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00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:22,120

They come from all walks of life.

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00:00:22,120 --> 00:00:27,040

Computer experts, artists, engineers, booksellers and blue collar workers.

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00:00:27,040 --> 00:00:29,040

They all have one thing in common.

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00:00:29,040 --> 00:00:31,040

A fascination for the paranormal.

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00:00:31,040 --> 00:00:39,040

At times passionate to the point of being obsessed, they are known as UFO hunters.

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For the past 50 years, the phenomenon of unidentified flying objects commonly referred to as UFOs

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00:01:28,040 --> 00:01:31,040

has frequently made the headlines.

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00:01:31,040 --> 00:01:37,040

Exploited by tabloids, ridiculed by skeptics and for the most part scorned by the scientific community,

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the UFO phenomenon has captured popular imagination.

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In Canada, surveys confirm that the public is interested in unidentified flying objects.

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In the United States, dozens of books on the subject are published each year

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00:01:52,040 --> 00:01:56,040

and Hollywood generally comes out with at least one film per season.

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The U.S. has the largest UFO group in the world called Mufan, the mutual UFO network.

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00:02:08,040 --> 00:02:15,040

Its members gather every year at the International UFO Symposium,

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00:02:15,040 --> 00:02:23,040

Webmaster for the Internet site UFOcity.com and co-author of Left at East Gate.

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00:02:23,040 --> 00:02:26,040

Peter Robbins is a well-known New York artist.

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00:02:26,040 --> 00:02:30,040

He is quite familiar with the community of UFO hunters.

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00:02:30,040 --> 00:02:36,040

We are a wildly varying lot of people.

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00:02:36,040 --> 00:02:41,040

We are as different as any random section of society, I think.

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00:02:41,040 --> 00:02:49,040

What unites us is an intellectual curiosity, maybe a little bit of a spirit of adventure.

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00:02:49,040 --> 00:02:57,040

Most of us like digging either allegorically or in a library or actually in the field.

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00:02:57,040 --> 00:03:04,040

Most of us are somewhat idealistic, which usually means we're somewhat naive.

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00:03:04,040 --> 00:03:09,040

They are obviously motivated by a desire to try and understand what's happening.

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00:03:09,040 --> 00:03:17,040

Often, when you scratch beneath the surface, you find a desire to believe in the existence of extraterrestrials.

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00:03:17,040 --> 00:03:22,040

Behind their impartial front, we can see their desire to believe.

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00:03:22,040 --> 00:03:27,040

We actually are interested in the truth about something that is a genuine mystery.

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Some of us have PhDs in the natural sciences.

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00:03:31,040 --> 00:03:38,040

Many of us have backgrounds in the arts and we come to it from a creative sensibility.

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00:03:38,040 --> 00:03:46,040

It is precisely this eclectic attitude that has greatly contributed to tarnishing the reputation of the UFO community.

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00:03:48,040 --> 00:03:56,040

As soon as a UFO is observed, UFO hunters find themselves shoulder to shoulder with journalists at the site where it was observed,

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00:03:56,040 --> 00:03:59,040

both trying to make the most out of it.

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00:03:59,040 --> 00:04:06,040

One camp sees it as a great news story, while the other camp sees an opportunity to talk about

their wild theories,

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00:04:06,040 --> 00:04:12,040

worldwide cover-ups, alien abductions, or a threat of an alien invasion.

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00:04:13,040 --> 00:04:20,040

Comments made by serious researchers often become buried in the tall tales which attract the media.

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Caught up in this three-ringed circus of ideology, it is not surprising that over the years,

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00:04:26,040 --> 00:04:31,040

UFO hunters have gained the reputation of attracting crackpots.

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00:04:31,040 --> 00:04:39,040

Like many fields of research or natural interest, we as a group have grown somewhat more sophisticated over the years.

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00:04:39,040 --> 00:04:48,040

We have seen more frauds, we have seen more genuine, remarkably important breakthroughs in research.

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00:04:48,040 --> 00:04:56,040

We are a bit better organized. We are maybe a little bit more respected by the general population, but not so much.

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00:04:56,040 --> 00:05:02,040

Over the years, UFO groups have been forced to evolve according to the interests of their members.

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00:05:02,040 --> 00:05:08,040

Their interest is often tempered by the events themselves and by pressure from the media.

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00:05:08,040 --> 00:05:12,040

UFOs are not the same today as they were years ago.

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To better understand this evolution, we have to go back to the Kenneth Arnold affair in 1947, which spawned the expression, flying saucer.

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No one is better qualified to lead us back in time than French sociologist Pierre Lagrange,

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00:05:37,040 --> 00:05:42,040

a research scientist with the Center for Sociology of Innovation in Paris.

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Pierre has written several reports on UFO studies, and over the past few years,

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00:05:47,040 --> 00:05:54,040

he has gained recognition as one of the world's leading authorities in the field of UFO history.

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The Kenneth Arnold affair marked the beginning of flying saucers.

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That was when the expression, flying saucer, was first invented.

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00:06:02,040 --> 00:06:06,040

His story happened on June 24, 1947.

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He was a 32-year-old private pilot and businessman who saw strange discs flying over Mount Rainer, Washington, in the American Northwest.

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According to Arnold, they were flying twice as fast as the speed of sound, and they had an unusual shape.

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They were not exactly saucer-shaped. They were rounded in the front and triangular in the back.

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And he described their flight as saucers skimming over the water.

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And when he reported this to a reporter, a news reporter, the journalist wrote down flying saucers,

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00:06:41,040 --> 00:06:45,040

and the name was born and has been with us ever since.

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The objects seen by Kenneth Arnold were probably nothing more than a flock of migrating birds.

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However, his story gave birth to the modern era of flying saucers.

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Back in 1947, unidentified flying objects were not synonymous with extraterrestrial spacecraft.

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At the time back in 1947, Kenneth Arnold thought he was seeing secret weapons.

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Obviously, the prospect of extraterrestrials was soon raised.

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If we look back at the first articles written in the press on June 26 and 27, 1947,

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00:07:24,040 --> 00:07:28,040

the objects were not only presented as extraterrestrial airships.

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00:07:28,040 --> 00:07:33,040

That was just one theory, among others. The theory of secret aircraft was the most popular.

