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### Introduction

This is a book about the hopes, the experiences, and the frustrations, of a scientist who has gone into the field in search of proof for the elusive claims of the paranormal; but first and foremost it is a book about truth-seeking of a very special kind—a story of my investigations into a bizarre, seductive, and often terrifying phenomenon reported by many witnesses as a contact with an alien form of intelligence.

Over the years, I confess - and indeed I take pride in the fact - that I have changed my mind about the meaning of UFO data. As a young student in France I grew up wanting to be an astronomer: I was convinced that UFOs were conventional phenomena because astronomers would report them if they were truly unknown. Once I had realized my dream of working professionally at a major observatory I found that scientists did observe unknown objects. But they reported very few, destroying in the process some of the most interesting or tantalizing data.

In those days the extraterrestrial theory of UFOs seemed to be our best bet. Although most of my professional work has been in the computer field (as a scientific programmer and later as a principal investigator for some of the networking projects of the U.S. Department of Defense), I have not forgotten the galactic statistics I believe the probability for the existence of planetary systems similar to ours throughout the universe is overwhelming. Like many of my peers, I have been inspired by Teilhard de Chardin's gentle view of a great spiritual potential permeating the cosmos. I believe that life and consciousness are manifested on distant worlds. To establish the foundations of a future contact with them while enhancing human survival should be the primary long term goal of our space program, the major contribution of the scientific generation to which I belong.

For the past forty years those who believe in UFOs have assumed that these objects were the product of a civilization of space travelers who were conducting a survey of the earth in pursuit of their own goals. I have found myself gradually at odds with that interpretation. In the process I have uncovered major contradictions between the extraterrestrial hypothesis (ETH) and many UFO reports, including "abduction" cases.

In my earlier works most notably in Dimensions, I have enumerated the difficulties of the extraterrestrial theory and the concerns raised by the abduction reports. I will not repeat the detail of the argument here. Careful analysis of the reports shows that there are many more landings and "close encounters" than would be required for a survey of our planet. The reported interaction with the occupants of the objects is absurd and their overtly "scientific" experiments are crude to the point of being grotesque. The medical examination to which abductees are said to be subjected often accompanied by sadistic sexual manipulation is reminiscent of the medieval tales of encounters with demons. It makes no sense in a sophisticated or technical or biological framework: any intelligent being equipped with the scientific marvels that UFOs possess would be in a position to achieve any of these alleged scientific objectives in a shorter time and with fewer risks. Those among the scientific community who have been openly skeptical of the entire UFO phenomenon (and they are in the majority) must be excused for stating that the reported contact is so absurd, and the conclusions of the believers so preposterous that the alleged object must be an aberration (physical or psychological) in every case. And yet the reports are there. They continue to come from reliable well-balanced observers. And they increasingly point to existence of a genuine technology pursuing its own hidden agenda.

Some witnesses react to the phenomenon with a feeling of awe and fulfillment: for Whitley Strieber the outcome was *communion* and *transformation*. Yet for many others I have interviewed the experience is better described as *confrontation*.

My friends in the UFO research community have been puzzled by my disappearance from the scene between 1980 and 1987. In the present book they will find the answer. In 1980 I felt that the debate for and against the reality of UFOs had reached a point of diminishing returns. I stopped reading UFO books and subscribing to specialized magazines. I stayed away from local study groups and national conferences on the subject. The same arguments were rehashed, the same cases were cited ad nauseam. It was already clear that the study of abductions was hopelessly mired in the complexities and pitfalls of the use of hypnosis in the hands of believers who were subtly<or not so subtly<influencing the outcome of the interviews they conducted. It was time for me to go back into the field in search of new information. Not for the data alone; heaven knows we have more data than we can process. So much that a complete catalogue of close encounter cases would encompass between 5,000 and 10,000 reports, depending on the criteria one used. The total number of unexplained UFO cases on record worldwide is well in excess of 100,000, yet we are fairly certain on the basis of opinion polls that only one witness in ten comes forward with a report. Faced with this deluge of data, we need appropriate methodology to classify and analyze the cases. We need a new assessment of investigative techniques and a new outlook on the phenomenon.

