



Aliens On Earth.com

Resources for those who are stranded here



Our Bookstore is **OPEN**

Over 5000 new & used titles, competitively priced!

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](#) -> [1998](#) -> [Dec](#) -> Hynek 12/17/66 Sat. Eve. Post article - Pt. 2

UFO UpDates Mailing List

Hynek 12/17/66 Sat. Eve. Post article - Pt. 2

From: Jerry Cohen <rjcohen@li.net>
Date: Tue, 15 Dec 1998 22:11:18 -0400
Fwd Date: Wed, 16 Dec 1998 10:19:00 -0500
Subject: Hynek 12/17/66 Sat. Eve. Post article - Pt. 2

Hynek 12/17/66 Sat. Eve. Post article - Pt. 2

ARE FLYING SAUCERS REAL? - continued
By J. Allen Hynek

We had many reports from people of good repute, yet we had no scientifically incontrovertible evidence--authenticated movies, spectrograms of reported lights, "hardware"--on which to make a judgment. There are no properly authenticated photographs to match any of the vivid prose descriptions of visual sightings. Some of the purported "photographs" are patent hoaxes. Others show little detail; they could be anything. Some show a considerable amount of detail, but cannot be substantiated.

The evidence for UFO's, then, was entirely without physical proof. But were all of the responsible citizens who made reports mistaken or victims of hallucinations? It was an intriguing scientific question, yet I couldn't find any scientists to discuss it with.

The general view of the scientists was that UFO's couldn't exist, therefore they didn't exist, therefore let's laugh off the idea. This, of course, is a violation of scientific principles, but the history of science is filled with such instances. Some scientists refused to look through Galileo's telescope at sunspots, explaining that "since the sun was perfect, it couldn't have spots, and therefore it was no use looking for them." Other scientists refused to believe in the existence of meteorites; who would be foolish enough to think that a stone could fall from the sky?

>From time to time I would urge the Air Force to make a more thorough study of the phenomenon, but nothing ever came of it. I began to feel a very real sense of frustration. As the years went by, I continued to find cases that puzzled me while I examined reports for Project Blue Book. People who were afraid that the Air Force would scoff at their reports began sending me letters that were often detailed and well written about their experiences. The Air Force never attempted to influence my view on any case, but occasionally the service would disregard my evaluations. What was more, I was not consulted on some key cases. (One of the most recent was the well-publicized incident involving two policemen in Ravenna, Ohio, last spring.)

Then, from 1958 through 1963, the UFO reports began to diminish in quality as well as quantity, and I felt that perhaps the "flying-saucer" era was at last on the wane and would soon vanish. But since 1964 there has been a sharp rally in the number of puzzling sightings. The more impressive cases seem to

fit into a pattern. The UFO's had a bright red glow. They hovered a few feet off the ground, emitting a high-pitched whine. Animals in the vicinity were terrified, often before the UFO's became visible to the people who later reported the incident. When the objects at last began to disappear, they vanished in a matter of seconds.

A very real paradox was now beginning to develop. As the Air Force's consultant, I was acquiring a reputation in the public eye of being a debunker of UFO's. Yet, privately, I was becoming more and more concerned over the fact that people with good reputations, who had no possible hope of gain from reporting a UFO, continued to describe "out-of-this-world" incidents.

In July, 1965, I wrote a letter to the Air Force calling again for a systematic study of the phenomenon. "I feel it is my responsibility to point out," I said, "that enough puzzling sightings have been reported by intelligent and often technically competent people to warrant closer attention than Project Blue Book can possibly encompass at the present time."

Then, in March of this year, came the reports of the now-celebrated "swamp-gas" sightings in Michigan. On two separate nights, at spots separated by 63 miles, nearly 100 people reported seeing red, yellow, and green lights glowing over swampy areas. When I received the first accounts of the UFO's, I recognized at once that my files held far better, more coherent and more articulate reports than these. Even so, the incident was receiving such great attention in the press that I went to Michigan with the hope that here was a case that I could use to focus scientific attention on the UFO problem. I wanted the scientists to consider the phenomenon.

But when I arrived in Michigan, I soon discovered that the situation was so charged with emotion that it was impossible for me to do any really serious investigation. The Air Force left me almost completely on my own, which meant that I sometimes had to fight my way through the clusters of reporters who were surrounding the key witnesses whom I had to interview.

The entire region was gripped with near-hysteria. One night at midnight I found myself in a police car racing toward a reported sighting. We had radio contact with other squad cars in the area. "I see it" from one car, "there it is" from another, "it's east of the river near Dexter" from a third. Occasionally even I thought I glimpsed "it."

Finally several squad cars met at an intersection. Men spilled out and pointed excitedly at the sky. "See--there it is! It's moving!"

