

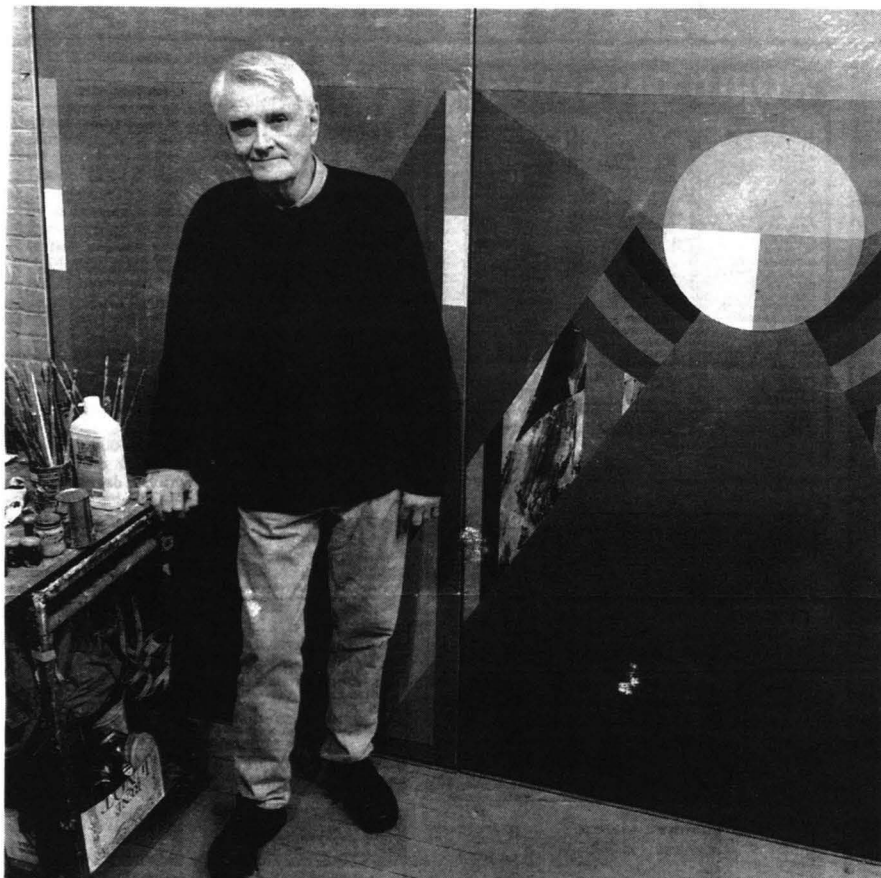
UFO

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Tracking interstellar travelers: Budd Hopkins in his studio

ARTIST BRINGS UFO ABDUCTION HOME TO NEW YORK

BY AUSTIN BUNN

THE ALIENIST

something that doesn't have coloration and it leaves people completely confused. It is truly alien."

Hopkins resists the idea that his own abstract expressionist art might be influenced by his UFO research, through it's impossible not to see parallels. His "Guardian" paintings—canvases fractured by color that he calls "sentinel-like"—and his "Altars" series of wooden sacred objects resonate with a spiritual questioning. But he's cagey on the topic. "A relationship ends, you move to a studio with a higher ceiling, it all affects [the art]," says Hopkins. "I withstood the connection [to the UFO research] for many years, and I still don't like to stress it." He admits it has done "more harm than good" to his art career.

He provides an invaluable service for the abductees, regardless of whether they're telling the truth. "If it wasn't for Budd, I don't know what would have happened to me," says Cortile (not her real last name), who claims she was abducted from her apartment on the Lower East Side. Her story is renowned in the UFO community as one of the only witnessed abductions. (Hopkins's book *Witnessed* examines the case.) In November 1989, Cortile was preparing for sleep when she "looked up and there was a four-foot guy across the room." She threw a pillow at it, but then a white fabric fell over her head. "The next thing I remember was dropping into my bed," she says. Three witnesses later wrote letters to Hopkins claiming to have seen Cortile floating up from her window into a spacecraft.