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The day after Kenneth Arnold's observation, the U.S. Army put up a wall of silence

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00:07:39,040 --> 00:07:42,040

and took extraordinary defense measures.

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However, despite all the military's preparations, an entire fleet of flying saucers

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seemed to be descending upon the United States.

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Throughout the country, Americans were claiming to have seen unidentified flying objects.

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Since the Army was refusing to release these reports to the public,

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small groups of two or three people each began collecting information on these settings.

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It was the dawn of ufology, the study of UFOs.

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The first ufologists appeared in the 1950s in groups such as NICAP and APRO,

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which integrated a large mass of scattered information.

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At first, UFOs were only seen flying in the sky.

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They hovered and flew away, but didn't land.

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Then gradually, stories began pouring in about landings.

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Investigators changed their view over time.

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History professor at Temple University in Philadelphia.

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David Jacobs is the author of the famous UFO Controversy in America.

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Well, I think that the role of some of the early UFO organizations like APRO,

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00:09:05,040 --> 00:09:10,040

the Aerial Phenomenon Research Organization, and NICAP, National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomenon

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in the overall controversy over UFOs was really very, very important.

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I think that these are groups that continue to collect reports.

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They analyzed reports. They kept the subject in front of the public

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and helped to also pioneer methodology for how you can do this,

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how you can actually investigate reports.

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It was in this fervor of the 1950s that people began speculating

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00:09:40,040 --> 00:09:44,040

that these unidentified flying objects were of alien origin.

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These speculations soon became the most popular way of interpreting these objects.

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Left in the dark, the more conservative researchers who refused to share this opinion

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without an argument were stigmatized as ignorant

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or having little faith by those who supported the theory.

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Now, 50 years after that initial sighting by Kenneth Arnold,

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00:10:04,040 --> 00:10:10,040

we can only wonder how UFOs, which were originally thought to be top secret weapons,

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00:10:10,040 --> 00:10:13,040

came to be thought of as interplanetary vehicles.

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How is it that extraterrestrials have become the focus of UFO study?

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One of the first people to introduce the idea that flying saucers were of alien origin

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was Donald Keeho, a former member of the U.S. military who became a journalist,

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00:10:31,040 --> 00:10:36,040

and while working for True Magazine in 1949 was assigned to investigate this story.

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Keeho was rather skeptical at first since most of the contacts he had kept in the Army

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00:10:41,040 --> 00:10:44,040

were not clear about the origin. There was nothing to the story.

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00:10:44,040 --> 00:10:49,040

But as he dug deeper, he began to think that the military wasn't telling him everything they knew,

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00:10:49,040 --> 00:10:52,040

that there may be something to the story after all.

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00:10:52,040 --> 00:10:56,040

The article that he published in the January 1950 issue of True

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was one of the first to really popularize the alien theory.

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Three years later, Donald Keeho wrote Flying Saucers from Outer Space,

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00:11:04,040 --> 00:11:10,040

whose popularity at bookstores further entrenched the theory that UFOs were of alien origin.

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From there on, lines were drawn between those who believed in extraterrestrials and those who didn't.

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While America was debating over whether or not unidentified flying objects were alien in origin,

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00:11:36,040 --> 00:11:43,040

on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, France was experiencing an unprecedented wave of UFO sightings.

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00:11:43,040 --> 00:11:48,040

Up until then, UFOs were just strange things flying around in the sky,

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00:11:48,040 --> 00:11:51,040

but now they seem to be landing everywhere.

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00:11:51,040 --> 00:11:56,040

Even worse, the occupants of these spaceships were strolling around on our planet.

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00:11:57,040 --> 00:12:05,040

One of the most striking stories happened to Marius De Ville from Carube in northern France on

September 10, 1954.

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00:12:07,040 --> 00:12:10,040

I heard my dog barking and it didn't sound normal to me.

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00:12:10,040 --> 00:12:16,040

At first, I just ignored him, but then I decided to go see what he was barking about.

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00:12:16,040 --> 00:12:20,040

I came over here and I saw two men, or rather two beings.

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00:12:21,040 --> 00:12:23,040

How far away were they?

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00:12:23,040 --> 00:12:26,040

They were on the other side of that road there about 12, 15 feet away.

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00:12:30,040 --> 00:12:32,040

Can you tell us what they looked like?

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00:12:32,040 --> 00:12:35,040

They were pretty small. I'd say about three feet tall.

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00:12:36,040 --> 00:12:39,040

So your flying saucer was over there. How did it leave?

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00:12:39,040 --> 00:12:43,040

Well, it went straight up about 150 feet.

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00:12:43,040 --> 00:12:44,040

Straight up like that?

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00:12:44,040 --> 00:12:47,040

Well, that's when it changed into a ball of fire and headed east.

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00:12:51,040 --> 00:12:57,040

In the 1960s, a whole new generation of investigators appeared on the scene, like John Keel,

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00:12:57,040 --> 00:12:59,040

who wrote an entire series of books.

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00:12:59,040 --> 00:13:04,040

He also investigated matters that did not seem to interest other people.

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00:13:04,040 --> 00:13:09,040

He examined things that were outside of the box, things that seemed UFO related,

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00:13:09,040 --> 00:13:11,040

but which were still on the fringe.

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00:13:11,040 --> 00:13:16,040

With investigators like John Keel, it wasn't just a matter of aliens visiting us in their flying saucers.

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00:13:16,040 --> 00:13:22,040

Keel's perspective was much larger and more complex, touching on both ecology and the occult,

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00:13:22,040 --> 00:13:25,040

with phenomena that might be linked to our basic human nature.

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00:13:25,040 --> 00:13:29,040

Some people proposed psychological theories for his phenomena.

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00:13:29,040 --> 00:13:34,040

Keel was now in the area of parapsychology, where things were happening to our society,

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00:13:34,040 --> 00:13:37,040

other than simple visits by extraterrestrials.

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00:13:41,040 --> 00:13:48,040

Thanks to John Keel, a movement began in the late 70s that included both the UFOs and paranormal phenomena

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00:13:48,040 --> 00:13:51,040

by people who took an interest in these things.

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00:13:51,040 --> 00:13:55,040

They believed that the phenomena were closely linked to the witnesses.