But it wasn't moving. "It" was the star Arcturus, undeniably identified by its position in relation to the handle of the Big Dipper. A sobering demonstration for me.

In the midst of this confusion, I got a message from the Air Force: There would be a press conference, and I would issue a statement about the cause of the sightings. It did me no good to protest, to say that as yet I had no real idea what had caused the reported sightings in the swamps. I was to have a press conference, ready or not.

Searching for a justifiable explanation of the sightings, I remembered a phone call from a botanist at the University of Michigan, who called to my attention the phenomenon of burning "swamp gas." This gas, caused by decaying vegetation, has been known to ignite spontaneously and to cast a flickering light. The glow is well-known in song and story as "jack-o'-lantern," "fox fire," and "wil-o'-the-wisp." After learning more about swamp gas from other Michigan scientists, I decided that it was a "possible" explanation that I would offer to the reporters.

The press conference, however, turned out to be no place for scholarly discussion: it was a circus. The TV cameramen wanted me in one spot, the newspaper men wanted me in another, and for a while both groups were actually tugging at me. Everyone was clamoring for a single, spectacular explanation of the sightings. They wanted little green men. When I handed out a statement that discussed swamp gas, many of the men simply ignored the fact that I said it was a "possible" reason. I watched with horror as one reported scanned the page, found the

phrase "swamp gas," underlined it, and rushed for a telephone.

Too many of the stories the next day not only said that swamp gas was definitely the cause of the Michigan lights but implied that it was the cause of other UFO sightings as well. I got out of town as quickly and as quietly as I could.

I supposed that the swamp-gas incident, which has become a subject for cartoons that I greatly enjoy, was the low point of my association with UFO's. The experience was very obvious proof that public excitement had mounted to the point that it was ridiculous to expect one professor, working alone in the field, to conduct a scholarly investigation. We had quite clearly reached a new state in the UFO problem.

Three weeks after the Michigan incident I appeared before a hearing into UFO's that was conducted by the House Committee on Armed Services. I pointed out to the committee that I had a dossier of "twenty particularly well-reported UFO cases which, despite the character, technical competence and number of witnesses, I have not been able to explain. Ten of these reports were made by scientists or by highly trained individuals, five were made by members of the armed services or police, and five were made by other reliable people. The committee urged the Air Force to give continued attention to the subject and was assured by Air Secretary Dr. Harold Brown that it would.

A serious inquiry into the nature of UFO's would be justified, in my opinion, just on the basis of the puzzling cases that have been reported during the last two years. It seems to me that there are now four possible explanations for the phenomena:

First, they are utter nonsense, the result of hoaxes or hallucinations. This, of course, is the view that a number of my scientific colleagues have taken. I think that enough evidence has piled up to shift the burden of proof to the critics who cry fraud. And if the UFO's are merely hallucinations, they still deserve intensive study; we need to learn how the minds of so many men so widely separated can be so deluded over so many years.

Second, the UFO's are some kind of military weapon being tested in secret. This theory is easily dispensed with. Secret devices are usually tested in very limited geographical areas. Why should the United States, or any other country, test them in scores of nations? The problem of preventing a security leak would be impossible.

Third, the UFO's are really from outer space. I agree with the Air Force. There is no incontrovertible evidence, as far as I can see, to say that we have strange visitors. But it would be foolish to rule out the possibility absolutely.

Solely for the sake of argument, let me state the case in its most favorable light. We all suffer from cosmic provincialism--the notion that we on this earth are somehow unique. Why should our sun be the only star in the universe to support intelligent life, when the number of stars is a 1 followed by twenty zeros?

Stars are born, grow old and die, and it now seems that the formation of planetary systems is part of this evolutionary process. You would expect to find planets around a star just as you find kittens around a cat or acorns around an oak. Suppose that only one star in 10 is circled by a planetary system that has life; that means that the number of life-supporting stars in the universe would be a 1 followed by 19 zeros.

We also know that some stars are many millions of year older than our sun, which means that life elsewhere in the universe may have evolved many millions of years beyond our present state. That could mean that other planets in other solar systems may have solved the problem of aging, which we are beginning to grapple with even now. If a life span reached 10,000 years, let us say, a space journey of 200 to 300 years would be relatively short. In that time it would be possible to get from some distant planetary systems to ours.

A highly advanced civilization, such as the one I am postulating, would naturally keep an eye on the progress of life elsewhere in its galaxy. Any signs of unusual scientific

progress might be reason enough to send a reconnaissance vehicle to find out what was going on. It so happens that in recent years we have made a very important advance of this kind; the development of the use of nuclear energy.

