

# CONTINUUM

*The official publication of ParaNet<sup>SM</sup> Information Service  
(a division of the NovaStar Group, Inc.) and MICAP, Inc.*

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plus two new regular features: **MICAP News** and **Sources and Resources**.



**Volume 1  
Number 1**

**September, 1991**

**\$3.95**

# From the Publisher's Desk ...

Welcome to the premier issue of **CONTINUUM**, the official news magazine of ParaNet Information Service.

This issue carries many articles and features of interest to ParaNet members and others. Foremost among these is the debut announcement of MICAP (Multi-national Investigations Cooperative on Aerial Phenomena), a non-profit research and education organization which was "spun off" from ParaNet this summer. In the interest of fostering cooperation between the two organizations, ParaNet has agreed to publish **CONTINUUM** in conjunction with MICAP for one year, at which time MICAP will begin its own publication. For more information about MICAP, see the article "Announcing the Debut of MICAP" in this issue.

For those who haven't been around the net for ever and a day like some people, this issue includes a history of ParaNet by Jim Speiser, ParaNet's founder and first Director; this is followed by a prospective view of ParaNet's future from current Director Michael Corbin. We also present the first installment of "The Fatima Enigma", an analysis of the Fatima "miracle" and its paranormal cousins by James R. Black, ParaNet's Director of Investigations, and an in-depth report on an apparently genuine crop circle in Blue Grass, Iowa. There's also a review of the long-awaited book *UFO Crash at Roswell*, an update on the state of Australian Ufology, and a number of other odds and ends we think you will find both interesting and useful.

In keeping with ParaNet's traditional "bulletin board" concept, we encourage you to contribute your own articles to **CONTINUUM**. Science fiction, science fact, UFO or paranormal history, scaly-eyed skepticism, a book review, a television critique, an interview, the results of your latest physics experiment--you name it. We don't promise to publish it; but if it interests you as a devotee of the paranormal, it's probably a safe bet that it will interest others as well. All we ask is non-exclusive serial rights for publication in **CONTINUUM**; in exchange, you get free editing and a chance to see your work in print. (Who knows, we might even improve it!)

This first issue of **CONTINUUM** has been sent to you free of charge, in the hope you will find it interesting enough to justify the cost of a paid subscription. Several options are available (see below), ranging from a simple magazine subscription to full membership in both ParaNet and MICAP. But whatever your interests may be, and however limited your financial resources, your support for **CONTINUUM** is needed to assure its success in providing high-caliber information and up-to-date news of the world of Ufology. Future issues will contain a wealth of timely information on UFO sightings and investigations, paranormal phenomena, and esoteric physics, as well as book reviews, announcements of conferences and symposia, classified advertising, and whatever else we can think of. More than any other UFO publication, **CONTINUUM** will provide you with interactive access to the UFO community. It's *your* publication. Use it!

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**CONTINUUM** Magazine is published six times per year by ParaNet Information Service. Publisher: Michael Corbin. Editorial Director: James R. Black. Editorial Assistant: Susan Lewis. Articles, ads, subscriptions, letters to the editor, personal letters to the authors, and any other correspondence about **CONTINUUM**, ParaNet, or MICAP should be addressed to ParaNet Information Service, c/o Michael Corbin, Director, P.O. Box 172, Wheat Ridge, CO 80034-0172. Phone: (303) 431-8796 voice, (303) 431-8797 ParaNet Alpha BBS. Statements of fact and opinion in articles and advertising are the responsibility of the respective authors and vendors, and are not necessarily endorsed or verified by **CONTINUUM** Magazine, ParaNet Information Service, or MICAP. © Copyright 1991 by Continuum Magazine and ParaNet Information Service, a division of the NovaStar Group, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

# ParaNet/MICAP Field Investigation Report

CASE NUMBER: PN-91-0001

REPORT NUMBER: PN-91-0001-1 (29 Aug 91)

INCIDENT DATE: Wed/Thu, August 21/22, 1991

INCIDENT TIME: 9:30 pm to 3:00 am Central Time

## INCIDENT LOCATION

Blue Grass, Iowa (90 deg 45 min W, 41 deg 30 min N)

## WEATHER AND ASTRONOMICAL CONDITIONS

Clear skies, no precip, temp in low 70s, wind less than 10 mph[1].

Sunset 7:57 pm Wednesday, sunrise 6:21 am Thursday

Moonrise 5:58 pm Wednesday, moonset 3:34 am Thursday

Saturn 8.5 degrees from moon. No other planets visible.

Lunar illumination 91%.

## WITNESSES

Delmar "Snowball" Meyer, farmer, Blue Grass, Iowa.

J.H., farmer, Blue Grass, Iowa.

M.A., housewife, Blue Grass, Iowa.

S.S., shift worker, Blue Grass, Iowa.

Names of confidential witnesses will be made available to authorized ParaNet researchers by request.

## PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

James Roger Black, Iowa City, Iowa (author of this report)

Robert W. Atwood, Iowa City, Iowa (photographer and associate)

## Summary

A 46.5-foot circle appeared in a corn field east of Blue Grass, Iowa, on the night of Wednesday/Thursday, August 21-22, 1991. One witness saw an unidentified light moving over nearby fields around 9:30 pm. A second witness on a road adjacent to the field reported seeing a classic saucer descending toward the field as if preparing to land between 12:30 and 1:00 am. A third witness heard an unusual "rumbling, bumping sound" between 2:00 and 3:00 am. A second circle appeared in a different field on the night of Saturday/Sunday, August 24-25, 1991, but it appears to be a hoax perpetrated in response to the first circle.

## Background

Blue Grass, Iowa, is a farming community of approximately 1400 people near the Iowa/Illinois border. It sits astride U.S. Highway 61 between Davenport (4 miles east of Blue Grass in the "Quad Cities" area) and Muscatine (20 miles southwest of Blue Grass); Interstate 80 lies about 7 miles to the north and the Mississippi River about 4 miles to the south. Despite its proximity to a major metropolitan area, Blue Grass still has the feel of an isolated rural community, and the surrounding corn and soybean fields can be quite dark and forbidding in the dead of night.

As in most small towns, everyone knows everybody and their business, which leads to some interesting relationships among the witnesses in this case. For example, M.A.'s husband regularly plays cards with Snowball Meyer; and C.S., who helps care for M.A.'s husband because of his chronic medical problems, is the brother of S.S. In a larger com-

munity such interrelationships would immediately raise questions of collusion; in a town like Blue Grass, it is merely an inevitable part of the local culture.

The Blue Grass area, like much of eastern Iowa, has been a hotbed of UFO activity for years. One sightseer we encountered during our investigation told us that she had been "chased home" in her car by a brightly lit UFO in 1956, and we were told that another Blue Grass resident's vacation campsite in southern Iowa had been buzzed by bright lights earlier in the year. Last year a similar crop circle in a corn field near Milan, Illinois, just across the Mississippi River, was examined by MUFON investigators[2], and several UFO-related incidents were reported in the press. Two of the witnesses in the present case reported frequent nocturnal lights and close encounters during the past two years, culminating in the events which are narrated in this report.

## Event # 1: Snowball Meyer's Crop Circle

On Friday, August 23, 1991, ParaNet investigator Robert W. Atwood of Iowa City, Iowa, learned from a co-worker that a crop circle had appeared in a field owned by the co-worker's father-in-law, Delmar "Snowball" Meyer of Blue Grass, Iowa. Mr. Atwood immediately contacted me by telephone and together we drove to Blue Grass, arriving at Mr. Meyer's farm at about 5:30 pm.

Snowball has been a farmer ever since he left the Marines in 1954; he has been at his present location for 20 years. He is 57 years old, with three children, and remarried after the

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death of his first wife. He has no religious affiliation and no hobbies— "just this crazy farming" and a few rounds of golf "when I've got the time". He is respected by his neighbors and described as "not one to draw attention to himself." The farm is located approximately 1.25 miles east of Blue Grass amid gently rolling hills, on the southeast corner of the intersection of Highway 61 and Coon Hunter Road. It appears tidy and prosperous, with five major buildings and some metal storage silos in addition to a large farmhouse. There is also an older concrete silo standing by itself at the southeast corner of the homestead.

We were directed to the circle by Mr. Meyer's son and grandson; Snowball himself was already at the circle with some friends when we arrived. The circle was situated in a corn field about 150 yards south of the homestead, on a slight incline which slopes downward toward the northwest. The field is completely surrounded by an electric fence except for a large metal gate on the north side. Mr. Meyer's family assured us that the fence was electrified Wednesday night, and that due to its design (using line current instead of a battery) it would deliver a particularly nasty jolt to anyone who came in contact with it.

Local television station KWQC had already visited the farm and carried a "humorous" story about the circle on their noon news report, prompting a number of neighbors to visit the site before we got there; but Snowball had been careful to minimize damage to the circle and the surrounding fields. The corn was well over our heads and closely planted (about 3.5 feet between rows and only 6 inches between individual plants within the rows), and we had to walk carefully to keep from damaging the remaining crops. A pronounced trail leading from the gate to the circle had been formed by the steady stream of visitors and family members; two smaller trails leading toward Coon Hunter Road were attributed to sightseers who had come that way after the fence was turned off. Snowball insisted that he had carefully examined the field immediately after finding the circle and that there had been no evidence of trails or footprints at that time.