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The 1970s was also when the U.S. Air Force lost interest in UFOs.

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00:14:05,040 --> 00:14:11,040

In parallel with the work being done by John Keel, other researchers joined the cons,

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00:14:11,040 --> 00:14:16,040

often from university backgrounds, filling in the void left by the military.

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00:14:16,040 --> 00:14:25,040

In the 1970s in particular, after the Air Force in the United States stopped its project Blue Book,

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00:14:25,040 --> 00:14:31,040

what happened is that it was almost like people were finally free to come out in the open.

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00:14:31,040 --> 00:14:37,040

Those who were brave could come out in the open and they could now begin to talk about UFO research,

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00:14:37,040 --> 00:14:40,040

do it openly, work together.

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00:14:40,040 --> 00:14:43,040

That's why Alan Heineck formed the Center for UFO Studies in 1973.

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00:14:43,040 --> 00:14:48,040

We had a scientific advisory board of fairly distinguished scientists.

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00:14:49,040 --> 00:14:57,040

This went on and there was a flowering of very serious UFO research in the 1970s that had begun in the 1960s.

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00:14:57,040 --> 00:15:05,040

It lasted some into the 1980s to a certain extent, but several factors intervened, not Roswell,

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00:15:05,040 --> 00:15:09,040

not necessarily abductions, other problems like lack of funding again,

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00:15:09,040 --> 00:15:13,040

like the fact that no progress was being made.

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00:15:14,040 --> 00:15:21,040

The lack of concrete results led some ufologists to question their beliefs and they divided into two camps.

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00:15:21,040 --> 00:15:28,040

In the late 1970s, something interesting happened in ufology. Criticism began to come from within.

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00:15:28,040 --> 00:15:33,040

Skeptics had been regarded as rationalists who knew nothing about the UFO cases.

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00:15:33,040 --> 00:15:41,040

Now the situation began to change and longtime believers, who had felt strongly about the subject for years,

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00:15:41,040 --> 00:15:44,040

began to say, we don't believe in them anymore.

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00:15:44,040 --> 00:15:51,040

In 1977, French ufologist Michel Munnery wrote a book called What if UFOs Didn't Exist?

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00:15:51,040 --> 00:15:56,040

According to the author, UFOs are nothing more than a misinterpretation of known phenomena.

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00:15:56,040 --> 00:15:59,040

They're not real, they're only a myth.

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00:15:59,040 --> 00:16:03,040

There are no aliens visiting us and there are no strange phenomena.

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00:16:03,040 --> 00:16:06,040

They were just mistakes made by confused people who saw Venus,

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00:16:06,040 --> 00:16:11,040

the scientists' weather balloons, aircraft, the moons and other explainable phenomena.

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00:16:11,040 --> 00:16:17,040

UFO hunters were gradually becoming more aware that merely gathering witness accounts

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00:16:17,040 --> 00:16:21,040

was not enough to fully understand the phenomenon.

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00:16:25,040 --> 00:16:31,040

What was happening in ufology in the 1970s when the first skeptics began to appear within their ranks?

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00:16:31,040 --> 00:16:34,040

It was a time when, having discussed eyewitness accounts at length,

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00:16:34,040 --> 00:16:40,040

UFO researchers began to think, we need to be more scientific, there's a price to pay,

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00:16:40,040 --> 00:16:44,040

we have to change our methods, it's not enough just to gather eyewitness accounts,

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00:16:44,040 --> 00:16:47,040

we need to produce evidence, like scientists do.

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00:16:47,040 --> 00:16:52,040

For a long time we thought that it was a scientist's job to observe nature,

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00:16:52,040 --> 00:16:56,040

but in reality, a scientist's job is done in a laboratory.

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00:16:56,040 --> 00:16:58,040

He very rarely sees nature.

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00:16:58,040 --> 00:17:01,040

He spends his time looking at instruments, diagrams and graphs,

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00:17:01,040 --> 00:17:04,040

so his contact with nature is very remote.

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00:17:04,040 --> 00:17:08,040

If he goes into the woods or on top of a mountain, he doesn't see anything,

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00:17:08,040 --> 00:17:11,040

he's in the middle of nature and can't do anything.

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00:17:11,040 --> 00:17:17,040

UFO researchers began to ask themselves, how can we present data relating to UFO stories,

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00:17:17,040 --> 00:17:20,040

so it'll be perceived as scientific?

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00:17:20,040 --> 00:17:23,040

They realized that there was a price to pay,

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00:17:23,040 --> 00:17:27,040

that they would need to do more than gather stories to succeed

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00:17:27,040 --> 00:17:31,040

or simply state their opinion like a judge or a police officer.

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00:17:31,040 --> 00:17:34,040

They would need to delve into the facts and come up with items

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00:17:34,040 --> 00:17:38,040

that would allow experts to decide if there was a case or not.

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00:17:46,040 --> 00:17:51,040

François Bourbault belongs to this new generation of UFO researchers

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00:17:51,040 --> 00:17:55,040

that appeared on the scene during this shift in ideology in the 1970s.

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00:17:59,040 --> 00:18:04,040

My first job or my first goal, I should say, was to interest the university crowd

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00:18:04,040 --> 00:18:10,040

in the study of UFOs, but I soon came up against a brick wall,

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00:18:10,040 --> 00:18:14,040

from social prejudice to a wide variety of other prejudices.

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00:18:14,040 --> 00:18:18,040

These men and women from universities were probably afraid of losing credibility

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00:18:18,040 --> 00:18:20,040

among their peers.

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00:18:23,040 --> 00:18:27,040

I would say that it also had to do with the lack of knowledge of the subject area.

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00:18:27,040 --> 00:18:32,040

I must admit that in the field of UFO research for serious amateurs like myself

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00:18:32,040 --> 00:18:35,040

who want to dig a little deeper to understand an issue,

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00:18:35,040 --> 00:18:39,040

there is a fundamental lack of funding required to do the work.

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00:18:39,040 --> 00:18:42,040

There's also a lack of human resources available.

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00:18:42,040 --> 00:18:46,040

And to be perfectly honest, we also have very limited access to technology

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00:18:46,040 --> 00:18:49,040

that would allow us to perform rapid tests on the spot,

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00:18:49,040 --> 00:18:52,040

where physical evidence appears on the ground, for instance.