Once I had made the decision to place my research back into an investigative mode, some simple steps suggested themselves. I made arrangements with a few laboratories in Silicon Valley to have access to the equipment I would require. I made a list of the areas where I would need expert advice<from interview techniques to photographic interpretation, from biological analysis to forensic science. To my surprise, I found that the scientists and the executives I approached were eager to help once they became convinced that my own discretion could be trusted. I also discovered that I could expect no cooperation from most of the UFO believers, who' were willing to help me only to the extent that my conclusions! would support their preconceived idea that UFOs are extraterrestrial visitors to the earth. As one field investigator for a major U.S. group put it, his dream was to find a flying saucer and kick the tires! I was not willing to commit to this party line. The UFO phenomenon, in my view, is an opportunity to practice science with humanitarian aims. But an open mind is a prerequisite. It is not easy to achieve it. The human brain loves to jump to conclusions on the basis of insufficient data.

It turned out that working in the field alone, or with just a few discreet friends, was a blessing in disguise. I could cover more ground, investigate more cases, and learn new things faster equipped simply with my all-terrain Chevy truck and a small group of well-connected associates, than a cumbersome organization could.

When the results started piling up, a new picture of the UFO phenomenon emerged. It was bizarre, yet consistent; well patterned, yet terribly disturbing. So disturbing, in fact, that I keep in my files some data I do not want to publish until I have verified its validity and thought through the implications. This book is only a partial selection, using the cases that have risen to a sufficient degree of maturity in my own mind.

I have borrowed my own methods from the tools of technical intelligence, which are different from those of ordinary science. In science one has no reason to suspect that the phenomena under study are the result of manipulation or deliberate bias. Here we must assume that some of the data is misleading. The cases that receive a high level of media publicity are especially suspect.

Instead, the reports I selected for follow-up came mostly from private sources: either from readers of my previous books or from researchers in the field who were aware of my new activities. I drew up a list of criteria for my investigations. I would assign the highest priority to cases that had not been reported to the media or to the major UFO groups. (I made an exception for old cases where enough time had passed so that interest in them had waned.) I stressed access to the site and to the witnesses, and I placed a high value on physical or biological data.

I have selected from my research files one hundred UFO events for detailed presentation in this book. Forty-seven of them are firsthand cases in which I met and interviewed the witnesses myself generally at the site. These events come primarily from the United States, Brazil, France, and Argentina. Many of them involve secondary physical and medical effects, including twelve cases of fatal injuries in which the victim typically survived less than twenty-four hours.

In the course of my field work on UFOs I also accumulated evidence in three related domains that I consider to be outside the scope of the present book. First, I obtained much new information about cults. I am repelled by this material, yet the cultist temptation is definitely present among many witnesses and quite a few ufologists. My attempts to sound a note of alarm on this subject in an earlier book entitled *Messengers of Deception* went largely unheeded. Many ufologists even became angry at me for pointing out that a belief in extraterrestrials could be used to manipulate unsuspecting populations. Perhaps the experience of the People's Temple in Jonestown, Guyana, will have to be repeated before the full impact of cults in our society is realized. Cults are driven by irrational beliefs, and they serve a psychological purpose in their members by providing a release from the confrontation with the unknown. It is my view today—as it was when I wrote *Messengers of Deception* ten years ago—that science, by refusing to openly study the UFO phenomenon, drives many sincere witnesses into such cults. The skeptics, who flatly deny the existence of any unexplained phenomenon in the name of "rationalism," are among the primary contributors to the rejection of science by the public. People are not stupid and they know very well when they have seen something out of the ordinary. When a so-called expert tells them the object must have been the moon or a mirage, he is really teaching the public that science is impotent or unwilling to pursue the study of the unknown. He is contributing to the growth of irrational movements in modern society.

