



**Alien Discussions:
Proceedings of the Abduction Study
Conference held at M.I.T., June 13-17, 1992
North Cambridge Press, 1995**

Reviewed by Robert Bletchman

Dr. J. Allen Hynek said the impetus to his writing the now classic *The UFO Experience*, Regnery, 1972, was to satisfy the inquiries by friends of where to find a good book on the UFO subject. Harvard psychiatrist Dr. John E. Mack, co-sponsor of this landmark conference, echoes that sentiment in his concluding remarks when he notes that the published proceedings of same "will for the first time give us a book we can give proudly to people and say, 'Here is solid information in this field.'"

The field the conference explored is of course the alien abduction phenomenon, and the book itself is a 684-page transcription of speeches, along with a glossary, a 50-page index and an addendum by Thomas (Eddie) Bullard, Ph.D., which surveyed investigators and researchers after the conference. Among the invitation-only experts presenting papers or reports were 12 abductees, one anthropologist, three author/investigators, three experts in related fields (NDE, Old Hag and ritual abuse), two experts in scientific analysis (dermatopathology and neuroradiology), one folklorist, one historian, 12 investigators, three media representatives, five MDs; one neuropsychologist, 11 Ph.D. psychologists, one philosopher, three physicists, two religious studies/ministers, four social workers and three sociologists.

Such a book should come with a warning label: Compelling Contents May Be Inimical To Your Present Career. Indeed, it's hard to work one's way through what is essentially a vast research tool without wanting to make a personal contribution to this challenging and profoundly important work. It is noted, however, that the conference's use of its facilities was not to be taken as an endorsement of the legitimacy of alien abduction research by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, but as an affirmation of the principles of freedom of academic research and expression. Dr. Mack and his co-sponsor, M.I.T. physicist David E. Pritchard, concurred in their opening remarks that one should expect to discover few answers, but that one would also encounter "science in action . . . therapeutic techniques that help [the abductees] and promising [new] research directions."

The submitted papers are short and punchy; graphics, illustrations and drawings abound. Lively discussions cap most papers and reports. The Chapter headings provide the sweep of areas covered. They are: The Abduction Experience, Evidence, Psychology of Abductees,

Hypotheses, Ethics, Therapy and Investigation, and What Should We Consider Next? The diversity of the presenters and their hypotheses (most were amenable to falsification testing) did however at rare times go from the ridiculous to the sublime. But this is to the credit of the conference and the book, as an embodiment of Gestalt theory, where the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

Of greatest interest to this reader were research findings which strongly imply a literal interpretation of the abduction phenomena. A particular example is Dr. John G. Miller's paper, "Medical Procedural Differences: Alien vs. Human," which compares alleged alien doctors' practices with those of their human counterparts. Whereas the aliens assert "we have the right to do this," human doctors try to explain; alien doctors perform mind scans, human doctors ask questions; alien doctors directly probe nasal passages with sharp objects, human doctors use a speculum to open the nostril first, etc. Dr. Miller concludes that "the differences between reported alien and known human medical techniques and procedures are great enough to invalidate any theory that these reports somehow originate in the witnesses' own medical experience or knowledge." Another such example was provided by Deborah Bruce Truncale, M. Divinity, Ph.D. Psychology, from her paper, "Alien/UFO Experiences of Children." Her experience "observing children making up and telling a story [is] that they generally take their time, engage in eye contact or stop to check out the listener's reaction. When observing children relate abduction/alien encounters they are generally more animated and speak quickly, recalling an account without the behavior that accompanies making up or story telling." To the researchers, however, there will likely be infinitely more potential pay dirt in work being done by Dan Wright, Manager of MUFON's Abduction Transcription Project. What was envisioned (now deep in process) is a computer-accessible "database containing the verbatim hypnosis transcripts (hundreds) from the cases on audio tape that you (the researchers) consider credible."

Noted UFO skeptic Robert Sheaffer presented "A Skeptical Perspective on UFO Abductions." He sarcastically puts down the varied appearances of alien prototypes seen in different countries as meaning that the "Galactic High Command must have divided earth into Alien Occupation Zones." Then there's the paper by Paul Horowitz, Ph.D. Physics, entitled "Radio Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence." He argues that extraordinary energy expenditures and cost constraints would have E. T. phone home rather than ride around the universe in a spaceship. Of course he's missed the historic fact that science generally advances by doing things differently and in unexpected ways. For a universe that may be infinitely old and teeming with intelligent life, who can guess what the science and technology of a very ancient society might, or might not, consist of?