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00:18:55,040 --> 00:18:59,040

With these tests, we could advance our own research since we are on the front line,

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00:18:59,040 --> 00:19:05,040

thereby eliminating a layer of analysis where we have to wait for the results before proceeding.

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00:19:05,040 --> 00:19:10,040

We could also turn over our test results to experts for further research.

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00:19:10,040 --> 00:19:12,040

Maybe that's where the problem lies.

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00:19:13,040 --> 00:19:18,040

A really good example of how this lack of funding and logistics can have an impact

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00:19:18,040 --> 00:19:24,040

is the case of Saint-Marie de Manoir, a small rural town less than 60 miles from Montreal, Quebec.

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00:19:26,040 --> 00:19:29,040

At first I was sure that it was a 4x4, but when I got up and looked,

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00:19:29,040 --> 00:19:31,040

I saw that it was over my neighbor's house.

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00:19:31,040 --> 00:19:37,040

It was blue everywhere in the house, and there was this persistent noise in the background.

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00:19:37,040 --> 00:19:41,040

I think it was something from outer space.

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00:19:41,040 --> 00:19:45,040

I think they might be more advanced than us since they are coming to visit us.

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00:19:45,040 --> 00:19:47,040

It was bright everywhere.

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00:19:47,040 --> 00:19:51,040

I'm not sure how far away it could be seen, but it was as bright as day where I was.

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00:19:54,040 --> 00:19:57,040

Several experts find this case to be particularly puzzling.

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00:19:59,040 --> 00:20:03,040

UFO researchers involved in the case had to cut their investigation short,

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00:20:03,040 --> 00:20:05,040

since they lacked the means to continue.

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00:20:05,040 --> 00:20:09,040

François Bourbaud was one of the key figures in this affair.

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00:20:10,040 --> 00:20:16,040

The incident in Saint-Marie de Manoir was probably one of the best opportunities in scientific terms

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00:20:16,040 --> 00:20:20,040

to pursue an in-depth study of the case.

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00:20:23,040 --> 00:20:28,040

First of all, there were many witnesses, and several different types of witnesses at that,

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00:20:28,040 --> 00:20:32,040

including highly competent ones such as police officers.

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00:20:34,040 --> 00:20:37,040

I was amazed I'd never seen anything like it before in my life.

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00:20:38,040 --> 00:20:41,040

Several levels of society were represented among the witnesses,

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00:20:41,040 --> 00:20:44,040

and there was physical evidence left on the ground.

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00:20:44,040 --> 00:20:50,040

Electromagnetic effects occurred in the immediate area, and a trace of the craft was left on the ground.

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00:20:50,040 --> 00:20:54,040

This incident happened in winter, and the grass turned green where the UFO mark was found.

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00:20:54,040 --> 00:20:59,040

Using my own money, I paid L'Oval University to analyze grass and soil samples.

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00:20:59,040 --> 00:21:04,040

Chlorophyll levels were ten times higher, and nitrogen had gone up by 300%.

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00:21:05,040 --> 00:21:10,040

I found it very bizarre, because the chlorophyll levels should normally have been the same everywhere.

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00:21:10,040 --> 00:21:15,040

I don't think it's humanly possible to fake chlorophyll levels and plants in November.

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00:21:17,040 --> 00:21:21,040

We had material on our hands that could have been genuinely investigated,

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00:21:21,040 --> 00:21:25,040

but somehow we missed our big opportunity.

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00:21:25,040 --> 00:21:30,040

We didn't succeed in capturing the interest of enough people in the fields of botany,

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00:21:30,040 --> 00:21:35,040

physics, electricity, magnetism, or mathematics.

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00:21:35,040 --> 00:21:39,040

We didn't get plant geneticists involved in our project.

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00:21:39,040 --> 00:21:44,040

A lot of work could have been done to rule out natural causes.

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00:21:44,040 --> 00:21:59,040

Over the years, UFO hunters have gradually divided into two separate camps.

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00:21:59,040 --> 00:22:05,040

One group represents the diehards, who still believe that UFOs are extraterrestrial in origin.

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00:22:05,040 --> 00:22:11,040

The other group, mainly consisting of UFO researchers, define themselves as skeptics.

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00:22:12,040 --> 00:22:17,040

It appears that ufology is not the work of a single group of individuals,

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00:22:17,040 --> 00:22:20,040

but rather a network of groups, like in the field of science.

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00:22:20,040 --> 00:22:26,040

In my view, the fact that there are skeptics does not mean that ufology has become more scientific in approach.

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00:22:26,040 --> 00:22:31,040

It means that researchers are starting to think like the people they used to criticize.

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00:22:31,040 --> 00:22:37,040

Nowadays, skepticism about UFOs is a matter of personal opinion, just like believing in them used to be.

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00:22:38,040 --> 00:22:43,040

It's not much different after believing in UFOs for years. They decide not to believe anymore.

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00:22:43,040 --> 00:22:45,040

What effect does that have?

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00:22:45,040 --> 00:22:49,040

Rationalists say, finally UFO researchers are becoming more scientific,

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00:22:49,040 --> 00:22:52,040

but if we look at the facts, it just isn't true.

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00:22:52,040 --> 00:22:58,040

Just when things were calming down and researchers were beginning to use a more scientific approach,

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00:22:58,040 --> 00:23:01,040

the controversy started back up again.

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00:23:01,040 --> 00:23:06,040

After having said they exist, they were turning around and saying they don't exist.

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00:23:06,040 --> 00:23:11,040

While saying they don't exist doesn't make you a scientist, but it does spark controversy.

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00:23:11,040 --> 00:23:15,040

This controversy is not making the field any more scientific.

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00:23:15,040 --> 00:23:21,040

Since each person is proceeding according to their own personal opinion, it's very easy to become a UFO researcher.

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00:23:21,040 --> 00:23:25,040

You have some business cards printed and publish an article in a few newsletters.

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00:23:25,040 --> 00:23:27,040

It's much harder to be a scientist.

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00:23:27,040 --> 00:23:32,040

You need to have diplomas, experience and research work that's approved by others as a group.

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00:23:37,040 --> 00:23:40,040

The UFO field has been faced with two problems.