The case gets weirder. The woman who saw the abduction from her car on the Brooklyn Bridge spoke to Hopkins, but now refuses to be interviewed. The two other witnesses were unidentified "agents" whom Hopkins never met and who continually harassed Cortile to explain what had happened. One even claimed to have been abducted repeatedly with Cortile (and to have fathered one of her kids). If that weren't enough to undermine credibility, Cortile herself must have floated through grilles on her window to even make it into the open air. "You can't really believe them," says Greg Sadow, a New York journalist and moderator at the conference. "On the other hand, the more I looked into it, it's a hoax of unimaginable complexity because of the number of people that had to be involved."

Hoax or not, Hopkins is doing a kind of social work right in the gap. He brought Cortile to a free monthly support group for abductees he runs out of his art studio, and she's been attending ever since. "I didn't know what to expect, but they were people just like me," she says. "I made friends and they pulled me through." Unfortunately, there's no cure for the stories they're now living with. "I wish I was crazy," Cortile says, exasperated. "There's a treatment for that."

The 1999 UFO Abduction Conference will be held at the O. Henry Learning Center on West 17th Street, Saturday April 10. Call 645-5278 for full information.

Budd Hopkins keeps a scrapbook of scars—close-up photographs of lashes, wales, and scabs that people can't explain. He flips through the images and points to an indentation the size of a teaspoon on a woman's upper arm. "These are scoop marks," he says. "You see them a lot." In another shot, a woman's labia are spread to reveal two perforations in the skin, supposedly incised by aliens while she slept. On another woman's shoulder swells a giant, deep bruise that, he says, "healed by the end of the day."

This Saturday, Hopkins takes his latest findings—scars and all—public at a daylong conference on UFO abduction, featuring the leading lights in the field: *UFO Encyclopedia* author Jerome Clark, nuclear physicist Stanton Friedman (speaking on the possibility of interstellar travel), and Temple University historian David Jacobs (on abductions in the 19th century). Over 50 abductees will also be present, including Linda Cortile, the victim of New York's best-known incident, the 1989 Brooklyn Bridge abduction case.

"What you're dealing with are tightly imagined testimonies" by abductees, says Hopkins, who has interviewed hundreds of them. For example, "No abductee has ever reported any interest [by the aliens] in the heart." It's as if the alleged victims of an interstellar human buffet all somehow got their stories straight. As if they were all telling the truth.

Hopkins, a veritable Alan Lomax of UFO abductions, has been listening to abductees for over 20 years. An established artist with paintings in the permanent collections of the Whitney and Guggenheim, the 67-year-old has been collecting abductees' testimony since his first (and only) sighting back in 1964 of a "dark, elliptical object" hovering outside Provincetown. He has amassed over 650 histories and transformed them into books like *Missing Time* and the bestseller *Intruders*, which became a CBS miniseries.

No doubt Saturday's "crash course," sponsored by Hopkins's own Intruders Foundation, comes at a strange time for ufology. On St. Marks Place, the city's extraterrestrial airstrip, you can't escape merchandise printed with little green aliens toking on spliffs and popping the peace sign. Cults seem to regularly make the jump for Heaven's Gate. And who *doesn't* have a "scoop mark"? According to a 1996 *Newsweek* poll, 48 percent of Americans think UFOs are real and 29 percent of us think we have made contact. For Hopkins, the cultural saturation vindicates the cause. "We've gotten a tremendous fair shake from the media because of it," he says.

The problem is that all the media attention is "contaminating the pool" of subjects, notes Hopkins. "The more material that is publicized, the easier it is for somebody with psychological problems to invent something."

He already filters huge amounts of delusion from his mailbox (people contact him through a P.O. box listed at the back of his books). The majority of mail gets dumped immediately. Of the remaining correspondents, only 30 percent can recall their experience coherently afterward. As a result, Hopkins gets their testimonies by hypnosis (free of charge), which raises eyebrows. He claims it's necessary because aliens submerge people's memories of abduction. Usually, each person has multiple encounters. "If people have had one abduction experience, then they will have others," he says. "It's as if you become a specimen for them."