He explained that he first noticed the circle about 6 pm Thursday afternoon while driving on Coon Hunter Road. He added that the circle was only partially visible from the road, appearing from that vantage point as a semicircle rather than a complete circle, but that from the moment he saw it "something told me this is what I was going to find." He was certain the circle was not there at 6 pm Wednesday (which is corroborated by the fact that the leaves of the fallen plants were still green when he first examined them Thursday evening). He concluded that the circle must have been formed some time Wednesday night; but he could recall nothing unusual about that night, and he confessed that he was completely baffled by the whole thing. He also said that he had never had any problems in the past with vandals, pranksters, trespassers, thieves, or any other peculiar or troublesome events.

Snowball reported the incident to the Scott County Sheriff's Department almost immediately (at 7:06 pm Thursday according to the official report), but the inves-

tigating officer had dismissed the incident as an act of "vandalism" despite an inability to find any footprints or any evidence of how it was accomplished. [3] Snowball said that the incident had left him "keyed up" and nervous, and that he had trouble sleeping Thursday night; he said it bothered him to think that things like this could happen on his land without his knowledge or consent.

Within the circle, the corn plants had been swirled counterclockwise around the center in a manner similar to the wheat circles in England, with the individual stalks lying at right angles to the radius. With few exceptions the stalks were not broken off but rather had been simply pushed over flat against the ground as if by a high wind, with the roots on one side pulled out of the ground and those on the other still buried. (Those stalks that were broken off—we counted only four, all clustered together near the western edge of the circle—were broken cleanly just above the roots, and there was still considerable moisture in the break.) There was no evidence of any damage to leaves or stalks (both of which are very fragile due to the low rainfall in recent weeks), and none of the ears had been detached. Four other plants which had previously been pulled over and broken by foraging raccoons (as evidenced by their gnawed and discolored ears) were still standing in various parts of the circle; they measured between 19 and 30 inches tall and showed no evidence of recent damage. In one place—again on the western edge—the leaves seemed to have been swirled around adjacent stalks somewhat like the "braiding" patterns reported in English wheat circles.

We measured the circle's diameter half a dozen times, and each time arrived at the figure of 46.5 feet with an error of at most a couple of inches. The investigating officer from the Sheriff's office had examined the center of the circle and found no evidence that a spike or post had been driven into the ground there; we conducted our own search and found nothing either. The circumference was clearly defined, again in the manner of the English circles; a plant inside the circle would be pushed over and lying perfectly flat, while another plant only six inches away but outside the circle would be standing perfectly straight and untouched. The only irregularity was on the western edge, where two or three plants outside the circle were slightly damaged; but Snowball attributed this to the carelessness of the sightseers who had come from that direction and insisted it had not been that way when he first arrived on the scene.

The ground in this particular field is mostly clay and was extremely dry (again due to the near-drought conditions), with no evidence of any moisture at all in the first three or four inches of soil. Snowball informed us that the field is neither deeply tilled nor chemically fertilized; instead he prefers to turn the cows loose in it after the harvest and "let them fertilize it for me." As a result, the soil is quite hard and compacted. Nevertheless, the surface was covered with a light, powdery layer of dust which was easily disturbed; a cooler carried into the circle earlier in the day by one of Snowball's friends had left clear marks everywhere it was set down. We found it was possible to walk through the field without leaving footprints if one wore flat-bottomed shoes

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and took great care, but field boots left characteristic marks everywhere.

There was no obvious difference between the ground inside the circle and the ground outside of it, and no evidence of desiccation (beyond the drying and yellowing one would normally expect of uprooted plants in the hot summer sun. Several grass plants were still green and standing amid the flattened corn, as were a number of shorter buttonweeds; but the taller buttonweeds had been broken (although not completely detached) and then knocked over in the same spiral pattern as the corn. Near the center of the circle one very tall buttonweed plant had been broken twice and left standing so that it formed a square with the ground about two feet on a side. The top edge of this particular plant was a noticeably different color than the rest of it (grey instead of dark green), but otherwise there was no unusual discoloration of any of the plants.

As evening came on, we noticed a fair number of flies on the fallen corn, but there was no other insect activity that we could find. Snowball did inform us, however, that there had been some rootworm infestation in the field. (Since rootworm weakens the stalk near the base, it could explain the handful of plants which had been broken off instead of uprooted.) We took pictures of everything we could think of, but did not take any soil or vegetation samples both because of the lateness of our arrival and because we have not yet arranged for use of the necessary laboratory facilities.

On our way out of the field we encountered a small herd of cattle, both cows and bulls, penned up near the old silo. They seemed unusually attentive to us, drawing up together in a mass and staring at us for as long as we stood still. At the slightest movement, however, they "spooked" and ran some distance away, then turned and stared again. Snowball's family said that their cows have always been nervous and easily upset, so this is presumably "normal" behavior for them, but it seemed very strange to us. We asked Snowball whether there had been any mutilations or missing cattle in the area; he said he was not aware of any, but that with cattle often set free to forage in the fields it might be days before anyone would notice if one did turn up missing.

During the two hours we spent at Snowball Meyer's farm, there was a steady stream of friends and neighbors who wandered by to see the circle. During the course of the ensuing discussions, we picked up the names of three other witnesses to strange events on Wednesday night and Thursday morning. During the next few days I talked with these witnesses by telephone and discovered that Snowball's crop circle was only the tip of the iceberg.

### **Event # 2: "A rumbling, bumping sound"**

Our second witness, J.H., is also a farmer in the Blue Grass area. He lives east of Blue Grass and north of Highway 61, which puts him about three-quarters of a mile northwest of Snowball Meyer's place.

J.H. told me that early Thursday morning, some time between 2:00 and 3:00 am, he got up to go to the bathroom and heard a strange sound, coming from the southeast, which lasted for about two minutes. He said that he "never heard anything like it before," but at the time he attributed it to a tractor-trailer rig having some kind of trouble on the highway. Now, in light of the other events of that night, he now wonders if it might have been something else. He described the noise as a "rumbling sound with a kind of bumping inside it" like "a semi about to throw four caps [tire re-treads] at once." He said that at night in the country, especially in the kind of weather they had been having lately, it was possible to hear noises from far away, and he considered it quite possible that he could have heard sounds from the vicinity of Snowball's farm. He says he "could kick himself" for not looking out his bedroom window; it faces toward the east, and he believes he might have been able to see the source of the sound if he had only looked.

### **Event # 3: A Possible Landing**

Our third witness, M.A., is a 47-year-old housewife. She has been married for 26 years, and lives with her husband (an ex-fireman who lost his legs in a work-related accident), her mother, and C.S., a 34-year-old friend of the family who helps care for her husband; they also have an adopted daughter. She has an eleventh grade education but seems intelligent and articulate; she smokes but does not drink or use drugs. She has never had any psychic or occult experiences, and until last November had no interest whatever in UFOs. (In fact, she says she has long had an actual aversion to the subject--"whenever someone would mention them, I'd get up and walk away.") She was raised Roman Catholic, and her husband was raised in a Protestant church, but she says their different backgrounds were never a problem; they "believe in God" but are not particularly religious and do not attend services regularly. She prefers a "slow-paced, quiet life" and "doesn't want any attention"; she thinks she "may have made a mistake" in telling people about her experiences because now they make fun of her and think she is crazy.

M.A. has been seeing UFOs in the Blue Grass area since November 1990, when she was driving at night with her mother and saw a strange light in the sky. It drew nearer and finally hovered about 150 feet above their car. At first she thought it might be a helicopter, but then decided that wasn't possible because it made no discernible noise. She stopped the car, turned off the engine, and verified that she and her mother were both seeing the same thing: a classic flying saucer.

She described the saucer as having a silvery metallic skin, small square windows "like bathroom windows" around the circumference, a white searchlight on a pole above, a row of white lights around the rim, and a set of multicolored lights underneath. Through the windows she could see what looked like "a computer room" with colored lights and screens. (Her husband runs a computer bulletin-board system from his home, so the computer metaphor would come naturally to her.) The searchlight on the top was shining

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forward, in the direction of travel, and was aimed downward so that it illuminated part of the top of the craft and bled over the rim "like a flashlight shining over the edge of a table top". The lights on the underside were clustered together near the center and were flashing red, green, and white. She heard no noise at all, and she described the scene as actually being quite "peaceful."

At first she said she was terrified, but then "some kind of force" took the fear away and she was able to contemplate the vehicle calmly for about ten minutes. Finally she started the engine and began to drive away, and the craft immediately moved away and was lost to sight. Three or four times since then she has seen a light which she believes to be the same craft moving in the distance, especially late at night when she is traveling alone. She finally got disgusted and decided to ignore it because of the ridicule she was getting from her friends.

A couple of weeks before the corn-circle incident she saw the light again and became extremely angry. She "thought" (rather than spoke) to it, "If you're for real, why don't you land? Give me some proof." She now believes that this may have been the reason for the circle's formation two weeks later.

About 12:30 or 1:00 am Thursday morning she was driving east on Highway 61, returning from a friend's house where she had gone to watch cable TV. Off to her left she saw the light again over the fields north of the highway; she said it seemed to be directly over Snowball Meyer's bean field. Once again she decided to ignore it, but after turning south onto Coon Hunter Road she realized the light was also moving south, across the highway and toward her. As she watched in her rear-view mirror, the light stopped over Snowball's corn field and began to descend, dropping straight down until she could no longer see it. She continued home and said nothing to anybody. (And lest anyone think the witness was merely confused by the full moon, it should be noted that the moon at that hour was in the southwest, ahead and to her right. It could not have been visible in her rear-view mirror.)