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FUND'S YEAR

- A study of strange images on Shuttle Discovery videotape to be published in 1995.
- A pilot study of UFO cases involving radiation injuries.
- Expanded research into the massive 1947 wave of UFO reports.
- Work on the UFO papers of the late Dr. James McDonald, senior atmospheric physicist at the University of Arizona.
- Symposia on Government secrecy and on "abductions."

For additional information, contact Don Berliner, Fund for UFO Research, Inc., P.O. Box 277, Mount Rainier, MD 20712. Tel./fax 703-684-6032.

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Don A. Johnson, P.O. Box 446, Concord, NH 03302. The cost of a basic listing is \$10.00 plus \$3.00 postage and handling. These listings have reports through 1992, but gaps are still being filled for some years during the 1980s (such as 1983-85). When ordering specify if the sort is to be by date or by geographic area. This database is not available on CD-ROM.

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Joseph Ritrovato conducts research work for a major daily newspaper. He hopes the above will stimulate debate and generate additional research activity into UFOs and their cycles.

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Finally, as Dave Pritchard said in his concluding remarks: "Really, we have an incredible problem that begs for a careful and multidisciplinary investigation."

A great tool is now available to enhance that process. Copies of *Alien Discussions* are \$55.00 each, p/h included and can be ordered from Proceedings, P.O. Box 241, North Cambridge Post Office, Cambridge, MA 02140. Foreign orders are \$60.00 U.S.

UFOS ON LINE

Thanks for a great article from Steve Mizrach on everything UFO-related that's available from the Internet and bulletin board services. It looks like you can find almost anything, although driving the highway is still pretty difficult for many. The information reported about the

commercial online services was, unfortunately, several years out of date.

I'd like to correct the impression that there isn't much happening in the way of UFOs in the services CompuServe and America OnLine. These services, for my wife Sara and I, are ideal because we get local access, real-time communications, ease of use, low rates (in the US), graphical interfaces, and a tight-knit worldwide community that generally supplies anything we need in the way of human interactions.

We are the section leaders of UFO Theories on CompuServe's New Age Forum. The forum has been around for over three years now, with more than 50,000 members. It has grown enough that it is scheduled to double into an A and B section on March 1st. We have Whitley Strieber in his own Communion Section, as well as Richard Bach and Jach Purcel.

Sara and I have hosted online conferences in New Age Forum with several UFO investigators and will next have as guest Marc Davenport. His wife Leah Haley was on CompuServe's Stein OnLine electronic talk show two weeks ago. Also, MUFON is represented by Michael Curta on the Encounters Forum, which has many UFO threads and, along with the New Age Forum, posts electronic issues of the *Swamp Gas Journal* and *The Desert Rat*. A year ago we found the Extraterrestrials section in the Space Forum, but like the notorious Issues section mentioned in the article, there's no protection from ridicule and abuse from anyone who feels like flaming. The New Age Forum was founded on the principle that it should be a place for experiencers and thinkers to get away from the skeptics and debunkers, and it really is like a second home to us now.

A new forum opened on AOL in December, called The Institute for the Study of Contact with Non-human Intelligences, founded by Michael Lindemann and joined by Karla Turner, Linda Howe, John Carpenter, Dan Drasin, and later on by Stanton Friedman and others. It is set up as an electronic school. To go there, use the keyword EUN (for Electronic University Network), then click the button Continuing Education, then folder ISCNI; it's listed first.

The main drawback is that it has yearly fees and campus passes that keep parts of the forum private unless you pay the tuitions. However, there is some benefit to having an area for low-profile studies, given the nature of the material. They have rapidly become very popular, with the public area hosting several wild conferences, an "electronic cafe" and a sprinkling of library files.

UFO: Theories, Case Studies, and Communion are the areas on CompuServe's New Age Forum we hang out in, but on March 1st there will be some new discussion sections for UFOs, New Physics and other related topics. We are at 73521,3045 on CIS and SDS2SQS on AOL.

