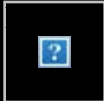


 Aliens On Earth.com <i>Resources for those who are stranded here</i> 	
Our Bookstore is OPEN <i>Over 5000 new & used titles, competitively priced!</i> Topics: UFOs - Paranormal - Area 51 - Ghosts - Fortean - Conspiracy - History - Biography - Psychology - Religion - Crime - Health - Geography - Maps - Science - Money - Language - Recreation - Technology - Fiction - Other - New	Search... for keyword(s) in Page Titles
Location: Mothership -> UFO -> Updates -> 1996 -> Dec -> UFOs and Mainstream Science	

UFO UpDates Mailing List

UFOs and Mainstream Science

From: "Steven J. Powell" <sjpowell@access.digex.net>
 Date: Thu, 26 Dec 1996 20:40:49 -0500
 Fwd Date: Fri, 27 Dec 1996 02:21:29 -0500
 Subject: UFOs and Mainstream Science

UFO's and Mainstream Science

by Bernhard Haisch, Ph. D.

[Bernhard Haisch is the Managing Editor of the Journal of Scientific Exploration, P.O. Box 5848, Stanford, CA 94309. E-mail: <haischGjse.com>]

(Mutual UFO Network UFO Journal, Number 335, March 1996, Copyright 1996 by the Mutual UFO Network, 103 Oldtowne Rd., Sequin, Texas 78155, published monthly with a membership/subscription rate of \$25/yr.)

'The Journal of Scientific Exploration' (JSE), which I edit, is a peer-reviewed research journal in which scholarly investigations on phenomena not part of the currently accepted scientific paradigms may be published. UFO's fall in this category, or more to the point, UFO's certainly fall outside the realm of mainstream science. Is there any possibility of changing this situation? The purpose of this essay is to present some ideas along these lines to the community of UFO investigators and supporters.

By way of introduction I am not myself a UFO researcher, but as editor of this unconventional journal I have been exposed to enough data and met enough serious investigators to become supportive of the need to carefully study whatever this phenomenon, or perhaps phenomena, may be. My profession is that of astronomer and by most criteria, apart from editing JSE, I am an insider in the scientific mainstream: author of research papers, principle investigator on NASA projects, associate editor of a leading journal in astrophysics.

The field of astronomy is supported by hundreds of millions of dollars in government research funding every year, billions if one tallies such major missions as the Hubble Space Telescope. For the recent meeting of the American Astronomical Society in San Antonio, the head of NASA, Daniel Goldin, flew down from Washington just to address us astronomers. Is there any chance that even a fraction of such support and respectability could ever come to ufology?

At the moment, no, not a chance. But as I was listening to Mr. Goldin speaking it occurred to me that some of the points he was making might be worth passing on.

Goldin made it clear that NASA's job is not to support astronomers (although it does that pretty abundantly, a situation I greatly appreciate!). Nor is NASA's job to employ engineers and astronauts to keep the shuttle flying. NASA's job, said Goldin, is to serve the American people. He mentioned a talk he had given in Bozeman and the

excitement that the Hubble pictures elicited there among the ordinary men and women of Montana, far removed from NASA centers. People want to know about the universe. And people especially want to know whether there are other worlds capable of sustaining life. The fact that the announcement at the same astronomical society meeting of the discovery of two new planets orbiting the stars 70 Virginis and 47 Ursae Majoris made the front pages of major newspapers underscores this point.

The search for the origins of life and for other planetary systems is now a cornerstone objective for NASA. Goldin discussed visionary plans to image other solar systems using huge space-based interferometers in the new millennium. He challenged us astronomers to find ways to photograph clouds and mountains on earth-like planets in other solar systems, which must be one of the most scientifically ambitious statements ever made by a head of NASA. This, in his view, is what the American people want from NASA; and I have no doubt that he is correct in his assessment. I pose to you that there is a lesson here for ufology. If various public opinion polls are to be believed there may be more Americans who believe there is something going on having to do with UFO's than not. It even seems probable, though I do not know this to be the case, that there are more people who "believe in" UFO's than have heard about Hubble. If that is the case, Goldin's lesson for NASA would apply here too. If the American people truly want the UFO problem officially investigated, the government will do that by and by. That does not automatically mean NASA of course. Many appearances to the contrary, UFO's may have nothing to do with outer space as astronomers view the universe.

