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UFO UpDates Mailing List

HOT GOSSIP UK - April '99

From: **Gerogina Bruni** <georgina@easynet.co.uk>
Date: Tue, 13 Apr 1999 17:35:55 +0100
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HOT GOSSIP UK
NICK POPE'S WEIRD WORLD

Hello, and welcome to April's column, where I round up the news, and tell you what's hot and what's not from the world of ufology and the paranormal.

Independent UFO Network

The Independent UFO Network (IUN) has been relaunched after an absence of some years, and this promises to be an interesting development for British ufology. There are some good people involved with the project, such as David Clarke, whose investigation of an incident that occurred on 24 March 1997 (which some people claim involved an object crashing in South Yorkshire) is an example of how good, methodical UFO investigations should be done. However, one or two of those involved struck me as being slightly out of place in an organisation that is being launched amidst claims that it will offer an honest and rational perspective. Last year, at a TV show, one of these people openly jeered at an abductee I was talking to, and made fun of his story; and there are question marks over the attitude that this individual and another of those involved take towards witness confidentiality. The issue of witness confidentiality will be the acid test so far as the IUN is concerned: if members know or suspect somebody has had an anomalous experience of some kind, but also know that this person doesn't want to talk about it, will anyone involved in the IUN speculate about the identity of the witness in public? If so, they would have no place in an organisation that purports to be a positive force in ufology. I give the IUN a cautious welcome, but in view of these concerns will be keeping a watchful eye on their activities and pronouncements. I'll keep you posted.

Starsigns

There's an old joke that if you want to annoy astronomer Patrick Moore you ask him whether it's going to be a good year for Virgos. But now even the TV Times (6-12 March issue) has committed the cardinal sin of referring to The Sky at Night as an astrology series! Whoops.

Royal Aeronautical Society Lecture

On 23rd February I gave a lecture to the Fleet Air Arm branch of the Royal Aeronautical Society. The lecture took place at the Fleet Air Arm Museum, adjacent to Royal Naval Air Station

Yeovilton, and was entitled The Government and UFOs - Official MOD Investigations. I talked about official attitudes to the UFO phenomenon, and the policy pursued over the years by the RAF, the Air Ministry and the Ministry of Defence. I also discussed some cases that I'd investigated during my stint in Sec(AS)2a. Needless to say, the talk concentrated on radar/visual cases and sightings with military witnesses. Most of the audience were naval personnel from the base, while the rest were from various aerospace companies, mainly Westlands. It was a rare opportunity to bring the UFO subject to a predominantly military and ex-military audience, and although I've dropped out of the ufological lecture circuit, I'm taking every opportunity to bring home to those within the world of officialdom the fact that the UFO phenomenon - whatever it may be - raises some important defence and national security issues.

The Contact Has Begun

I've just finished reading an extraordinary little book about alien contact. Entitled The Contact Has Begun, it's written by Phillip H. Krapf, and published by Hay House. The story itself is a bizarre account of contact with alien beings called Verdants, who are going to make open contact soon, with the aim of bringing Earth into the "intergalactic Federation of Sovereign Planets", using a series of human ambassadors to smooth the way. Well, I've heard this sort of stuff a million times before, but what makes this interesting is that Krapf spent the last 25 years of his career as a journalist on the Metro desk at the Los Angeles Times. Check out www.hayhouse.com for more information and order details.

Asteroids

I'm an Associate Member of Spaceguard UK, a lobby group aimed at raising awareness about the danger posed to the Earth by comets and asteroids. I was pleased to see that on 3 March there was a (long overdue) debate on the subject in Parliament, where the matter was raised by MP Lembit Opik. This tied-in nicely with a documentary on BBC 2's acclaimed science series Horizon, screened on 18 March.

Underground Bases

One mention of the phrase "underground facility", and all sorts of lunatics come out of the woodwork. People think there's something sinister about them, even though the military have long recognised that such facilities are possibly the best way to protect personnel and equipment in the face of an attack. It's simple common sense really, and yet the whole subject still inspires the sort of paranoid, delusional rambling that gives ufology a bad name. To get the real story, check out Secret Underground Cities, written by Nick McCamley and published by Leo Cooper.