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00:23:40,040 --> 00:23:44,040

Frequent shifts in ideology and a lack of funding for its work.

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00:23:50,040 --> 00:23:52,040

Victims of precarious budgets.

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00:23:52,040 --> 00:23:55,040

Most UFO associations cannot hire paid staff.

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00:23:55,040 --> 00:24:01,040

This means that almost all of their members are volunteers, with the best of intentions no doubt.

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00:24:01,040 --> 00:24:06,040

But inevitably, they run into problems with the availability and competency of their members,

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00:24:06,040 --> 00:24:09,040

which leads to less than ideal investigations.

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00:24:13,040 --> 00:24:20,040

Fascinated by the subject of UFO since the mid-1970s, Antonio Junius, a writer for Fate magazine

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00:24:20,040 --> 00:24:27,040

and co-author of the UFO Briefing Document, is quite familiar with the problems faced by UFO researchers.

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00:24:33,040 --> 00:24:40,040

One of the main problems of ufological research is the lack of funds.

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00:24:40,040 --> 00:24:48,040

This is very bad, especially when you go to even two other countries, it's even more acute.

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00:24:49,040 --> 00:24:57,040

There was a short period, I would say through the 90s, where you suddenly had this emergence of the philanthropists.

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00:24:59,040 --> 00:25:06,040

In the late 1990s, US multimillionaire Lawrence Rockefeller financed a series of meetings on the American East Coast.

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00:25:06,040 --> 00:25:11,040

Chaired by astrophysicist Peter Sturrock of Stanford University, California,

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00:25:11,040 --> 00:25:20,040

the Pocantico meetings are now considered to be the most important initiative that has taken place in the field of UFO study over the past few years.

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00:25:24,040 --> 00:25:32,040

Francois Luange is an optic specialist who directs FlexImage, a corporation specializing in satellite imagery.

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00:25:32,040 --> 00:25:35,040

He was an active participant at the Pocantico meetings.

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00:25:36,040 --> 00:25:45,040

The Pocantico conference organized by Mr. Rockefeller in 1997 was highly instructive.

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00:25:45,040 --> 00:25:52,040

This gentleman, who has large sums of money, tends to spend a lot on artistic and human causes.

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00:25:52,040 --> 00:26:00,040

Lawrence Rockefeller had a certain curiosity about UFOs in general, and crop circles in particular.

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00:26:01,040 --> 00:26:06,040

So he financed this week-long meeting at his Pocantico Center where his family had once lived.

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00:26:06,040 --> 00:26:12,040

The idea was to discuss physical evidence, not just for UFOs, but in general.

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00:26:13,040 --> 00:26:18,040

Basically, you had two types of scientists. You had ufological scientists.

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00:26:18,040 --> 00:26:28,040

These were people who were professional scientists like Ballet and even Velasco and Richard Haynes and John Schuster and many others

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00:26:28,040 --> 00:26:36,040

who made the case for ufology. They presented the best landing cases, the best photography and so on, the best radar cases.

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00:26:36,040 --> 00:26:44,040

Then you had a panel of neutral scientists, and these were people who were neither in favor nor against it, but they were professional scientists.

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00:26:46,040 --> 00:26:52,040

The goal was to have researchers speak about UFOs in front of a group of scientists in the hopes of finding common ground

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00:26:52,040 --> 00:26:55,040

and preparing a small booklet on their conclusions.

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00:26:56,040 --> 00:27:05,040

Why did Rockefeller do this? Because up until that point, the only thing that existed in the field was the Condon Report that had been sponsored by the U.S. Air Force several years earlier.

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00:27:05,040 --> 00:27:12,040

The very thick Condon Report was read by few people. It contains a lot of information, some of it on inexplicable phenomena.

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00:27:12,040 --> 00:27:19,040

However, the official conclusions of the Condon Report go something like this. First of all, we didn't find anything.

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00:27:20,040 --> 00:27:27,040

And secondly, science has better things to do with its time than waste it on a subject like this that is of no interest.

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00:27:27,040 --> 00:27:36,040

Condon closed the books on the subject, and scientists did that too. With regards to the Condon's conclusions, we agree at least on the first point.

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00:27:36,040 --> 00:27:45,040

We didn't find anything really convincing, any absolute proof that unknown phenomenon are occurring, and we found even less evidence of extraterrestrials.

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00:27:45,040 --> 00:27:50,040

On the other hand, as to what science's position should be, we are diametrically opposed to Condon.

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00:27:50,040 --> 00:28:03,040

We feel that given the evolution of the information gathered and the technologies at their disposal, it would be in the best interest of science to research the subject intelligently, to listen to UFO researchers and to continue the work.

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00:28:04,040 --> 00:28:15,040

If the Pocantico Conference led to a recognition of the interest in UFOs, then why does the science community at large seem so uninterested in this phenomenon?

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00:28:15,040 --> 00:28:24,040

If someone were to find a technological application for the UFO problem, then just watch the benefactors line up to finance it.

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00:28:25,040 --> 00:28:34,040

Maybe not UFO groups at first, but if another meeting were held with Mr. Sturok, there might be a group of people who would say,

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00:28:34,040 --> 00:28:39,040

aha, we're being offered 10 million gentlemen, go back to your drawing boards.

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00:28:39,040 --> 00:28:53,040

However, before we can speculate on how to interest the science community in UFOs, we need to have UFO groups themselves come to an agreement on the importance of the information gathered and the manner in which it is presented.

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00:28:54,040 --> 00:29:04,040

The material itself, the data, although there are some excellent cases, but it is very ambiguous and you can basically adapt it to any theory you want,

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00:29:04,040 --> 00:29:14,040

because you will select those elements if you're interested in the more bizarre cases, you will find plenty of those.

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00:29:14,040 --> 00:29:19,040

If you're interested in the more sort of sober, you'll concentrate with radar and pilot cases.

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00:29:20,040 --> 00:29:30,040

So that's what I saw, that people, because they had a theory, then they were digging up for those elements in the database that would support their theory.

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00:29:30,040 --> 00:29:40,040

After so many years, it may be surprising to find that so few professional researchers let themselves be carried away by a scientific interest in UFOs.