Thursday morning she awoke with a headache and a backache, and her ear hurt, all of which she attributed to "sleeping on it wrong." She took a couple of aspirin, and the pain was gone by the end of the day, but her back continued to be "uncomfortable." She said that C.S. commented to her that she had come in awfully late, "in the middle of the night"; she is confused by this, since she is certain it could not have been much later than 1:00 am when she arrived.

Friday, on the noon news, she saw the corn-circle report and immediately went out to Snowball's farm. She said that part of her concern was that the news report was incorrect--they had said the circle appeared Thursday night, when in fact she "knew" it had to have been Wednesday night. She arrived while the news crew was still on location and attempted to convince them of the correct date, but they stuck by their story until Snowball agreed with her.

When Snowball invited her to visit the circle, she replied that she didn't need to "because I already know what it's

going to look like." She did finally go to the site and viewed it from the shelter of the still-standing corn, but could not bring herself to cross the threshold into the circle itself. She said that she got "real, real scared" and had a strong feeling that she was "not invited." She was afraid that if she stepped inside the circle, something very bad would happen--but she had no idea what.

The events since last November have been difficult for M.A. In addition to teasing and ridicule from others, she has herself wondered from time to time if she was losing her mind. During the course of the interview, she must have asked me a dozen times if I thought she was crazy; she seemed much relieved to be hear that there are thousands of others who have had similar experiences.

She says that her outlook on life has not been changed by her experiences, and that she still has no interest in UFOs except as they affect her directly. In spite of her own experience with them, she "still doesn't know if I believe in them or not" and has "tried to push it away." She says she has no interest in hearing about the UFO experiences of others because she "doesn't want to start imagining things." She only wants to know the answers to three questions: (1) How was her fear taken away when she encountered her first UFO last November? (2) Why was she so afraid to enter the crop circle in Snowball's corn field? (3) Why was she picked out for this bizarre sequence of events? She says that once these questions have been answered to her satisfaction, she never wants to hear about UFOs again.

#### **Event # 4: A Big Sting Ray and A Little Red Light**

Our fourth witness, S.S., can contribute little to the immediate events of August 21/22, 1991, but she has much to say about their background.

S.S. is a divorced factory worker who lives with her parents. (Her father is a firm skeptic and has never seen anything in spite of her efforts to show things to him. She says that "they don't like him.") She began seeing lights in the sky near Blue Grass about two years ago, and saw them quite frequently thereafter--specially in the autumn--until last fall when they abruptly stopped. Because she works second shift in a nearby community, she is often on the road late at night, and she says the lights have frequently "followed her home" from work. At times she has seen rows of cars stopped alongside Highway 61 in the early morning hours so the passengers could watch the distant lights maneuver in the sky.

She described the lights as "like a star" but says she can pick them out as being somehow different from real stars, and that on occasion they will suddenly drop down out of the sky and begin moving across the fields. She has also sometimes noticed that when following her they seem to be "in distress"; on these occasions they display a contrail and seem to have difficulty catching up with her. They often travel in pairs, one large white light accompanied by a smaller red light. The larger light, she says, generally stays north of the highway; but the small red light has been seen to zip across the highway and travel around by itself. Sometimes it descends into the fields near her house and remains

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there for long periods of time, giving her the impression it is "watching" her. Once it sat behind her barn for a long time and was viewed by her mother as well.

S.S. has apparently had at least two close encounters. One, which was conveyed to me by MUFON investigator Grey Woodman, happened in 1980 in Davenport, Iowa, when her car was approached by a bright light and time seemed to slow down. The other experience occurred about two years ago when her boyfriend called her outside to witness a huge UFO passing silently over her house. She described it as "shaped like a sting ray" and so low that "if they had dropped a ladder down I could have climbed aboard."

Wednesday night at about 9:30 pm she saw the distant lights again for the first time this year while she was on her way to work. Once again they were on the north side of Highway 61, heading west toward Muscatine. She did not see anything on her way home

Like M.A., S.S. has received some amount of teasing and abuse from others who have heard about her experiences; some have told her that she ought to take up with M.A., because "she sees that kind of stuff, too." She seems less bothered by it all, however, and is more inclined to challenge scoffers to come out and see for themselves.

### Discussion: Crop Circle Formation

Much of our discussion with witnesses and with other researchers about this case has centered on how this and other crop circles could have been formed.

The easiest explanation, of course, is a hoax. And, indeed, there are some elements that might be consistent with a hoax. The center of the circle fell precisely between two rows of corn, which is where one would expect a hoaxer to begin; and it was a bright moonlit night, which would have obviated the need for artificial illumination.

On the other hand, those who offer this answer will be hard pressed to come up with any mechanism consistent with the rest of the physical evidence:

- The circle was perfectly round to within a few inches (about one percent of the radius.)
- The individual corn stalks were precisely laid out at right angles to the radius.
- There were no signs of abrasion on the sides of the stalks, no damage to the leaves, and no detached ears of corn.
- Small weeds and grass in the circle were not trampled, broken, or otherwise damaged.
- Stalks which had already been broken by predators were left standing; only tall-standing, intact stalks were knocked down.
- There was no evidence of a central stake, footprints, or other marks of human intervention.

In general, force applied to the upper part of a mature corn stalk will cause it to snap near that point; force applied to the lower stalk will break it off between four and six inches above the ground. We found no evidence of either kind of

damage in the circle. All but a handful of stalks were partially uprooted; the rest were snapped off within an inch of the ground. Both are consistent with a force applied evenly to the entire length of the stalk rather than at a particular point, which would seem to rule out any mechanism involving a rope or chain. The only hoaxing method we can envision would require applying a slowly increasing pressure at the base of each individual plant--within the first six inches or so above the ground--until the roots gave way and the plant toppled over. Such an approach would be incredibly time-consuming; there are approximately *one thousand* individual plants in a circle of this size. Several people might be able to do it in an hour or two if they never stopped to rest and never made a mistake; one person might do it in half the night. If done with bare hands it would require a lot of kneeling and crawling around, which would almost certainly have left marks in the dust; if done with machinery it should have left some kind of marks on the stalks. Further complicating the issue is the electric fence (which would have required travel through the homestead area to reach the gate) and the fact that dragging or carrying machinery through the close-standing stalks should have left tell-tale signs. While a hoax can never be absolutely ruled out (people can, after all, be extraordinarily clever when they want to be), it seems extremely unlikely in this instance.

I discussed weather as an explanation for the circle with both Snowball and J.H., but both firmly dismissed this possibility. Snowball admitted that the field where the circle appeared is "one of the worst for windstorms" and that "this hill catches it all the time." But both he and J.H. insisted that never in their many years of experience with wind damage had they ever seen corn knocked over in a single perfect circle and the plants otherwise left undamaged. Normal storm winds, they said, will uproot the stalks in a similar fashion, but in a straight line instead of a circle; furthermore, there is always a considerable amount of damage to the plants, especially torn or detached leaves, and there are generally a significant number of plants left standing in the midst of the damage. A typical whirlwind, on the other hand--far from forming a single perfect circle--will "chew up" crops in a long, jagged scar, leaving them tangled and torn but still standing. Finally, it should be noted that the weather in the Blue Grass area during the time in question was dry and clear, and the wind was less than 10 miles per hour--hardly consistent with a violent windstorm.

The "plasma vortex" explanation was initially attractive, since this little-understood phenomenon allegedly forms near-perfect spheres within which the kinds of high winds required by this case can occur. That line of thought fell apart, however, when we learned that a crop circle formed last year in Milan, Illinois was also measured at precisely 46.5 feet.[2] It seems extremely unlikely, to say the least, that "plasma vortices" or any other natural phenomenon would create two circles of identical diameter within ten miles of each other in two successive summers. This would seem to require some kind of intelligent origin for both circles, whether human or otherwise. It should also be noted that this particular circle formed in the middle of the only

(Continued on Page 7 ...)



open expanse in an area cluttered with trees, fences, roads, buildings, and farm equipment. One would expect a natural phenomenon to be a little less discriminating.

Of course, in the Milan case the circle was swirled clockwise instead of counterclockwise, and most of the stalks were broken off at ground level instead of uprooted. However, this is not so great a discrepancy as it might seem. Whether corn will uproot or snap off in high wind depends on how deeply it is rooted and whether or not it is infested with insects which can weaken the stalk. In the Blue Grass circle, the roots of the corn plants were only three or four inches deep (somewhat shallow for this late in the year) which may have made them easier to uproot than normal. Furthermore, the one place where we found some stalks broken off instead of uprooted was on the western (i.e., downslope) edge, where one would expect greater moisture and deeper root systems. Finally, the roots of the plants in question were tangled together more tightly than most, and may have presented greater opposition to whatever force toppled the other plants.

One other point about the Blue Grass circle needs to be emphasized. Whatever acted to create it, it did not involve the kind of broad, crushing force that would be generated by large planks or sheets of plywood--or, for that matter, by a grounded flying saucer. Some of the plants (the grass, smaller buttonweeds, and previously broken corn stalks) remained upright and undamaged, while everything around them was being flattened; consequently, if some kind of vehicle descended toward the field as M.A. claims, it could not have come closer than about thirty inches to the ground. It would seem that the force which created the circle, whatever it was, acted on the stalks individually, not collectively--and that fact must be paramount in any theory that attempts to explain it.

### Discussion: Similarities to Other Cases

This case has so many similarities to others in the literature that it's hard to know where to begin. The Milan circle has already been mentioned, of course, as well as the similarity to characteristics of English crop circles. But there are others. Indeed, in many ways Blue Grass looks like a "classic" case in the sense that statistically it falls right in the middle on just about everything.