Blast From The Past

This month's blast from the past quote comes from John Fuller's classic book, The Interrupted Journey. The book tells the story of the experiences of Betty and Barney Hill, whose 1961 encounter was the first widely publicised account of what came to be known as an alien abduction experience. The quote comes from one of Barney's hypnotic regression sessions with Dr Benjamin Simon:

"I didn't think of anything. I didn't think of the man in the sky in the machine that I saw. I just saw these eyes, and I closed mine."

Alien Investigator

Tony Dodd is one of the UK's best known ufologists, and has been researching and investigating the subject for many years. Tony is a former sergeant with the North Yorkshire police force, and has had a spectacular UFO encounter himself, in 1978. Now, he's written an account of his experiences, detailing his own encounters, and some of the cases that he's looked at, over the

years. Alien Investigator is published by Headline, and is an interesting read. I have to say that I have my doubts about some of the information passed to Tony by his sources, and disagree with some of his conclusions. Notwithstanding this, Tony is one of the good guys in ufology - a good-natured and honest man who calls things as he sees them. His book is well worth a read.

Operation Thunder Child

A lot of people have been asking about my next project, and a few others have been giving their opinions without having a clue what the book's about. In fact, I've signed a two book deal with Simon & Schuster and will be turning my attention to fiction for the time being. The books are part techno-thriller, part science fiction, and tell the story of a national crisis in which the Royal Air Force and the Ministry of Defence try to come to terms with a mysterious and hostile force which is launching devastating attacks on the United Kingdom. It combines my knowledge about UFOs with experience of crisis management which I gained in the Joint Operations Centre during the Gulf War. The first novel is called Operation Thunder Child, and will be published in October this year. The second is as yet untitled, and is currently scheduled to be published in Autumn next year. There have been one or two sarcastic comments from people implying that this departure into fiction somehow means that my non-fiction books can no longer be taken seriously. I find this a bizarre and totally illogical view. A number of former SAS soldiers have done exactly the same thing, and after writing non-fiction have gone on to write thrillers drawing upon their military experience. These books are written by insiders who, whether they're writing about technical details or tactics, certainly know their stuff. I'm trying to do the same. I've read a lot of thrillers where the authors tell a good story, but are let down by lack of knowledge about the way in which governments actually respond to a crisis. In drawing upon official knowledge and experience I'll be able to inject some realism into the books, and give readers what amounts to a seat at the Top Table in the Ministry of Defence, as the crisis unfolds. And as it's fiction, I'll be able to speculate on areas which could never have appeared in Open Skies, Closed Minds or The Uninvited. A lot of people are getting distinctly nervous about Operation Thunder Child, and I get the impression that my life will be getting quite interesting over the next few months, in the run-up to publication. I'll keep you posted.

The Final Frontier

Scientific American have produced an excellent publication, available now from newsagents, and entitled The Future of Space Exploration. It's packed with interesting articles on space missions, some underway, some scheduled to begin shortly, and some which are just ideas at present. The final page lists thirty space-related websites, covering everything from astronaut biographies to the latest Hubble Space Telescope photographs.

Implants

It's long been claimed that some abductees are fitted with implants, designed perhaps to control their actions, or track their movements. American ufologist Derrel Sims is best known for these claims, and Whitley Strieber has also covered them in his latest book, Confirmation. Now a new book claims to shed some light on the mystery. It's written by Dr Roger Leir, and entitled The Aliens and the Scalpel. The publishers are Granite Publishing. Leir is a medical professional and a member of the Mutual UFO Network, and has surgically recovered implants from a number of abductees. Whether they are of extraterrestrial origin is, of course, another matter, as all sorts of foreign bodies can enter the body through wounds. Furthermore, fragments of bone or pieces of hardened tissue can also find their way to a position just underneath the skin. Although I haven't read this book yet, it's clearly one that should be read by anybody with an interest in the alien abduction phenomenon.