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00:29:40,040 --> 00:29:48,040

Perhaps we are simply seeing a contrast between the ideal vision of science and the unorthodox reality of ufology.

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00:29:48,040 --> 00:29:58,040

One of the great failings of UFO research in the western hemisphere anyway, and not as much in Europe, but certainly in Canada and in the United States,

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00:29:58,040 --> 00:30:04,040

has been the failure to convince the scientific and academic community of the legitimacy of the subject.

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00:30:04,040 --> 00:30:11,040

I think we're setting ourselves up for a disappointment when we expect science to come up with all of the solutions.

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00:30:11,040 --> 00:30:15,040

When it comes to expanding knowledge, solutions are very rare.

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00:30:15,040 --> 00:30:21,040

When scientists study a matter, very rarely do they agree on what it means.

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00:30:21,040 --> 00:30:28,040

Of course, when we read history books about science, we see famous names such as Galileo, Newton and Einstein,

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00:30:28,040 --> 00:30:32,040

who all made a significant contribution to scientific knowledge.

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00:30:32,040 --> 00:30:38,040

But we need to remember that 99% of all scientific research does not lead anywhere.

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00:30:38,040 --> 00:30:43,040

The research is done because we need to ask questions and find answers. We need to make progress.

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00:30:43,040 --> 00:30:48,040

Scientists often disagree. In the field of science, it's very difficult for everyone to agree.

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00:30:48,040 --> 00:30:55,040

So if we were to take a scientist out of his controlled environment and place him in a situation with amateurs and people from different backgrounds,

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00:30:55,040 --> 00:30:58,040

naturally he would find it more difficult to do his job.

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00:30:58,040 --> 00:31:06,040

In that type of situation, scientists tend to have the attitude that UFO researchers are not capable of producing hard evidence.

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00:31:06,040 --> 00:31:11,040

They're not like scientists who produce real results. I tend to see the problem differently.

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00:31:11,040 --> 00:31:18,040

If we think about it, science hasn't produced a lot over the years, considering all the conditions imposed on scientists.

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00:31:18,040 --> 00:31:22,040

They need to have a diploma, publish articles, sign contracts and so forth.

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00:31:22,040 --> 00:31:29,040

In contrast, it's amazing to see how much UFO groups like SOPEPS have managed to accomplish without a controlled environment.

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00:31:29,040 --> 00:31:33,040

So if anything, I would say that the opposite is actually true.

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00:31:33,040 --> 00:31:41,040

It's not that UFO researchers don't take their work seriously. Given the conditions under which they work, they're very serious in their approach.

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00:31:41,040 --> 00:31:47,040

Perhaps we should be demanding that scientists produce a lot more than they do.

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00:31:49,040 --> 00:31:58,040

A half century after the birth of ufology, UFO hunters are still practically as far away from a global answer as they were back then.

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00:32:04,040 --> 00:32:09,040

Can their limited success be blamed on a lack of effort, a poor choice of witnesses,

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00:32:09,040 --> 00:32:16,040

or is it simply that ufologists have had to pay the price for resorting to sensationalism once too often?

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00:32:17,040 --> 00:32:21,040

Well, obviously we still don't know what the UFOs are.

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00:32:21,040 --> 00:32:26,040

If we did, the discussion would already be on a different level.

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00:32:26,040 --> 00:32:35,040

People already automatically, and this is even in France, I would say not the researchers, but the culture and the media,

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00:32:35,040 --> 00:32:42,040

automatically equates UFOs with extraterrestrial beings coming in spaceships.

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00:32:42,040 --> 00:32:46,040

So this is sort of the cultural interpretation.

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00:32:46,040 --> 00:32:50,040

The popular cultural interpretation, I would say, all over the world.

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00:32:50,040 --> 00:33:02,040

In this world of superficial choices and judgments, abduction by aliens, the Roswell crash and cover-up, these are sexy.

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00:33:02,040 --> 00:33:06,040

These are hot topics, even though time is passing.

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00:33:06,040 --> 00:33:11,040

Roswell's 53 years ago, it still captures the public imagination tremendously.

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00:33:11,040 --> 00:33:22,040

I think it makes it very difficult for the serious research of ufology because so much of it now has become basically a media-oriented entertainment and sensation.

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00:33:23,040 --> 00:33:34,040

The lack of interest in UFOs by the elite of the science community is not only due to the ufologists' tendency to believe in wild rumors of alien abductions and flying saucer crashes.

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00:33:35,040 --> 00:33:43,040

It also stems from public prejudice and the superficial manner in which UFO-related matters are handled by the media.

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00:33:55,040 --> 00:34:03,040

An associate member of the National Center for Scientific Research in Paris, Béthra Meust has written several books on UFOs.

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00:34:03,040 --> 00:34:07,040

Such as science fiction and flying saucers.

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00:34:11,040 --> 00:34:14,040

There are several factors that come into play.

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00:34:14,040 --> 00:34:20,040

On one hand, there is the unstructured research that has been done up until now by amateurs,

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00:34:20,040 --> 00:34:24,040

whose standards of quality are not as high as those of the science community.

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00:34:25,040 --> 00:34:31,040

On the other hand, there has been this incredible challenge to have this subject regarded not only as a serious matter,

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00:34:31,040 --> 00:34:35,040

but also as something important, something worthwhile studying.

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00:34:35,040 --> 00:34:40,040

This message has not yet found roots within the scientific community in France.

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00:34:40,040 --> 00:34:45,040

To give you an example, my peers are sociologists and ethnologists,

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00:34:45,040 --> 00:34:49,040

and you wouldn't think that the study of UFOs would be a problem for them,

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00:34:49,040 --> 00:34:53,040

since they study sociological and cultural phenomena.

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00:34:53,040 --> 00:34:58,040

But even within these groups, UFOs are not considered to be a serious subject of study,

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00:34:58,040 --> 00:35:04,040

and if a sociologist decides to study UFOs, he risks becoming a social outcast.

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00:35:04,040 --> 00:35:12,040

The situation is absurd. As you can see, there is a sort of barrier, a fear of cultural or philosophical rejection.

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00:35:14,040 --> 00:35:17,040

The people that matter don't look at our findings.

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00:35:17,040 --> 00:35:22,040

It is much easier to say, well, this can't be because it isn't.