This is still "science fiction," of course, but let me take the story a step further. Some skeptics who scoff at reported UFO sightings often ask why the "flying saucers" don't try to communicate with us. One answer might be; Why should they? We wouldn't try to communicate with a new species of kangaroo we might find in Australia; we would just observe the animals.

Is there any connection between the reported UFO sightings and the scientific probability of life elsewhere in our galaxy? I don't know. I find no compelling evidence for it, but I don't rule it out automatically.

The fourth possible explanation of UFO's is that we are dealing with some kind of natural phenomenon that we as yet cannot explain or even conceive of. Think how our knowledge of the universe has changed in 100 years. In 1866 we not only knew nothing about nuclear energy, we didn't even know that the atom had a nucleus. Who would have dreamed 100 years ago that television would be invented? Who can say what startling facts we will learn about our world in the next 100 years?

All of these possibilities deserve serious consideration and now, at long last, they will get it. In October the Air Force announced that a thorough investigation of UFO's will be conducted at the University of Colorado by a team of distinguished scientists, headed by Dr. Edward Condon, the former director of the National Bureau of Standards.

I cannot help but feel a small sense of personal triumph and vindication. The night the appointment was announced, my wife and I went out and had a few drinks to celebrate.

I am particularly pleased that the Condon committee will have time to work into the problem because I cannot consider anyone qualified to speak authoritatively on the total UFO phenomenon unless he has read at least a few thousand original (not summarized) reports, and is thoroughly acquainted with the global nature of reported UFO sightings. The truly puzzling and outstanding UFO reports are few in number compared to the welter of poor reports.

Recently I had dinner with several members of the Condon committee. What a pleasure it was to sit down with men who were open-minded about UFO's, who did not look at me as though I were a Martian myself. For the first time other scientists, who apparently have been wondering all along, have openly talked about the reports. One leading scientist wrote me the other day: "For some time now I have been convinced of the reality of this phenomenon based on reports in the general news media. It has seemed to me that even with a heavy discount there is a core of reliable observations which we cannot shrug off. Twice in recent weeks I have stated my views on the subject in small conversational groups of respectable, scholarly friends, and found that they were amazed that I should take these matters seriously. So I know that it took some courage for you to speak out."

I would like to suggest two more steps to help solve the UFO problem:

First of all the valuable data that we have accumulated--good reports from all over the world--must be computerized so that we can rapidly compare new sightings with old and trace patterns of UFO behavior.

Second, we need good photographs of UFO's. Although the Air Force has probably spent less on UFO's so far than it has on wastebaskets. I realize that it is impractical to expect the service to set up a costly "flying-saucer" surveillance system across the country. When a UFO is spotted, the terrified witness usually picks up the phone at once and calls the local police, who have missed dozens of opportunities in the past to record the phenomena on film. I recommend that every police chief in the country make sure that at least one of his squad cars carries in its glove compartment a camera loaded with color film. The cameras, which could also be used for regular police

work, might be furnished by civic or service groups. (I carry a camera in my briefcase at all times.)

Finally, I would like to emphasize my views on a controversial subject. During all of my years of association with the Air Force, I have never seen any evidence for the charge about UFO's most often leveled against the service: that there is deliberate cover-up of knowledge of space visitors to prevent the public from panicking. The entire history of the Air Force and the UFO's can be understood only if we realize that the Pentagon has never believed that UFO's could be anything novel, and it still doesn't. The working hypothesis of the Air Force has been that the stimulus behind every UFO report (apart from out and out hoaxes and a few hallucinations) is a misidentification of a conventional object or a natural phenomenon. It is just as simple as that.

Now after a delay of 18 years, the Air Force and American science are about to try for the first time, really, to discover what, if anything we can believe about "flying saucers."

End Sat. Eve. Post article:

To Summary of the preceding article:
<http://www.ufomind.com/ufo/updates/1998/dec/ml5-009.shtml>

Those of us familiar with the Colorado Condon Study know what occurred back then.

Click here if you're not familiar with same:
<http://www.li.net/~rjcohen/condon.html>

Click below for extracts of a letter he wrote to his boss in the Air Force explaining things that were wrong with Project Blue Book <http://www.li.net/~rjcohen/ocr.5a.html>

The opinion Hynek expressed in the next to last paragraph changed somewhat with the releases of certain FOIA documents by the government in 1979 & 1981.

To see this, click below for several quotes from Hynek at various times throughout his career.
<http://www.li.net/~rjcohen/ocr.3b.html#anchor75480>

To see exactly what changed his mind, click below for the 1979 and 1981 governmental releases:
<http://www.li.net/~rjcohen/Nsday.Art.79.html#anchor1389688>
<http://www.li.net/~rjcohen/frnt.sci.81.html#anchor417559>

[[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.

Software by Glenn Campbell. Technical contact: webmaster@ufomind.com

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