— Shannon & Sara Smith
Journal Subscribers

UFO YEAR IN REVIEW: 1994

The 47th year of the modern UFO era was marked by the first official UFO-related report from the U.S. Government in 25 years, and by the continuation of almost 50 years of sightings. The level of scientific interest and activity continues to rise.

SIGHTINGS

The majority of current reports of alleged UFOs describe odd lights in the night sky, which are exceedingly difficult to investigate because they contain so little information. But an increasing number of reports in 1994 were of distinct objects, rather than just lights. Many of these objects were said to be triangular in shape and able to fly silently at unusually low speed (under 50 mph) and then quickly accelerate to very high speed.

In March, there was a rash of reports from southwestern Michigan, triggered by the tracking of several unexplained targets by U.S. Weather Service radar and by visual sightings. For several nights, reports poured in to newspapers, radio and TV stations, airports, etc., from average and from skilled observers. No explanations were forthcoming.

GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY

In January, following his inability to get a satisfactory explanation for the July, 1947, UFO? crash in New Mexico from the Secretary of Defense, Rep. Steve Schiff (R-NM) formally asked the General Accounting Office to investigate. The GAO then set out to search for government documents related to this incident, which was highly publicized at the time. No date has been set for the GAO's report to Rep. Schiff, but the GAO has said it will turn over everything it finds to Rep. Schiff. And he has stated that everything he learns will be made public.

In September, the U.S. Air Force announced the results of its effort, in support of the GAO, to find documentary evidence of the so-called "Roswell incident." Rather than turn over its information to the GAO, it chose to make it public, announcing that it had "discovered" that what had been recovered in New Mexico was the remains of a then-cluster of balloons launched as part of tests for the then-secret Project Mogul. Enthusiasm for this "explanation" was hinted at almost two years before, by two former Project Mogul employees, as the project had been declassified many years earlier.

In response to the USAF report, the Fund for UFO Research pointed out that the remains of synthetic rubber balloons known to have been used by Project Mogul in early July, 1947, bore no resemblance to the materials described by first-hand witnesses to the Roswell crash. Moreover, the USAF report states that such balloon materials disintegrate in a few days. This would have left

nothing that witnesses would have noticed, let alone found mysterious, aside from easily-identified pieces of flimsy radar reflectors.

ABDUCTIONS

Despite the truly bizarre nature of these claims of highly unwelcome interference in personal lives by presumed aliens, reports of such activity continue to stream in. They contain striking patterns and similarities, as well as specific items of description that have been kept out of publication so they can be used as internal checks. It appears that thousands of apparently innocent individuals in all parts of the world are involved in the same strange experiences, which mental health professionals have been unable to explain.

Publication is expected early in 1995 of the proceedings of a scientific conference on abductions held at (but not by) the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This 600-page plus report will be distributed to university libraries, medical schools and other facilities where they can be studied by interested professionals. Any member of the press wishing a copy should contact the Fund for UFO Research, Inc.

In addition, a computer database of abduction cases is nearing the stage where it will be made available to qualified professionals who wish to study a large body of information in their efforts to understand this peculiar phenomenon.

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

The funding available for serious scientific research into the UFO mystery has increased considerably, thanks to the support of the Bigelow Foundation of Las Vegas, Nevada. Advising the Foundation are representatives of the three major private UFO organizations: the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies, Chicago, IL; the Mutual UFO Network, Seguin, TX, and the Fund for UFO Research. Research proposals are being invited, and the results of research will be published.

PERIPHERAL MATTERS

Crop Formations. For many years, scores and even hundreds of precise, complex formations have appeared in fields of grain, mainly in the southwest of England. There is little basis for assuming any direct connection to UFOs, though this is one of many explanations being considered. Some and possibly many or even all of these formations could well be hoaxes, as the ability to hoax formations and fool so-called experts has been demonstrated. Yet despite the drop in press attention being paid them, the formations continued to appear in England and North America in 1994.

Cattle Mutilations. Reports of allegedly high-tech mutilations of cows, horses and other farm animals have continued to come in. While these, too, are only speculatively connected to UFOs, the possibility exists.