To begin with, it took place on a Wednesday night, which just happens to be the day of the week when the plurality of UFO sightings occur.[4] For another, it happened in a spot which was bound to draw attention, rather than off in the middle of nowhere as one might expect. As John Keel put it in his book "UFOs: Operation Trojan Horse", UFOs "prefer to land in the fields of occupied farms and on major highways close to big cities".[5] This case exhibits both characteristics at the same time.

But the case that most often came to mind while investigating this one was Budd Hopkins' "Kathie Davis" case.[6] As in the "Davis" case, we have a mysterious circle forming in someone's back yard, apparently in connection with a UFO landing; we have a witness who reports possible missing time and physical complaints (even to the location of

that complaint in the ear); and we have a neighbor reporting an odd roaring sound at the end of the incident. Most importantly, though, we have a whole group of people who all know one another and all seem to be involved with the phenomenon in one way or another, either as witnesses or as victims. One wonders what a door-to-door survey of Blue Grass and its environs might turn up.

### Aftermath

According to Snowball Meyer, the mayor of Blue Grass went up in a small plane over the weekend to get a look at the circle from the air, and immediately spotted a second circle in another one of Snowball's corn fields. This circle was adjacent to Highway 61 (only about 40 feet into the field) and approximately the same size as the first; but unlike the first one, the stalks had all been broken off about four to six inches above the ground--precisely what one would expect from a hoax. Snowball was of the opinion that this circle was created by pranksters Saturday night after news of the first circle got around, and he was not at all pleased about it. "If it's a prank and it keeps happening, somebody's going to get hurt," he warned.

Because of the near certainty that the second circle was a hoax, we chose not to investigate it. We do intend, however, to follow up from time to time with witnesses M.A. and S.S., and to track down some of the witnesses to other sightings in the Blue Grass area. The more we dig into this case, the more we are convinced that we have just scratched the surface.

Meanwhile, what of the investigators themselves? All too often those who investigate UFO phenomena become its victims themselves. For example, to quote John Keel again: "Within a year after I had launched my full-time UFO investigating effort ... the phenomenon had zeroed in on me." [7] I am pleased to report that so far, at least, nothing like that has happened to us.

Or, rather, almost nothing. Friday night after returning from Blue Grass, I excitedly called a fellow researcher and related in some detail what I had seen; and with my permission he recorded the call for future reference. On Sunday afternoon he called me back in a state of great agitation. Saturday night his roommate had returned from an errand to find their housecat inexplicably traumatized and the room filled with the feeling that "somebody else has been here." Then, about 3 am Sunday morning, they had been awakened by a series of poltergeist-style poundings on the outside wall of their apartment building. Finally, to top it all off, when he played back the tape of our conversation on Sunday afternoon, it was filled with a background chorus of moaning and howling that sounded like something right out of *The Exorcist*. He still hasn't been able to determine how or why any of this happened, or whether it is related to our investigation in Blue Grass. Neither have I.

### Conclusion

In some respects the Blue Grass case is almost too good. It seems to have something for everybody: nocturnal lights, strange noises, crop circles, close encounters with flying

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saucers and other exotic craft, the "red light" which travels sometimes alone and sometimes with others, possible missing time, and perhaps even an abduction. All we need is a dead cow--and I wouldn't be surprised if one of those turned up sooner or later. If I hadn't visited the circle and talked to the witnesses myself, I might be inclined to dismiss Blue Grass as a disinformation experiment by some overzealous debunker to see just how gullible Ufologists can be.

But I have visited the circle, and I have talked to the witnesses, and I can't even explain what I saw--much less what they tell me they saw (and heard). Of course, it is always possible to dismiss the testimony of inconvenient witnesses with the now-infamous accusation of "hoaxes, hallucinations, and misidentification of known phenomena"; but I see no reason to do so in this case, and many reasons not to. The stories are consistent and mutually supportive. The witnesses do not exhibit any obvious signs of deception, or of instability beyond the stress and uncertainty one would expect from those who have experienced the unknown. At this point, anyway, and until some evidence to the contrary emerges, I am inclined to believe them.

### Acknowledgments

My thanks and appreciation go to Robert W. Atwood, my fellow researcher in this case, for his invaluable assistance and suggestions; to Michael Corbin, Director of ParaNet Information Service, for his enthusiasm and encouragement; and to Dr. Grey Woodman of MUFON for sharing insights and information from his own investigations of the Blue Grass and Milan cases.

- [1] U.S. Weather Service, Moline, Illinois (personal contact, 8/26/91).
- [2] Jeff Fischer, "Crop Circles at Milan, Illinois", MUFON Journal #279, July 1991.
- [3] Incident Report # 91-36708, Scott County Sheriff's Department, Davenport, Iowa.
- [4] John Keel, "UFOs: Operation Trojan Horse" (New York: Putnam, 1970).
- [5] Keel, p. 178.
- [6] Budd Hopkins, "Intruders: The Incredible Visitations at Copley Woods" (New York: Ballantine, 1987).
- [7] Keel, p. 173.



## ParaNet: Five Years and Counting

by Jim Speiser, Director of ParaNet 1986-88

It may be a bit late to celebrate an anniversary that occurred on New Year's Day, but the premiere issue of CONTINUUM provides an opportune moment to recognize that ParaNet is now over five years old. The chance to write about those first five years brings with it the temptation to spout off about ParaNet's lofty goals, to boast of its various accomplishments, and to reflect on those triumphs not yet realized. Not being one to resist temptation ...

On January 1, 1986, a bulletin-board system (BBS) called "The Other Side" opened its doors to inquiring minds, featuring a type of information which had, at that time, never been gathered together for electronic mass consumption. The modern world had not yet emerged from its MacLuhanesque infancy; very few BBSs of the time had ventured beyond the "games-and-utilities-for-download" stage. The idea behind ParaNet was revolutionary, and yet long overdue; it was to be a BBS network:

- which accomplished more than merely supporting the habits of computer addicts;
- which not only *informed*, but *inquired*;
- which covered a topic that desperately cried out for studious inquiry and wide-ranging dissemination: the paranormal.

Thus was born ParaNet's first motto, which was also the embodiment of its basic goals: "Answering Questions, Questioning Answers".

From the beginning it was intended that ParaNet link together the three factions of paranormal debate: the skeptics, the believers, and (most important of all) the undecided, which I believe includes the vast majority of Americans. As ParaNet's first Director, I wanted it to be a place where those of us who had taken a firm position on the fence would feel comfortable, and would be able to benefit from public discussion of paranormal issues by the other two factions.

And so, from the start, I actively encouraged participation by skeptics and the unconvinced, as well as believers. I think it was this promotion of ParaNet as neutral ground, tempered by our common-sense approach, that has contributed most to its reputation as a credible network. This tradition has continued under the directorship of Michael Corbin, to whom I turned over the reins in 1989 due to equipment problems and time constraints. Michael has actively sought and gained the participation of the Bay Area Skeptics (via the Skeptic's Board), the South Shore Skeptics (via Cleveland FreeNet), and other skeptics' groups.

Another goal which I saw as vital to ParaNet's success was to bring as many recognized investigators, authors, and researchers on-line as possible. This was no small task, as most of the world's paranormal researchers had never heard of a modem at the time, let alone bought one or learned how to

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use it. Nevertheless, over the years ParaNet's bandwidth has been honored by communications from Marge Christensen, T. Scott Crain, Dan Drasin, Stan Gordon, Barry Greenwood, Budd Hopkins, Linda Howe, Phil Imbrogno, Dr. David Jacobs, Dr. Donald Johnson, Philip Klass, Bruce Maccabee, Maj. James McGaha, Dr. Mark Rodeghier, Robert Schaeffer, Tracy Torme, and Dr. David Webb--not to mention our own Don Ecker, who brings with him Vicki Cooper and our interface to the premiere trade publication, *UFO Magazine*.

I believe that both we and they have benefitted from ParaNet's existence. No researcher can operate in a void. The investigator's raw material, in the form of sighting reports, comes from data supplied by "regular people", and there is probably no better way to stay in touch with regular people and keep one's fingers on the pulse of UFO activity than through a computer network. The network concept provides the investigator with immediacy, one-on-one contact, and instant access to a global communications medium. Best of all, the same advantages apply to the rank-and-file user, placing him on a communicative par with the big-name researcher--something not possible with conventional media such as journals and newsletters. It is hoped that these advantages will have a "snowball" effect, attracting more researchers, who will attract more users, who will provide more raw information, which will attract more researchers, and so on--until eventually ParaNet becomes the "network of record" for the anomalistics field.

Of course, the "network advantage" was also bound to attract people of a more disruptive nature, and as a result ParaNet's bandwidth has also been graced by the presence of provocateurs and troublemakers. But ultimately the network's collective wisdom prevailed over the disrupters, simply by allowing them to hang themselves with their own words in a public forum. ParaNet survived the incursion, and may even be healthier for it.

Another accomplishment that ParaNet can be proud of is its timely reporting of major, fast-breaking stories, often beating mainstream and even trade media to the punch. The first of these was the unfortunate death of J. Allen Hynek, the founder of the Center for UFO Studies. By happenstance, I found out about it from a secondary source, confirmed it, and ran his obituary on ParaNet a full day before it hit the press wires. While bearing bad tidings is nothing to brag about, it did prove the viability of the computer network as a news medium.

