographs, would come out of the experience without thinking it at *least possible* that something was keeping mankind company.

But even though the paradox-steeped pace is increasing, and blips are dripping from the radar screens, I doubt whether our sometimes merry, sometimes menacing companions are ready, yet, to announce their intentions.



PROFESSOR HYNEK . . . air force expert