Why would a superior race waste its time wiping out people's memory when pop-cult awareness of its activities is at an all-time high? "It's extremely difficult to get inside the alien mind," explains Hopkins. "There may be reasons for them to forget the experiences so that they're tractable."

Unfortunately, the testimonies themselves don't tell us very much, and for Hopkins, that is the most alarming part. In all the records he's got, he's never seen any sign of alien malevolence—"they don't pull out chin whiskers one by one," he says—or benevolence. "That goes a long way to eliminating the fantasy element to this—we tend to fantasize angels or devils because most fantasy is connected to our needs and fears. But this is

The CEO From Cyberspace



Joe Firmage and the firmament: The 28-year-old computer executive who amassed a fortune has abandoned Silicon Valley to pursue his quest for The Truth.

Joe Firmage, A Master of the Universe at 28, Wants to Defy Gravity and Visit the Far Corners Of His Realm

By JOEL ACHENBACH
Washington Post Staff Writer

The prophet speeds through Silicon Valley in a red Corvette convertible, up Highway 17 to Highway 85 to Highway 101. Joe Firmage is racing to the offices of USWeb/CKS. He started the company three years ago in a moment of inspiration, and it now has a market value of \$2.5 billion. Joe Firmage, at the age of 28, is a winner.

Another red Corvette whizzes by. Another young businessman, going faster. This is a Darwinian world—speed is of the essence.

Firmage soon arrives at his office building, which is like every high-tech office for miles around, so new it's barely had time to experience the phenomenon of rain. Firmage rides an elevator, goes through double doors and strides down a clean, carpeted hallway past secretaries and staffers, everyone tapping on keyboards and

talking on the phone. They're all engaged in an extremely profitable pursuit that didn't even exist a few years ago. USWeb/CKS provides "Internet services." The people here set up "e-commerce" sites and "intranets" and "extranets" for other companies. Firmage says proudly, "We are probably the single largest concentration of Internet experts in the world."

He used to be the ultimate boss here, the CEO. Now he's just a consultant, the resident prophet in the corner office.

He devotes himself to his mission. His mission is "The Truth."

That's the title of his book, which is posted on the Internet at www.thewordistruth.org. Joe Firmage believes he has found The Truth, and he is using all his entrepreneurial skill to disseminate that truth to the world at large.

In a single month, his Web site received 6 million hits. He's placed a full-page ad in USA Today. He is about to be profiled in Wired and

Rolling Stone. The local papers have followed his recent moves. He's a hot topic in certain Internet chat rooms—a sudden silicon celebrity.

The Truth according to Firmage is that the world is about to change dramatically. Of course that's what every visionary says. In these millennial times, there are futurists and big talkers crawling all over California and the rest of the planet. Firmage knows he has to speak louder than others to be heard over the background static. Thus his assertion that human beings are about to master the force of gravity.

We will learn to engineer the very fabric of "space-time." We'll tap into a massive, hidden energy source. Aspects of nature that everyone has always taken for granted—like this annoying thing called "inertia"—will enter the realm of human manipulation. We'll zip around the planet in a flash. We'll zoom across the entire galaxy—really fast!

"You could go to Alpha Centauri and be back for dinner," Firmage says.

And there's more! The gravity breakthrough is merely a harbinger of the really huge development, the paradigm-shattering event to end all paradigm-shattering events. We will make contact with... the Visitors. We're talking formal contact here, actual direct communication, no more cat-and-mouse games in the desert. No more coverup. We will know the aliens and discover, finally, our place in the cosmos.

That's "The Truth." Whether he's right or wrong—brilliant or boneheaded—Firmage is clearly a creature of his time and place. The temptation is to prop him up as a Generation X figurehead, and the press has been unable to resist the urge to call him the Fox Mulder of Silicon Valley. A better way to look at the situation is to say that he's the Internet in human form.