Then, in January of 1987, I got wind of what was being termed a "major breakthrough" in the Cosmic Watergate. Piecing together conversations with Bill Moore, Bruce Maccabee, and Barry Greenwood, I put out the word over ParaNet that the upcoming "breakthrough" probably involved something called "MJ-12". Sure enough, in March of that year Moore released the first "sanitized" version of the Majestic 12 documents--and ParaNet was the first mass medium to publish them. It would be a full two months before most other people in the UFO community would even hear of MJ-12. Thankfully, it wasn't more than a few months later that we published a series of strong caveats

about the veracity of the documents, and we *never* took a position endorsing their validity.

Other notches on ParaNet's gun include the JAL 747 "Encounter over Alaska" (thanks to a contact in Japan), the first reporting of the results of the testing on the Shroud of Turin (thanks to a slip by one of the researchers involved in the test), and the identity of Gulf Breeze's "Believer Bill" (thanks to the detective work of Michael Corbin). More such scoops are in the offing, and may be breaking on-line by the time you read this.

One of our proudest accomplishments is our reach into foreign lands. Thanks to the tremendous growth initiated by Michael Corbin, ParaNet can now be accessed in six countries on three continents. And it is entirely possible that by the time this magazine goes to press, there will be a ParaNet node up and running in St. Petersburg, Russia. I think we can all agree that ParaNet is much more useful because it reflects the global nature of UFOs and anomalistics.

Which brings me to the part where I fret about those goals we have yet to accomplish. Briefly, over the next five years I would personally like to see ParaNet:

- establish a major presence in more countries, especially Japan, Belgium, Brazil, Peru, and South Africa;
- establish a vigorous investigative arm, with "ready teams" in place to track down sightings and other claims;
- promulgate investigative standards that are palatable to all sides, so that the results of our investigations are viewed with respect;
- establish a press liaison office, and perhaps even a wire service, so that the mainstream press need not fish around in the dark for the definitive word on a paranormal story;
- establish a Congressional liaison office, or perhaps just a regular publication to quietly and reliably keep Congress informed on the major issues;
- begin to delve more deeply into other anomalies, including crop circles, surface features on Mars, Big-foot, ghosts, and other mysteries. We need not take a position one way or the other; I'd simply like to see us carry more information on these topics. [Editor's note: Consider it done, Jim. See the article on the Blue Grass, Iowa, crop circle in this issue.]

Overall, and most important, I'd like to see ParaNet establish itself as the "network of record" for the field of anomalistics. I believe we have truly come a long way toward accomplishing that goal, and it would be a shame to come up short now. For once that's accomplished, we will be one step closer to achieving that ultimate, most elusive of goals: Finding the Answers.

For that, of course, ParaNet will need the cooperation of as many of you as possible. In the end, the network is only as good as the people who use it. We thank all of you for contributing to the growth of ParaNet over the past five years; and we hope you will continue to use the network and benefit from it, so that we can maintain our stature as "the world's most important computer network."

# ParaNet: The Next Generation

By Michael Corbin, Director of ParaNet

In his article "ParaNet: Five Years and Counting" in this issue of **CONTINUUM**, the first Director of ParaNet, Jim Speiser, tells why ParaNet was started and how it came to be what it is. Now, as the current Director of ParaNet, I'd like to map out where we're trying to go, as well as some of the opportunities and dangers I see lurking along the way.

In recent years the public has become increasingly aware of the UFO phenomenon. UFO vocabulary, images, and concepts are appearing with increasing frequency not only in the weekly tabloids (where they have been for a long time) but also in the advertising, entertainment, and even news programming of the mainstream media. Unfortunately, there is precious little real information content in all of this--and what little information there is comes laced both with misinformation generated by the careless, and with poisonous disinformation generated by those who do not want the truth to be known.

In some quarters of the UFO community this has resulted in a pervasive atmosphere of mistrust and paranoia, which is both unproductive and unnecessary. Certainly the UFO phenomenon has some very bizarre elements to it, and taken in isolation this can lead to unreasoning fear. But I am convinced that a positive public education campaign, if based on hard data instead of wild speculation, will yield a society better equipped to deal with whatever the phenomenon finally turns out to be. The mainstream media, unfortunately, have treated the subject in a very sterile way, and failed to appeal to the intellect of the people despite solid evidence that the phenomenon is in fact "real" (whatever that means). In the meantime, people are still being subjected to encounters which leave them frightened and confused, thereby fomenting a deep lack of confidence in both the scientific community and the government. Many people want to know more about what is happening, but they have nowhere to go for a rational perspective on the deepening mystery. Where to turn? Clearly what is needed is a public resource to spur both discussion and education on the basis of reliable data.

Jim Speiser founded ParaNet for just such purposes: to provide the public with a forum where a wide range of ideas can be discussed without fear of reprisal; where high-quality, reliable information about the paranormal can be made available; where research and education can take place side by side. When I reflect back to February of 1988, when Jim turned over the directorship of ParaNet to me, I realize that we have already come a very long way; but there is still a long, arduous journey ahead to realize the full potential of our network and its benefits to the public. As Jim mentioned in his article, we have built ParaNet into an international affiliation of scientists, journalists, top UFO researchers, and a host of other curious and concerned people, all focusing their attention on this global enigma. In the last three years,

fueled in part by my own brief exposure to the UFO phenomenon and my disgust with the charlatans rampant in the field, we have moved ahead with a continuing program of network expansion, public education, and scientific research and investigation which is, I believe, unequaled in the field of Ufology.

In the future, our focus will be directed toward bringing the existing credible UFO organizations together on common ground. This will be accomplished in part through a new organization known as MICAP (Multi-national Investigations Cooperative on Aerial Phenomena), a non-profit research and educational vehicle with investigative capabilities. In addition, ParaNet itself will also turn more of its attention to investigative reporting; and we intend to make sure that the information published by both organizations will be highly reliable as well as interesting. As evidenced by the birth of **CONTINUUM**, ParaNet is expanding its operations to include regular publications to get the news out to those who do not use a computer and a modem; and we intend to continue our expansion into the global Internet for those who do. These are just a few of the many things we have on the drawing board. Our problem is not going to be finding things to keep ourselves busy, but finding the time and the people to accomplish everything we already know has to be done. It's a challenge we welcome--and we hope you will, too.

Finally, I wish to thank all those who have already contributed so much to ParaNet's continuing success. Some of them are:

- Jim Speiser, Don Ecker, and Clark Matthews, for their never-ending devotion to the survival of ParaNet as a viable network;
- Vicki Cooper and Shari Stark, publishers of **UFO Magazine**, for their commitment to information exchange and reaching a wider audience;
- Paul Faeder and Doug Rogers, two of my close cohorts, for their patience during my brief tour of the western United States, which led me to Las Vegas and Los Angeles and ultimately back to Denver--where I find that home is the Mile High City with its majestic mountains and clean air;
- Cyro Lord and Roger Black for their hard and often thankless work in implementing our connection to the Internet;
- and finally all the ParaNet sysops who have struggled through the thick and thin of this with us, and without whom the integrity and quality of this network would not be what it is today.

Onward and upward ...



## Australian UFOlogy: An Update

by Keith Basterfield, Research Officer  
UFO Research Australia

The following is a brief status report on the state of Australian UFOlogy at the beginning of September 1991.

### Organization

There is really now only one serious national-level organization in Australia with an effective national network of interested researchers and groups. This organization is called "UFO Research Australia" and was founded by Vladimir and Pony Godic and Keith Basterfield in 1984. All serious Australian UFO investigators and UFO groups belong to the UFORA network, and there is a strong sense of co-operation evident in the network. Vladimir Godic heads the administration side of things, Pony Godic acts as the network's secretary, and Keith Basterfield looks after the research side.

UFORA publishes a bi-monthly *Research Digest* which contains brief summaries of UFO reports coming in to the network, items from the literature, details of research by members of the network, and reviews of new books.

UFORA also publishes periodically, as finances permit, the *UFO Research Australia Newsletter* with details of investigations, research items and articles by Australian researchers.

### Abduction Research

After years of very few reported abductions, Australian UFO organizations are starting to have an increasing (but still numerically small) number of individuals coming forward. Almost all of these approaches have been out of the media spotlight, which has enabled quiet research to be conducted.

The accounts which are being given, in the main, follow the standard abduction scenario reported from elsewhere in the world. Details of investigations/research have been reported in:

- Bartholomew, R.E. & Basterfield, K. (1988). "Abduction states of consciousness." *International UFO Reporter* 13(2): 7-9 & 15.
- Basterfield, K. & Bartholomew, R.E. (1988). "Abductions: The Fantasy-Prone Hypothesis." *IUR* 13(3): 9-11.
- Basterfield, K., Godic, V., & Godic, P. (1989). "The Abduction Phenomenon in Australia." *IUR* 14(4): 11-13 & 24.
- Chalker, W. C. (1989). "Abducted?" *Australian Penthouse*. Nov. 1989 pp 35-39 & 113.
- Basterfield, K., Godic, V., & Godic, P. (1990). "Australian Abductions: An update." *IUR* 15(3): 10-12 & 22-23.

- Basterfield, K., Godic, V., & Godic, P. (1990). "Australian UFOlogy: A Review." *Journal of UFO Studies* n.s. 2:19-44.
- Clark, J. (1990). "The UFO Encyclopedia: Volume 1." Detroit. Apogee. pp 5, 12, 111-112, 183.
- Chalker, W.C. (1990). "Alien Abductions." *Nature and Health*. Autumn. pp 20-26.
- Basterfield, K. (1991). "An Australian Abduction Case Study." *IUR* 16(2): 4-6 & 22.

Unlike the U.S.A., where health professionals have become increasingly interested in researching the abduction phenomenon, Australian health professionals have not yet been exposed to the topic in any depth and consequently only a few have become involved with UFO researchers. Bill Chalker of Sydney has teamed up with a clinical psychologist to look at some reports; and in Adelaide, Keith Basterfield, the Godics, and Julia Elsbeth have recruited another clinical psychologist.