How would one bring about government-sponsored research analogous to that of astronomy or the other sciences. As Goldin urged us to do on behalf of NASA's research: write, call, visit your representatives and senators. Constituencies count. No doubt about it. NASA funds astronomical research because the American people want this; even if most of it is too esoteric for public consumption, the highlights such as Hubble images and first extra-solar planets do make the newspapers and people read with interest about what their tax dollars are paying for.

But there is a second key ingredient that really needs to come first, and all the grassroots lobbying will come to naught until this second point that Goldin made to us astronomers is translated into action in the wilds of ufology. Given a mandate to support such research, who decides what exactly will be done. Goldin reminded us astronomers that it is our responsibility to come up with NASA's marching orders for the start of a new century. The community of astronomers must reach consensus on prioritizing projects, and he made it clear that those of us whose projects may not make the cutoff, owing to fiscal limitations, are still obligated as members of the research community to support those that are selected. Community consensus and support of an agreed-upon plan, even by those who lost in the proposal competitions, is essential. Without that, the money would eventually stop flowing.

And there is the roadblock for ufology. There, in my view, is the principal reason civilian government money has never started flowing, or even trickling. The field is as far from consensus as it could be. There are many possible factors in this ranging from sincere and professionally motivated difference of opinion, to lack of understanding of scientific methods, focus on personal aggrandizement rather than objectivity, paranoia, etc. To be fair to the principles of objectivity and comprehensiveness one must also acknowledge the possibility that the disarray of ufology may be partially driven by official or semi-official disinformation, or even, taking the view of the respected researcher Jacques Vallee, by the UFO phenomenon itself.

But even if those darker possibilities were true, it would still be possible to press ahead if a leadership and a position could be agreed upon, at least a tentative one, a provisional one to get started, one that can be re-evaluated after things get going. One has a better chance of arriving at a destination even if one drives the car in the wrong direction and has to turn around, than if no one is ever selected to start the car and pull out the driveway!

Lest I leave the wrong impression, this is not a solicitation for anyone's vote for this astronomer to lead the charge. I have no desire to become a ufology leader, nor am I here to recommend to you in whom such leadership should be vested. My message is a simple but absolutely realistic one as evidenced by Mr. Goldin's address. Astronomy is doing reasonably well even in today's budget climate because it is meeting a demonstrable desire of the American public and has the professional structure, stature and behavior to effectively translate that mandate into funded programs.

The public climate is in fact more and more receptive to new ideas and is certainly keenly interested in the possibility of other intelligent life in the universe, including the possibility of evidence for such right here under our noses. It is conceivable that this could be turned into a public mandate for government-sponsored UFO research. But that can only happen if ufologists can somehow follow the successful example of the astronomical community.

This is difficult. Ph. D.'s in ufology are not conferred by respected institutions as they are in astrophysics. But there are things that can be done to start the process. Genuinely scholarly papers can be written, which the Journal of Scientific Exploration would consider, for example. Note that I am not trying to solicit papers; the Journal is highly selective and turns down more articles than are accepted. Journal articles are one way to interest mainstream scientists. In fact, eliciting the interest of mainstream scientists is a key factor in raising the level of UFO respectability. This is extremely difficult in the present environment of disarray, but this could change.

A 1977 poll of American astronomers, published in JSE, showed the following. Out of 2611 questionnaires 1356 were returned. In response to whether the UFO problem deserved further study the replies were: 23% certainly, 30% probably, 27% percent possibly, 17% probably not, 3% certainly not. Interestingly, there was a positive correlation between the amount of reading done on the subject and the opinion that further study was in order. Professional researchers would be likely to lose interest if there were a complete lack of credible data. This shows a surprisingly high level of potential interest that could be brought into the open if a proper professional structure could be provided. Scientists value their reputations more than anything, and the perceived danger of tainting one's hard won reputation by association with a disreputable activity is a major obstacle.

There is also a kind of non-linear downward spiral. Scientists are both very busy and put off by the appearance of much of ufology. As a result most scientists never look at UFO evidence, which leads to their conclusion that there is no evidence. Given the proper environment this could presumably be turned into a favorable upward non-linearity: Given "evidence of evidence," credibly, soberly presented, the interest of scientists can be piqued, which would presumably lead to the "discovery" by scientists that there is evidence.