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00:35:22,040 --> 00:35:26,040

Therefore, it's not. Therefore, I'm not going to waste my time.

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00:35:26,040 --> 00:35:30,040

It is still informed by a great deal of ignorance, and most interesting,

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00:35:30,040 --> 00:35:36,040

if you go back and you study the first reports of UFOs in the major American media,

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00:35:36,040 --> 00:35:39,040

going back to the summer of the autumn of 1947 or so,

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00:35:39,040 --> 00:35:46,040

you will see a pattern of reportage in major American newspapers, start with the New York Times,

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00:35:46,040 --> 00:35:51,040

that continues to a degree to this day, and it usually goes like this.

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00:35:51,040 --> 00:35:55,040

There is an initial report of an incident and event, a sighting.

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00:35:55,040 --> 00:36:00,040

Then there is a response, either in the same article or follow-up article,

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00:36:00,040 --> 00:36:05,040

by some kind of authority who usually would have no knowledge of the subject,

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00:36:05,040 --> 00:36:11,040

but they are a psychologist or a meteorologist or a biologist,

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00:36:11,040 --> 00:36:16,040

and they are going to tell us, well, this is nonsense, I have a PhD and I know,

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00:36:16,040 --> 00:36:23,040

and the American public, the Western public, has been brilliantly conditioned,

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00:36:23,040 --> 00:36:28,040

overtly and covertly, by the media, by the government, by themselves,

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00:36:28,040 --> 00:36:34,040

to literally wire up in their minds when you hear UFO.

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00:36:34,040 --> 00:36:39,040

You see the mouth moving, but somebody is saying, I saw UFO,

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00:36:39,040 --> 00:36:43,040

what you are hearing is maybe I'm crazy and should be in an institution.

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00:36:43,040 --> 00:36:49,040

In order for ufology to rise above the scorn and ridicule that it faces,

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00:36:49,040 --> 00:36:57,040

and in order to determine with any degree of certainty whether or not unidentified flying objects are indeed elite in origin,

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00:36:57,040 --> 00:37:02,040

it is vital that this field of study receive a minimum of physical and logistic support.

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00:37:02,040 --> 00:37:07,040

In my opinion, state intervention is indispensable, if you want to do a thorough job,

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00:37:07,040 --> 00:37:11,040

since the most useful sources of information are generally state agencies.

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00:37:11,040 --> 00:37:16,040

If we take France, for instance, there is the state police, the air force and civil aviation.

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00:37:16,040 --> 00:37:21,040

Obviously, these organizations are not going to pass on information, especially the air force,

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00:37:21,040 --> 00:37:24,040

with its need to keep defense issues confidential.

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00:37:24,040 --> 00:37:31,040

It's very difficult for someone outside of these agencies to obtain information such as radar data.

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00:37:31,040 --> 00:37:38,040

In the late 1970s, France became the only member of the GA to set up such an agency.

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00:37:38,040 --> 00:37:41,040

It was called CEPRA.

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00:37:41,040 --> 00:37:47,040

As part of its mandate, this group examines unidentified phenomena in French aerospace.

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00:37:47,040 --> 00:37:54,040

The National Space Research Center, the equivalent of NASA,

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00:37:54,040 --> 00:38:01,040

is located within CNES, France's National Space Research Center.

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00:38:01,040 --> 00:38:08,040

CEPRA has been headed by engineer Jean-Jacques Velasco for quite a few years.

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00:38:08,040 --> 00:38:16,040

CNES is a public sector agency that distributes information.

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00:38:16,040 --> 00:38:19,040

We don't have anything to hide.

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00:38:19,040 --> 00:38:25,040

These days, we let the public know about a lot of our investigations,

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00:38:25,040 --> 00:38:28,040

and we will continue to do so in the future.

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00:38:28,040 --> 00:38:34,040

However, keeping the public informed of our investigations is not part of CEPRA's mandate,

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00:38:34,040 --> 00:38:41,040

as was the case for its predecessor, Japan, which prepared technical notes and informational notes.

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00:38:41,040 --> 00:38:45,040

The difference between the two groups is quite simple.

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00:38:45,040 --> 00:38:50,040

We just don't have the means.

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00:38:50,040 --> 00:38:57,040

Although he admits that his group does not have the logistic support necessary to carry out a global study of the UFO phenomenon,

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00:38:57,040 --> 00:39:02,040

Jean-Jacques Velasco does not see how CEPRA could associate itself with UFO groups

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00:39:02,040 --> 00:39:08,040

without putting its own credibility and that of CNES on the line.

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00:39:09,040 --> 00:39:18,040

What is commonly referred to as UFOlogy is a large group of people primarily interested in UFO sightings.

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00:39:18,040 --> 00:39:22,040

They have developed an interest in the subject as amateurs.

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00:39:22,040 --> 00:39:26,040

We are not at all in the same class as those groups of amateurs.

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00:39:26,040 --> 00:39:29,040

Here, we do scientific work.

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00:39:29,040 --> 00:39:35,040

We investigate sightings and check out the facts that are reported.

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00:39:35,040 --> 00:39:40,040

Our work consists of scientifically analyzing the facts, and that's all.

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00:39:50,040 --> 00:39:57,040

Other than France, only a few countries in South America have set up official agencies to collect UFO reports,

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00:39:57,040 --> 00:40:02,040

often undercover as part of their military activities.

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00:40:02,040 --> 00:40:10,040

Elsewhere in the world, UFO reports are lost, destroyed, or find their way into a box in the basement of an administrative building.

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00:40:10,040 --> 00:40:19,040

In Canada, the RCMP and Transport Canada used to send their reports to the National Research Centre in Ottawa.

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00:40:19,040 --> 00:40:25,040

After a quick read-through, the reports were then transferred to the National Archives building,

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00:40:25,040 --> 00:40:30,040

where they waited patiently for someone to come along and examine them.

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00:40:30,040 --> 00:40:38,040

Recently, Canadian UFO researcher Chris Rutkowski decided to do something constructive with these reports of UFO sightings.

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00:40:38,040 --> 00:40:51,040

After the year 2000, an arrangement between myself and Transport Canada allows the reporting of objects seen in the sky to be made through them to me,

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00:40:51,040 --> 00:40:57,040

and I produce an annual report of sighting activity to try and understand what it is that people were seeing.