UFO Research Australia have published a preliminary catalogue of known Australian missing-time and abduction reports. This can be obtained from UFORA (see "For More Information" below). The cost is Aust. \$4.20.

### Commonwealth Freedom of Information Act

In 1984 the RAAF withdrew from its previous position (held since the early 1950s) of investigating all UFO reports made to it, stating that it would, in future, investigate only those cases which had a national-security implication. Subsequently, in 1990, Keith Basterfield used the Commonwealth Freedom of Information Act to obtain copies of UFO reports given to the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) by civilians between 1984 and 1989. Just over 100 photocopied pages were received back from this FOI action. A copy of these papers is available from UFORA (see "For More Information" below).

### Archives Search

Using Australian national-level legislation, it is possible to obtain access to Australian Government papers after a period of 30 years has elapsed.

A request was submitted in February 1990 to the Australian Government Archives for access to Department of Defense files relating to UFOs. Six months later, Keith Basterfield was granted access to the RAAF's early policy files on UFOs. Later requests have followed up various other files. As of September 1991, Keith has obtained copies of RAAF files covering both policy and sightings from the early 1950s to the year 1961. Back in 1982 Bill Chalker was the first civilian ufologist to be granted access to these files and was able to review them from the 1950s up to 1982. Now full copies of the files have been accessed, and photocopies of the several hundred pages of documents are available from UFO Research Australia.

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## Circles Research

With the tremendous interest in the crop-circle phenomenon, first in the U.K. and now elsewhere, what has happened in Australia?

Early in 1990 UFORA forwarded a media release to various news outlets seeking people to come forward with Australian examples of the crop-circle phenomenon. The exercise was repeated in November 1990 when a media release was sent to eighteen South Australian country newspapers in the state's wheat belt, several national farming papers, and eighteen light-aircraft clubs. The resulting failure to receive any circle reports should be contrasted to the large numbers reported elsewhere in the world, especially in the light of Australia's position as one of the world's leading wheat-farming nations. What this means, however, is uncertain.

Two individual items regarding crop circles should, however, be noted. First, in December 1989 several swirled crop circles were located on a property near Speed, in Victoria, in wheat fields. The wheat had been flattened and swirled anti-clockwise in the manner of the U.K. events.

Second, in October 1990 a crop circle made the news at Jamestown, South Australia. A circle 10 meters in diameter, surrounded by a ring, was reportedly found. This was revealed, within one day, as a crude hoax.

## General Numbers of UFO Reports

Ever since the early 1970s, the number of UFO reports received by Australian UFO research organizations has been steadily declining on an overall trend. For 1990 the UFORA network received details of 112 UFO reports nationally which were duly reported in the UFORA Research Digest.

In states of Australia where there are large, publicly known UFO groups, there are reportedly "hundreds" of reports made each year. However, many of these are explainable, and only the genuine unknowns find their way into the UFORA Research Digest.

## Electronic Communication

Several of the Australian UFORA associates are on the UFORA- ParaNet network, including Vladimir Godic, Keith Basterfield, and Bill Chalker. This not only provides a national link for Australian researchers, but also allows them an international means for rapid dissemination of information.

UFORA welcomes communications from serious-minded researchers, and promotes the free exchange of information.

## Australia's First International UFO Conference

The first International UFO Conference in Australia was held in Sydney, New South Wales on 7-8 September 1991. Overseas speakers were Jerry Clark, Jenny Randles, and Brian O'Leary. Local speakers were Bill Chalker, Antony Drew, Brian Crowley and Keith Basterfield. The meeting

was a public seminar in format and was sponsored by a Japanese travel company. Media interest was intense.

## The Future

UFORA continues to work on the scientific-investigation approach to the UFO phenomenon. It wishes to involve a wide range of professionals in this research work.

## For More Information

UFORA may be contacted at:

UFOR Research Australia  
PO Box 229  
Prospect  
South Australia 5082  
Australia

## Book Review

*"UFO Crash at Roswell" by Kevin D. Randle and Donald R. Schmitt (Avon Books, 1991), 327 pages.*

(Reviewed by Michael Corbin and James R. Black, ParaNet Information Service.)

There are some books that everyone with an interest in UFOs should own. "UFO Crash at Roswell" is one of them. Here, for the first time, is a definitive answer to the long-standing question, "Has the U.S. government ever recovered a crashed flying saucer?" The answer is a resounding "Yes!"

## The Story and the Evidence

In brief, "UFO Crash at Roswell" tells how an unidentified flying object struck the earth on July 2, 1947 near Corona, New Mexico during a violent thunderstorm; how the wreckage was found by a local rancher and reported to the 509th Bomb Group at Roswell Army Air Field; how the soldiers of the 509th gathered the wreckage, discovered a second (and possibly a third) associated crash site, took possession of four alien bodies, and transported their finds to Los Alamos and Wright Field for analysis; and how the military brass in the Eighth Air Force and the Pentagon squelched the facts, disinformed the public, and suppressed almost all discussion of the events for decades afterwards.

Such a story could easily be dismissed as the rankest sort of sci-fi nonsense, and in its previous incarnations it has been so dismissed by UFO believers and debunkers alike. When Charles Berlitz and William L. Moore's "The Roswell Incident" made the first tentative steps to cover this ground in 1980, it was mercilessly derided and picked to pieces for its

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# The Fatima Enigma

## Part 1: What's going on here?

by James R. Black, ParaNet Director of Investigations

Most people who have any interest in the paranormal are already somewhat familiar with the famous "Miracle of Fatima" which took place on 13 October 1917. Briefly, at noon that day a crowd of 70,000 or more in rural Portugal saw storm clouds part to reveal a silvery disk which they took to be the sun—but a most peculiar sun which "danced" in the sky, spewed out a rainbow of colors, dived at the crowd, emitted such intense heat that the observers' rain soaked clothes were dried, and then climbed into the sky and once again became a normal solar disk. This bizarre event was immediately acclaimed by most of those present as a miracle; and despite initial attempts at suppression, and serious doubts by the Roman Catholic hierarchy, it has gradually come to be accepted by many in the Church (including at least one Pope) as a genuine case of divine intervention in the natural order of things.

Fatima cannot easily be dismissed. There is no reasonable doubt as to whether the event actually occurred; it was seen and photographed at close range by a number of "objective observers" (i.e., skeptics and journalists) who confirmed it in detail. The phenomenon was also witnessed by lone observers several miles away, which would seem to rule out hoaxes, "mass hallucination", or similar pseudo explanations. Of course, it probably goes without saying that the incident has all the trappings of a classic UFO encounter. Indeed, if the dancing sun were all we had to go on, we could pigeonhole Fatima as perhaps the grandest UFO event of all time (at least until the Belgian Triangle came along) and leave it at that.

Unfortunately, the religious elements of the Fatima incident cannot be attributed to the overblown imaginings of superstitious peasants who simply plugged an unknown phenomenon into the only categories they knew. For the "dance of the sun" capped six months of encounters by three young Portuguese children with an entity which identified itself as the Virgin Mary and delivered a series of messages, visions, miraculous signs, and foreboding prophecies of coming world events. The October "miracle", which the children had predicted in general terms well in advance, was intended as the final, definitive proof that they were telling the truth about what they had seen and heard—as well as a warning to the world of impending calamity.

Much of the interest and controversy surrounding Fatima has centered on the "secrets" which were revealed to the same children during another apparition of the Virgin three months earlier. Two of the three secrets became publicly known in 1942. One was a Dantean vision of Hell, complete with grotesque demons and the tormented souls of the damned; the other was a warning of the outbreak of World War II and the malign influence of Russia on the rest of the world. (Not bad for 1917!)

The third secret, however, was never revealed; it was written down and entrusted to the Vatican for safekeeping,

where it remains to this day. Pope John XXIII is known to have read it in 1960, and it is presumed that Pope Paul VI examined it during his tenure as well; but neither of them chose to reveal its contents to any but a small circle of close advisers. Some information has finally leaked out during the pontificate of John Paul II, although the details are still closely guarded. According to some sources, the third secret is a prophecy which itself has three components: (1) a "physical chastisement of the nations" by land, sea, and air; (2) a "spiritual chastisement" in which religious faith will all but disappear; and (3) ...

Maddeningly, the third component is still almost completely unknown; but it is rumored to be a detailed and sophisticated statement of a geopolitical nature about relations between the Communist world and the West, and the future of the Roman Catholic Church. John Paul II has said that it must be kept hidden "so as not to encourage the world power of Communism to make certain moves". Others are more forceful; one Cardinal said in 1957 that it should be buried "in the most hidden, the deepest, the most obscure and inaccessible place on earth".

But all this took place a long time ago. How can Fatima still be relevant to what is happening in the world today?

First of all because of its powerful influence on Pope John Paul II—and his influence in turn on the course of events in Europe, the Soviet Union, and the Third World—as documented in a recent book by Malachi Martin entitled *The Keys of This Blood* (Simon and Schuster, 1990). Martin is well known for his research into unusual and often neglected topics in history, theology, and the paranormal; his books include *The Jesuits* (an expose' of the inner workings of the Society of Jesus) and *Hostage to the Devil* (the most influential modern work on exorcism and possession)

*The Keys of This Blood* may well turn out to be Martin's most important work to date. It is subtitled "The struggle for world dominion between Pope John Paul II, Mikhail Gorbachev, and the capitalist West"—which just about says it all. According to Martin, John Paul II has built his understanding of current events, and his strategy for coping with and shaping them, around the third secret of Fatima and the Lady who delivered it. He, like the people of his native Poland, has always been supremely devoted to Mary; but now, it is said, he prays to her as Our Lady of Fatima. Furthermore, he has apparently been blessed with his own personal vision of the silver disk, which came to him while he was recuperating from the wounds he received during the assassination attempt in St. Peter's Square on 13 May 1981—the feast day of Our Lady of Fatima.