Another domain I have explored concerns cattle mutilations. Over a two-year period I interviewed ranchers, veterinarians, and law enforcement officials in Arkansas, Missouri, and Kansas. Today a number of the episodes I investigated are still unexplained. They may have a direct relationship to the UFO phenomenon. Because I cannot yet prove this relationship, I have decided not to burden the reader with what may be irrelevant data. But the entire subject remains very much open in my own mind, even if the UFO research community, except for a few courageous investigators, prefers to sweep it under the rug and keep it there.

The third theme untouched by this book is government intervention. In the course of my professional work I was asked twice to testify in congressional hearings on the subject of emergency management. This activity helped me to better understand how governmental agencies work. Like many of my colleagues in the field, I have become convinced that the U.S. government, as well as other governments, was very much involved in the UFO business. This involvement is not limited to the kind of data collection that is the normal responsibility of intelligence agencies. It extends to the close monitoring of the UFO organizations themselves and, in some cases, to the staging of false sightings and the occasional leaking of false documents. It is not my business to interfere with such activities. The belief in extraterrestrials, like any other strong belief, IS an attractive vehicle for some mind control and psychological warfare activities. I do not believe that any government has the answer to the UFO problem, although several governments must have the proof of its reality.

Once these three domains—cults, mutilations, and government activity—are excluded, we are left with what I regard as the core of the UFO problem: a mass of bewildering data coming from sincere observers who have been confronted with an unexplained source of energy affecting them in their physical environment and in their spiritual outlook.

What distinguishes this book from much of the UFO literature is that essential information was obtained (1) by the author himself (2) from firsthand sources, and (3) at the site, furthermore, all potential lines of conventional explanation have been followed to the best of my ability.

It will take many years, and more resources and skills than one man can assemble, to solve this problem. But I offer this report on my field work as a first step on this long and exciting road.

When I returned from my first trip to Brazil, it had become clear to me that the UFO problem was much more dangerous and much more technologically complex than the literature of the field had indicated. The methods of the amateur groups and those of official investigators armed with complicated forms and statistics were practically irrelevant. What was needed was not academic research but direct, down and dirty scientific intelligence. This would mean a lot of time and travel, careful weighing of contradictory data, and years of analysis of the resulting patterns. What I did not know when I embarked on this enterprise was the depth of the impact it would make on me and the clarity of the final conclusions.

Any systematic work of scientific intelligence begins with phys~cal data. Hence, in the first part of the book I have

assembled those cases that can teach us something new about the energy and the structure that characterize the phenomenon. Part Two, which deals with the puzzling, often subtle problems of field investigation, provides a few examples of apparently routine cases that turned out to be important, and of fascinating reports that were found to have conventional explanations. In Part Three I have covered the reported impact on human witnesses, from the simple stories of sunburns and conjunctivitis to apparent exposure to a lethal force. In Part Four I have gathered what are, in my own experience, some of the most challenging cases for my fellow scientists to ponder. And in Part Five the reader will find the observations I made in 1988 when I returned to Brazil in search of evidence for the medical injuries consecutive to UFO encounters—perhaps the most significant area of investigation for the future. An appendix proposes a new definition and classification system for UFO data, and a complete case index lists sightings described in the book.

All of the cases examined in this volume were unidentified when I started studying them. Most of them are still unidentified after all the work my associates and I did. What we learned in the process has to do with the power, and also the weakness, of scientific methodology, with the limitations of technical analysis, and with the very nature of our fears and biases as scientists facing the unknown. It is a process that teaches us a new measure of humility before the universe and its bewildering potential to reveal alien forms of consciousness and, more importantly perhaps, new insights into our own. But my immediate conclusion is this: whatever else they may be, UFOs represent a technology capable of harmful actions. This observation should send us back into the field with better resources and a renewed sense of urgency.

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