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00:40:57,040 --> 00:41:03,040

You see, the National Research Council itself was not interested in UFOs,

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00:41:03,040 --> 00:41:10,040

but the possibility that UFO reports might lead to the recovery of meteorites.

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00:41:10,040 --> 00:41:18,040

But I've chosen to do something with the data, because I think it's important that we understand what it is that people are seeing.

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00:41:18,040 --> 00:41:25,040

Not what is perhaps reported in the tabloid newspapers, perhaps not what we see in the movies,

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00:41:25,040 --> 00:41:30,040

but what is it that is actually seen by people, and to do that we need the actual reports.

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00:41:30,040 --> 00:41:35,040

So it is a very good arrangement from a scientific standpoint,

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00:41:35,040 --> 00:41:42,040

simply collecting the data from Quebec, from Newfoundland, from British Columbia, from the Yukon and Nunavut now as well,

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00:41:42,040 --> 00:41:50,040

and analyzing the data for an understanding of what it is people really are experiencing and seeing when they report a UFO.

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00:41:50,040 --> 00:41:56,040

Chris Rutkowski's initiative is an exception to the rule.

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00:41:56,040 --> 00:42:01,040

In the United States, where more UFO sightings are reported than anywhere else in the world,

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00:42:01,040 --> 00:42:07,040

there is no mechanism in place to provide UFO groups with a copy of these reports.

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00:42:07,040 --> 00:42:10,040

They usually end up in a shredder.

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00:42:11,040 --> 00:42:18,040

One of the things to me that puzzles me that after all these years in the United States, for instance,

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00:42:18,040 --> 00:42:23,040

no single repository was created for all the files.

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00:42:23,040 --> 00:42:32,040

That would have been much better spent, you know, and just create a central location where when the organizations go out of business,

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00:42:32,040 --> 00:42:37,040

which happens, you know, when the leader dies or something like that, there's nothing.

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00:42:38,040 --> 00:42:44,040

After 50 years of UFO research, how can we best sum up the results?

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00:42:44,040 --> 00:42:51,040

Researchers for the most part, amateurs, have still not succeeded in rallying the science community to their cause.

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00:42:51,040 --> 00:42:55,040

Living on the edge, they are constantly faced with prejudice.

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00:42:55,040 --> 00:43:05,040

For the time being, UFO hunters continue their pursuit, navigating through strange worlds in the search for evidence to support their theories.

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00:43:05,040 --> 00:43:13,040

Beyond the rhetoric of UFO groups, it is clear that if scientific institutions were to undertake a serious study of UFOs,

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00:43:13,040 --> 00:43:17,040

they would not make long philosophical speeches on the wonders of science.

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00:43:17,040 --> 00:43:23,040

They would proceed methodically, impervious to the war of words being waged by UFO groups.

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00:43:23,040 --> 00:43:29,040

The Americans need more of the sociological theory and the Europeans need less,

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00:43:29,040 --> 00:43:37,040

because in America, it's not at all liked by the ufological community, who is completely committed to strictly nuts and bolts,

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00:43:37,040 --> 00:43:44,040

ET, aliens, crash saucers, genetic hybrids with abductions and so on.

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00:43:44,040 --> 00:43:53,040

But in Europe, with some of these groups, you go to the other extreme where everything gets reduced to just a myth.

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00:43:53,040 --> 00:43:56,040

But a myth still takes off from something, you know?

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00:43:56,040 --> 00:44:02,040

Myths from North America, specifically from the United States, have swept through Europe.

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00:44:02,040 --> 00:44:09,040

Researchers like Scornot, myself and others have... well, I wouldn't exactly say that we've given up,

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00:44:09,040 --> 00:44:13,040

but we're still interested, but no one listens to us anymore.

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00:44:13,040 --> 00:44:22,040

Well, they still listen to Pierre Lagrange, who seems to be able to find ways to make himself heard, but no one really listens to us anymore.

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00:44:22,040 --> 00:44:25,040

They're only interested in those myths from the United States.

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00:44:25,040 --> 00:44:29,040

There's another factor that's also becoming into play, the Internet.

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00:44:29,040 --> 00:44:37,040

As a professor, I have several students who are interested in UFOs, but they know nothing of all the serious research that was done on the subject.

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00:44:37,040 --> 00:44:45,040

When they hear the expression, flying saucer, they immediately think of the American myths and all of the information circulating on the Internet.

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00:44:45,040 --> 00:44:50,040

To summarize, when I was 25 years old, UFOs were things flying around in the sky.

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00:44:50,040 --> 00:44:53,040

We would go into the field to observe them.

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00:44:53,040 --> 00:44:56,040

These days, young people look up information on the Internet.

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00:44:56,040 --> 00:44:59,040

That's why I'm a lot less interested now.

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00:44:59,040 --> 00:45:02,040

It's become a sort of virtual reality.

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00:45:15,040 --> 00:45:18,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.

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00:45:18,040 --> 00:45:21,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.

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00:45:21,040 --> 00:45:24,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.

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00:45:24,040 --> 00:45:27,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.

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00:45:27,040 --> 00:45:30,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.

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00:45:30,040 --> 00:45:33,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.

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00:45:33,040 --> 00:45:36,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.

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00:45:36,040 --> 00:45:39,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.

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00:45:39,040 --> 00:45:42,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.

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00:45:42,040 --> 00:45:45,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.

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00:45:45,040 --> 00:45:48,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.

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00:45:48,040 --> 00:45:51,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.

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00:45:51,040 --> 00:45:54,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.

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00:45:54,040 --> 00:45:57,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.

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00:45:57,040 --> 00:46:00,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.

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00:46:00,040 --> 00:46:03,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.

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00:46:03,040 --> 00:46:06,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.

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00:46:06,040 --> 00:46:09,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.

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00:46:09,040 --> 00:46:12,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.

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00:46:12,040 --> 00:46:15,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.

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The Internet is a virtual reality.

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The Internet is a virtual reality.

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The Internet is a virtual reality.

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The Internet is a virtual reality.

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The Internet is a virtual reality.

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00:46:30,040 --> 00:46:33,040

The Internet is a virtual reality.