So if the Fatima "miracle" cannot be dismissed as a hoax or hallucination, if it is still relevant to the events of today, and if the religious issues are integral and in fact paramount, what are we to make of it? One thing, at least, seems clear enough: Fatima shares a disturbing number of elements with a whole host of other strange phenomena, including Marian apparitions in Europe, Africa, and Latin America; "channeling" and other techniques for receiving unearthly messages from all sorts of allegedly non-human sources; and the UFO phenomenon in all its varied manifestations.

(Continued on Page 15 ...)

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*Announcing ...*

### The Debut of MICAP

**M**ICAP is the acronym for the Multi-national Investigations Cooperative on Aerial Phenomena, a new international organization dedicated to promoting focused, responsible scientific research on unidentified aerial anomalies. This announcement briefly outlines MICAP's goals and long-range plans. Founded in 1991, MICAP is a non-profit outgrowth of the world-renowned ParaNet Information Service, an international electronic news-gathering and news-distribution network. For five years ParaNet has provided a link between UFO "hobbyists" and the world's leading Ufologists. Now MICAP has been founded to enhance and coordinate the research efforts already being carried on in this field by investigators and organizations around the world. Over the last forty years, a great deal of UFO research has been conducted at the local level by independent UFO organizations, and there have been occasional attempts to bring these efforts together on the national level both in the United States and elsewhere. However, in all that time far too little progress has been

made toward gaining an understanding of what these anomalies represent--in part because the UFO problem is global in nature. There has also been far too much rivalry among the various UFO organizations, which has often resulted in duplication of effort, monumental egotism, and all the other ills for which Ufology is justly infamous. Clearly there is a crying need for a *cooperative global* effort directed toward UFO research. MICAP is designed to answer that need. MICAP is not a UFO club. It is scientific organization founded on scientific methodology, and is intended solely for discovering facts rather than for propagating religious, philosophical, or political convictions. We are under no illusion that we already know the answers; the first step, indeed, is to achieve a better understanding of what the questions are. Furthermore, MICAP is not intended to replace or compete with existing UFO organizations. Rather, its goal is to establish cooperative working relationships with other organizations in order to help them achieve a greater understanding of the complexity of the UFO

*(Continued on Page 15 ...)*



*(The Fatima Enigma ... from Page 13)*

Consequently, we dare not ignore Fatima, any more than we can afford to ignore the other phenomena to which it is related. For whatever else they may be, it seems inescapable that these phenomena represent a massive intervention in human affairs by powerful forces with their own agendas--an intervention which clearly has not yet run its course.

But intervention by whom, and toward what end? That indeed is the question--and in subsequent issues of **CON-TINUUM** we will be examining it in detail. Stay tuned.

*(MICAP Debut ... from Page 14)*

enigma. In essence, MICAP is designed to function as the "United Nations" of the UFO research community. MICAP's goals will be pursued by four strategies: standards-based scientific investigation; global data collection; public education; and an active, trained membership.

### **Standards-based Scientific Investigation**

MICAP will work with the scientific community to establish sound and accepted principles and standards by which the UFO phenomenon can be investigated; these will be designed by veteran investigators within Ufology and by responsible scientists from other disciplines. Every effort will be made to assure that collected data is of the highest quality, and field investigators will be selected and trained using the most stringent practicable criteria. In addition, formal oversight committees will be formed to assure compliance with investigatory standards, and will be staffed by representatives of existing research groups which are affiliated with MICAP. These measures will, we hope, allow MICAP to bridge the gap that currently exists between scientific Ufology and the rest of the scientific community.

### **Global Data Collection**

One of MICAP's first efforts will include the establishment of a central clearinghouse for data culled from independent local and national sources. This information will then be combined in a global computer database which can be accessed by authorized researchers from around the world.

### **Public Education**

The public often has a gross misunderstanding of what the UFO phenomenon represents, based on a conflation of media hype, rank speculation, and deliberate disinformation. MICAP will strive to replace the mythology surrounding UFOs with verifiable facts based on scientific investigation. This will be accomplished through positive and aggressive public education in the media, through its own publications, and through classroom curricula developed in conjunction with professional educators.

### **An Active, Trained Membership**

For its membership, MICAP is seeking concerned men and women from around the world who are seriously inter-

ested in unlocking the secrets behind the UFO phenomenon. MICAP members, unlike those of many other UFO organizations, will play a very active role in the pursuit of organizational goals; they are not restricted simply to the financial support of the organization. Instead, they will have the opportunity to actively participate in the investigation and collection of data if they wish. And, of course, all members will benefit from MICAP's educational efforts, as well as access to the largest, most sophisticated network of UFO investigators in the world. In order assure that all MICAP members are serious about their involvement and well qualified in the areas to which they wish to contribute, membership is by application only.

### **For More Information**

To receive additional information on MICAP or an application for MICAP membership, phone (303) 431-8796 or (303) 794-6817; or write to: MICAP, P.O. Box 172, Wheat Ridge, CO 80034-0172.

*From ParaNet's International Network ...*

## **The Roswell Incident: So *that's* what it was!**

From: Charles Packer <packer@amarna.gsfc.nasa.gov>  
Date: 4 Aug 91 11:11:17 GMT

The Roswell incident was the high water mark of the famous flying saucer (more typically, flying disk) craze of 1947 that began the UFO age. The first sighting, as everyone knows, was when a Boise businessman-pilot saw nine disks over the Cascade Mountains in Washington on June 24. Sightings spread, and by July 6 it was front-page news for the New York Times, with 43 states reporting them. Sightings were starting to be reported in other countries also. The Roswell "weather balloon" incident first made news on July 7.

It turns out that there were precursor incidents, however. In 1946 and early 1947, the testing of V-2s at White Sands was covered fairly well by the Times. One rocket went astray and exploded in Mexico. There were other mishaps. Also, reports came from Sweden during that time that rockets were seen flying over Stockholm. The implication was, in the little that I read of those stories, that people suspected that the Soviets were testing rockets at Peenemunde.

Anyway, as I browsed the July, 1947 issues of the Times and the Albuquerque Journal, I was intrigued by one item in particular that "points up," as journalists say, the way the press first teased the public before laughing at them. On July 6, the NY Times included in a longer story an item to the effect that

"An unidentified 'scientist in nuclear physics' at the California Institute of Technology was quoted today as suggesting the flying saucers might be the result of 'transmutation of atomic energy' experiments."

But Dr. C.C. Lauritsen, head of Caltech's nuclear physics department denied the source was a member of his staff.

*(Continued on Page 18 ...)*

# MICAP NEWS

- The next public meeting for MICAP will be held on Thursday, September 26, 1991, at the Village Inn Pancake House, 890 South Colorado Blvd., Denver, CO, at 7:00 P.M. The discussion will center on the crop circle investigation in Blue Grass, Iowa. Investigation methods will be discussed as well. Remember, MICAP holds regular meetings on the third Thursday of each month at the location noted above.
- The October meeting for MICAP will not be held as we are hosting STANTON T. FRIEDMAN, nuclear physicist and UFO lecturer. He will present his illustrated lecture, "Flying Saucers ARE Real!" on October 27th and 28th. Details about this event is on page 14. Plan to attend.
- Join the most unique UFO research group in the world. MICAP membership rates have been temporarily reduced to \$30.00 per year and are available on a limited basis. Membership entitles you to a one year subscription to the CONTINUUM. All members benefit by membership in MICAP by being an integral part of the investigative/research process. Several features are available to the active member. MICAP needs your support! For further information, contact (303) 431-8796 or (303) 794-6817, or write to: MICAP, P.O. Box 172, Wheat Ridge, CO 80034-0172.
- MICAP is proud to announce that it has appointed William Early as its Colorado State Director. Bill brings a career as a federal law enforcement officer with experience in forensics. Bill has agreed to

develop the investigator's program as it pertains to collecting evidence at the site and interviewing witnesses. This program will be developed in conjunction with our field investigation program administered to all MICAP investigators under the direction of Vance Reed.

- MICAP has established a UFO Reporting Hotline. If you have a sighting or encounter report, please phone us at (303) 431-8796. Each report will be handled in a confidential manner. A synopsis of your report will be published in CONTINUUM, however your name and other relevant information will be treated as confidential, unless you authorize us to use it in the public report. It is important that you call with any questions, comments, concerns or ideas. We are anxious to be of assistance to you.

## Upcoming events ...

- We are planning on having a group known as Wider Circles, in Louisville, CO., attend our public meeting on November 21, 1991. This group has toured the circle phenomenon in the United Kingdom and will present a lecture to our members concerning their findings, observations and theories on this perplexing mystery. (Recently, it was released on major media that the circles are the product of hoaxers in England. The next issue of CONTINUUM will look at this in detail. Is the mystery really solved? STAY TUNED!)