Two other obstacles are irrationality and paranoid claims. One cannot avoid the possibility that, as Vallee argues, the element of irrationality may be the actual key and purpose of the phenomenon so as to force a change in human consciousness. This would not be welcome news for the apparently large constituency of nuts-and-bolts saucer enthusiasts, nor presumably for those who take all abduction reports at face value. And this would be very difficult for science to deal with because it is at first glance a frontal assault on science itself. But consider the advent of quantum mechanics and relativity in the early 1900's. These were frontal assaults on the prevailing classical physics that must have looked like madness to many physicists of the day. We do not read about them of course. The textbooks discuss the Einsteins and Plancks and other geniuses who prevailed, not the army of "ordinary physicists" whose careers and world-views looked to be shattered by what must have seemed irrational to them. But life went on and science even advanced!

Scientists are also certainly not used to the possibility that a phenomenon under investigation may be subject to clandestine manipulation. This may be the greatest obstacle because of the, in my view, small possibility that there may be some truth to it. It is not hard to imagine that there may be a great deal of classified information, but that would not by itself imply any greater comprehension concerning the nature of the phenomenon by those holding - and withholding the data. The 'Journal of Scientific Exploration' is publishing formerly classified information concerning multi-million dollar remote viewing (ESP) programs funded by the CIA and other intelligence agencies over the past 20 years. Projects that were highly secret a decade or two ago are now a matter of public record. n This demonstrates two things directly analogous to the UFO situation: yes, there really were classified ESP programs as claimed; but no, the vaunted government agencies were not able to come to deeper conclusions regarding the nature of that phenomenon than was then or is now publicly available. (The two public reports - by Utts and by Hyman - on this 20-year effort disagree on the strength of the evidence for remote viewing. The view of the three leading figures in this program, Puthoff, Targ and May, with all of whom I have had in- depth discussions, is that there were astonishing successes in a fraction of the cases.

Unfortunately there was no way to distinguish in advance what would be signal from what would be noise, hence the program could not achieve its required operational intelligence potential.)

Only in the unlikely circumstance that the most paranoid vision of government conspiracy with non-earthly intelligences should prove to be true would the existence of classified programs obstruct a successful, open, funded research initiative-either by blocking outright the establishment of an open research program, or by turning it into a sham to further cover "the top secret truth." In any case, nothing would be gained by letting suspicions of this sort stop the attempt to establish an open research program. Indeed, such efforts would perhaps point to valuable indicators of opposition, if such there were.

It seems from my unique vantage point as both scientist and editor of JSE, that substantial evidence exists of "something going on." But in the real world of competition and politics and entrenched positions that by itself will not move the UFO debate off square one. Evidence needs to be properly analyzed and then properly presented using techniques and venues as close as possible to those of mainstream science. The disparity of the evidence appears to be confusing enough without layers of unproven theory and conspiracy. Somehow out of organization of evidence there could arise not the truth - that is too much - but there could arise a consensus on simply what to do next, who would plan it, who would execute it, how would money be spent in a responsible, accountable, way if made available. The outcome would not be "the answer," but merely and sufficiently the input for the next logical follow-on. If such a scientifically-oriented process could be started, scientists could be attracted: grassroots political lobbying could then point to realistic funding opportunities that a representative or senator would be willing to vote for and tout at the next election as his or her contribution to the legitimate needs and wishes of the public.

Even if the UFO phenomenon should turn out to be deeper than we imagine, even should it prove to transcend science as we know it, the scientific approach is the only feasible way in the real, political, economic, technological world we live in to give us some chance to control our dealings with this phenomenon, rather than letting the phenomenon entirely control us... if such it is.

Quo vadis, ufology?

--

Thanks, take care.
John.

```
([[]][[]][[]][[]][[]][[]][[]][[]])  
{  
  sjpowell@access.digex.net  
}  
([[]][[]][[]][[]][[]][[]][[]][[]])
```

Search for other documents to/from: [sjpowell](#)

[[Next Message](#) | [Previous Message](#) | [This Day's Messages](#)]
[[This Month's Index](#) | [UFO UpDates Main Index](#) | [MUFON Ontario](#)]

UFO UpDates - Toronto - updates@globalserve.net
Operated by Errol Bruce-Knapp - ++ 416-696-0304

A Hand-Operated E-Mail Subscription Service for the Study of UFO Related Phenomena.
To subscribe please send your first and last name to updates@globalserve.net
Message submissions should be sent to the same address.

[[UFO Topics](#) | [People](#) | [Ufomind What's New](#) | [Ufomind Top Level](#)]

To find this message again in the future...
Link it to the appropriate [Ufologist](#) or [UFO Topic](#) page.

Archived as a public service by [Area 51 Research Center](#) which is not responsible for content.
Software by Glenn Campbell. Technical contact: webmaster@ufomind.com

Financial support for this web server is provided by the [Research Center Catalog](#).