By The Right, Quick March

The fact that one of ufology's loudest characters used to be a member of the extreme right wing British National Party is old news, but is a story that won't go away, even though I'm sure the individual concerned is doubtless wishing it would. The individual concerned claims that he only joined the organisation to expose their violent and racist views, and that he is in fact a left-winger. Other people have told me that this denial is rubbish, and a predictable attempt to disassociate him from an embarrassing past which has resulted in him having changed his name. Although this controversy has been around for some time, it's recently resurfaced, and some very specific claims have suddenly appeared. I have been sent a bulky dossier which goes into even more detail, but have refrained from circulating the material for the time being, because we should always give people the benefit of the doubt and treat them as innocent until proven otherwise. Furthermore, although there can clearly be no place in ufology for those who actively preach the politics of hate, what if somebody who used to hold nazi views subsequently changed his mind? In this situation, should we perhaps accept that this matter belongs in the past, and forgive his previous sins? It's a difficult issue, and raises issues about whether researchers and investigators should "police" ufology, ostracising those whose views or behaviour goes beyond the pale. I'll keep you posted.

Moonshine

Newly published is a book which will doubtless be lapped up by conspiracy theorists. Dark Moon by Mary Bennett and David Percy examines in detail the claims that NASA hoaxed the 1969 Apollo moon landing. The book covers a lot of ground, from the mystery surrounding the Sphinx, to the controversy over the so-called Face on Mars. The authors even manage to bring in Roswell. I confess to being extremely sceptical about claims such as these. There are certainly some anomalies in the official films and photographs of the moon landings, but it's likely that this is due to nothing more sinister than NASA retouching some of the images, so that the demanding press and public had something impressive to look at. This enhancement is hardly a crime, and certainly doesn't mean the mission took place in a TV studio. Issue 97 of Fortean Times contains an excellent article refuting, point by point, the arguments that had previously (Issue 94) been put forward by David Percy. All this puts me in mind of one of the most amusing pieces of television I've ever seen, when Matthew Williams was invited onto Channel 4's The Big Breakfast, and allowed to trot out all the usual nonsense about how the moon landings were faked. He was midway through a nervous and rambling summary of other people's research when a caption was put up, telling viewers that what Williams didn't know was that Buzz Aldrin, the second man on the moon, was in the next room! How the presenter managed to keep a straight face, I'll never know. Aldrin was duly brought on, and I'll never forget the look on little Matty's face as long as I live, as he was totally and utterly humiliated on live national television. He doubtless wished that the ground would open and swallow him up. I was hoping that Aldrin would press the point, look Williams in the eye, and simply ask if he was calling him a liar. Given that Aldrin had put his life on the line to fly what was certainly a dangerous mission, he could have been excused for being somewhat aggrieved at anybody who suggested he'd lied about the whole thing, and had never been. But he was the perfect gentleman, and didn't push the point. Nonetheless, it was game, set and match to Aldrin, and a total disaster for conspiracy theorists. How I laughed!

The Unconvention

Talking about Fortean Times, their annual conference, The Unconvention, will be held in London on 24/25 April - details at www.forteanimes.com.

Mars Attacks

The controversy surrounding ALH84001 (the Martian meteorite that NASA scientists believe contains fossilised traces of bacteria that originated on the Red Planet) continues, and there's been an interesting new development. Dr Andrew Steele, a British

scientist working with the NASA team studying the meteorite, has discovered living bacteria within the meteorite. Before you get too excited, I should say that these are decidedly terrestrial micro-organisms. But the fact is that they've been feeding on the meteorite's organic carbon molecules, formed in an era when Mars almost certainly had running water on its surface. The fact that the bacteria can thrive off Martian rock is compelling evidence that life is not some unique miracle that can only exist here on Earth, but something that can exist in all sorts of different environments. We are not alone.

Ed's Note:

Nick Pope's two books, Open Skies, Closed Minds and The Uninvited, are available from all good bookshops. Simon & Schuster are his UK publishers, while The Overlook Press publish his books in America.

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