## *(Book Review: UFO Crash at Roswell ... from Page 12)*

intrinsic unbelievability and its lapses of both fact and logic. But Randle and Schmitt know their history, and they were determined not to repeat the mistakes of the past. Randle is a former helicopter pilot and Air Force intelligence officer; Schmitt is Director of Special Investigations for the Center for UFO Studies, one of the oldest and most respectable of today's UFO organizations. Together, over the course of almost three years, they interviewed more than 200 witnesses, reviewed hundreds of documents, and conducted the first scientific site visit by private citizens to the crash site itself. The result is a mountain of proof which will delight the true believer, astound the open-minded, and hopefully give the debunkers a real run for their money.

Inevitably, much of the book is concerned with sometimes confused tales of unearthly materials and alien bodies. But in our estimation this is not the most important and convincing evidence; much more telling is the downright strange behavior of the government itself, both then and now. Witnesses can easily be mistaken about esoteric technical issues outside their everyday experience; it's much harder to misinterpret being threatened by uniformed men carrying guns. The U.S. military has buried the Roswell event under all the trappings of a full-blown government coverup: the intimidation of witnesses, the destruction or suppression of evidence, and a systematic campaign of lies

and disinformation to prevent the truth from becoming widely known. The indisputable fact of the coverup itself is enough to establish that Roswell is truly the tip of the "Cosmic Watergate" iceberg.

The authors have anticipated the inevitable assault by debunkers who "know" that the Roswell event cannot have happened as described. They consider whether the Roswell crash can be explained as nothing more than a downed weather balloon, or a stray V-2 rocket nose cone, or a late-breaking Japanese balloon bomb--and then firmly reject them all. In the end, only one explanation remains: that in 1947 the New Mexico countryside witnessed the crash of a vehicle that was "not of this world".

## The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

"UFO Crash at Roswell" is not without its flaws. It was published as a paperback original rather than in hardcover, which almost inevitably means it will appear in few libraries and will garner few serious reviews. The cover art (against the authors' wishes) is a classic "daylight disk" photo which has been widely denounced as a hoax and has nothing whatever to do with the Roswell crash. The text is replete with typographical errors and grammatical slips that even

*(Continued on Page 17 ...)*

*(Book Review: UFO Crash at Roswell ... from Page 16)*

casual editing should have caught and corrected. There are mangled and self-contradictory quotations (some of which can be repaired by reference to repetitions of the same material elsewhere in the book), and there are "backward glances" to facts that have not yet been discussed. But these represent a failure by the publisher to take the book seriously, rather than a failure by the authors to write a book worth reading.

Perhaps more disconcerting is the authors' decision to cover the same ground four times from different perspectives: once in a brief historical overview, once in a "just the facts" account of the event itself, once in a blow-by-blow description of their investigation, and finally once more in a day-by-day time line. This occasionally gives the reader an annoying sense of "deja vu", as well as making it difficult to know which part of the book to search through for any particular detail.

On the positive side, the authors have taken a very professional and forthright approach to their work. The contributions of previous researchers are acknowledged (and, where necessary, gently corrected); shortcomings in the evidence are freely admitted; witnesses are named, and sources are documented. There are detailed lists of interviewees and participants, a glossary, a bibliography, extensive footnotes, and an index--all of which will greatly assist anyone who wishes to verify their information or to build on their efforts. One senses no "proprietary interests" at work here, which is a welcome relief in a field where information is often jealously guarded and cooperation among researchers is all too rare.

### Where Do We Go From Here?

"UFO Crash at Roswell" does not mark the end of crashed-disk research; indeed, it is only the beginning. A moment's consideration yields any number of avenues for further research, some of which Randle and Schmitt are no doubt already pursuing:

(1) The material relating to the second and third crash sites, the discovery of the alien bodies, and their final disposition at the hands of the military is still sketchy and full of holes; further research is definitely needed here, both to find more witnesses and to establish precisely what happened and how it is related to the primary site.

(2) Roswell is not the only rumored UFO crash; Randle and Schmitt list a number of them in an appendix. These other alleged incidents need to be investigated with the same vigor as the Roswell crash, and conclusively verified or disproved.

(3) The role of Kirtland Air Force Base, not only in the Roswell recovery and its coverup but in other landmark UFO events, needs to be thoroughly investigated and documented. Kirtland crops up over and over again in Randle and Schmitt's story--as a source of orders and machinations outside the normal military chain of command, as a transshipment point for material destined for the labs at Los Alamos, as the place where secret scientific reports on the crash were filed, and as the possible source of a military

mapping expedition near the crash site years afterwards. Given the prominence of Kirtland in the infamous Bennewitz affair and other disinformation operations which are known to have been carried out by personnel of the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, it seems highly significant that Kirtland appears so early and so prominently in the Roswell case.

(4) As far as we know now, Roswell was the first recovery of a crashed UFO; but there is reason to believe that the U.S. government had, to say the least, already given the matter some thought. The speed with which the military responded to the initial report, the forethought shown by the arrangements for transporting the wreckage, and the thoroughness with which the witnesses were hushed up and the evidence eliminated, indicate that the Roswell coverup was not an ad-hoc response to an unexpected event but rather the outworking of a pre-arranged plan. It remains to be seen whether this plan was formulated as the result of prior experience in crashed-saucer retrievals or was merely a contingency plan provoked by earlier encounters with "foo fighters", "ghost rockets", and "green fireballs" in the postwar years.

(5) The revelation by General Arthur Exon of the existence of a UFO control group outside official channels once again raises the spectre of MJ-12. Exon referred to the group as "the Unholy Thirteen" for lack of a better name, but of course this could easily mean nothing more than the twelve principals of MJ-12 plus the President himself, to whom the control group undoubtedly reported. While the controversy surrounding the MJ-12 briefing paper should not be allowed to sully the Roswell event itself, the semi-official acknowledgment that such a group once existed (and presumably still exists) should add new fuel to the MJ-12 fire.

(6) There is a crying need to re-evaluate postwar history in light of the now-established fact of the Roswell crash and retrieval. If the U.S. government successfully recovered an alien spacecraft, alien technology, and alien corpses in 1947, it should have had a profound impact on high-tech research (several witnesses described a material similar to modern fiber optics), on foreign policy, and on the aerospace industry and the space program--not to mention its effect on the government's attitude toward the UFO problem itself. Just as the revelation of the ultra-secret Enigma machine and the allies' successful cracking of Axis codes has required a complete rethinking of the historiography of World War II, so the Roswell event necessitates a reinvestigation of almost everything that has happened in the last 44 years.

(7) Finally, a host of questions remain unanswered about the relationship between the Roswell crash and the "other half" of the UFO equation: abductions, occult phenomena, cattle mutilations, and all the rest. Roswell *looks* like the crash of an extraterrestrial spacecraft; but that could be because the event has been shaped to look that way, either by the government, by the researchers, or by the forces behind the event itself. It would be a grave error to conclude at this point that Roswell establishes the Extraterrestrial Hypothesis as the only solution to the UFO mystery. That

*(Continued on Page 18 ...)*

(Book Review: *UFO Crash at Roswell ... from Page 17*)

something extraordinary happened at Roswell is astonishingly clear. Its ultimate explanation and significance are yet to be determined.

### Conclusion

If you have any interest in UFOs, go out and get a copy of this book. Better yet, get two copies—one for yourself, and one to loan out to your friends. You'll be glad you did.

(*Roswell Incident: So that's what it was! ... from Page 15*)

The Associated Press dispatch as published in the Journal handled the denial by Cal Tech this way:

"Cal Tech later issued a denial that one of its scientists had suggested the saucers might be experiments in 'transmutation of atomic energy.'

"Dr. C.C. Lauritsen, head of the school's nuclear physics department, said he believed the discs 'have nothing to do with nuclear physics.'"

There is a subtle difference here. The AP material and most of the world saw it, not the Times -- seems to say that yes, a Cal Tech scientist did say the saucers were about *something*, if not about "transmutation." Lauritsen's remark seems to be a response to the unnamed scientist.

The Journal's use of the AP dispatch was not subtle at all. Their front-page headline heralding the latest developments that day said

"Atomic Energy Experiments Explain 'Flying Saucer', Says Scientist; More In Sky"

Later in the story, which contained several saucer-related items, they had the same scientist asserting that the saucers "are twenty feet in width at the center and are partially rocket-propelled on the take-off ... Such flying disks actually are in experimental existence."

Experimental existence? Interesting phrase. Maybe it's a clue to the ultimate nature of the flying saucer scare. Their "existence" was an experiment. They existed, all right. In minds -- of the people who planted the stories and of the journalists who went along with the game. Something we would call a "hidden agenda" today. It was a time of mass hysteria and of concern about the effects of "propaganda." A few years later there would be mass illnesses in factories, attributed to "mass hypnosis." Would it be out of order to suggest that some of these frenzies were experimentally produced?



## SOURCES AND RESOURCES

a directory of contacts ...

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**The J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS)**

2457 West Peterson Avenue

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Founded by the late Dr. J. Allen Hynek, one of the world's pre-eminent authorities on the UFO phenomenon and was a scientific consultant to the U.S. Air Force's Project Blue Book from 1948 to 1968. Associate membership is available for a contribution of \$25.00 or more per year.

### Political Organizations

**Citizens Against UFO Secrecy (CAUS)**

P.O. Box 218

Coventry, CT 06238

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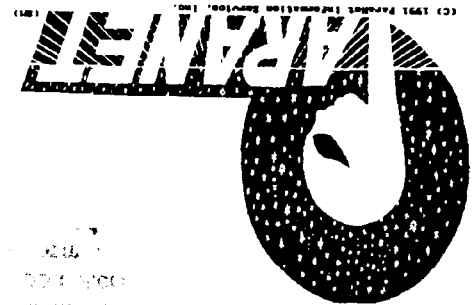
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