He's the human search engine. He is a nexus for provocative and questionable information. From his corner office, he can tap on the computer and dart through an unofficial and unauthorized world of knowledge and rumor. He can amass, as he swivels in his chair, his own personal database of facts and theories. To listen to Firmage is to hear of the Casimir effect and zero-point energy and Heisenberg's uncertainty princi-

ple and quantum foam and the Roswell incident and the MJ-12 documents. Science, pseudo-science, truth and fiction, God and electromagnetism: It's all there, a thick and pungent stew.

He would like the world to think that someone has come along, someone intelligent and bold and most of all spiritual, who can make sense of it all. He would be the man who reconciled science and religion, who legitimized the UFO mythology and who figured out the future, even though it meant abandoning his wildly lucrative career as an Internet guru. As he told a local paper, "I chose to basically take the risk for everybody's sake and put my own career on the line."

But another story line is in play—that what works in Silicon Valley does not always work in the real world. That here's a case of someone who couldn't separate the good information from the bad. That with enough hubris, even Joe Firmage, so young and smart and clever and rich, might find a way to make a fool of himself.

The Path

Firmage is polite and personable, but when he gets rolling, his fervor builds. He puts the tractor beam on his listener and doesn't let go. There are moments when his eyes appear sad, and weary, as though affected by the tedium of explaining things that should be obvious.

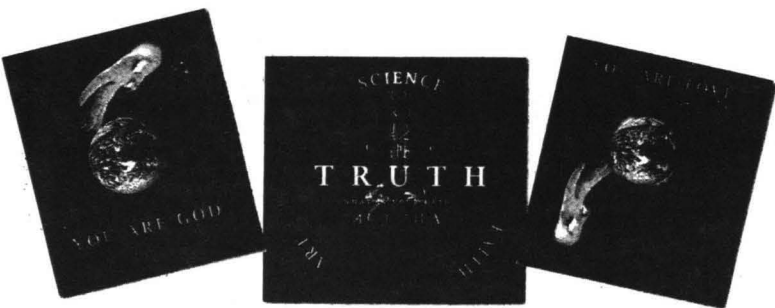
He says things like:

"The macro picture here is anthropological in dimension."

Firmage resides in a million-dollar house in Los Gatos, Calif., that shows little evidence of a human occupant. There's a pool table just off the kitchen (he is quite good at billiards, he says) and a laptop on the counter with, by Firmage's estimate, 2,000 unanswered e-mail messages. He says he typically works 15 hours a day and does not have the "bandwidth" at the moment to get married or have a permanent relationship.

Firmage is the descendant, through many generations, of another bold searcher, Brigham Young. Young led the Mormons to Utah after the murder of the prophet Joseph Smith. Firmage grew up in a Mormon household in Salt Lake City.

When he was 10 years old, his father, a law professor, insisted that he watch Carl Sagan's PBS series



Joe Firmage's book "The Truth" is posted chapter and verse on the World Wide Web.

"Cosmos." Young Joe found it transformational. He became fascinated by astronomy. In his back yard, he took pictures of the heavens with a camera attached to a telescope.

In his bedroom, he tinkered with computers. One day he tried to write a software program on a Macintosh, and found the job laborious. He had to dive down into the deepest structure of the Mac's brain. This is too hard, he told himself. Suddenly he had an idea. He'd make this simpler for everyone. He designed a set of software tools that could be used by anyone to write a program. He formed a company, Serius Corp., based in his bedroom. He stayed up late at night, shrink-wrapping boxes of Serius software.

His invention was a hit. Although he went on to the University of Utah, studying physics, he didn't stay long. Firmage had found his calling: computer world entrepreneur.

People with money were looking for computer whizzes. Investors gave him millions of dollars, the business expanded, and soon Firmage had 45 employees in a fancy office. Novell Corp. came along in 1993, waving \$24 million. The huge company bought Serius and made Firmage a vice president. He was 23 years old and a millionaire.

Two years later, in the fall of 1995, he quit Novell, and with a colleague, Toby Corey, he started USWeb. Firmage's new, big idea was that corporations all over the world were befuddled by the Internet and needed smart people to guide them through the wilds of this new medium. USWeb wouldn't make products, it would provide services. The company bought out more than three dozen other firms. Firmage was a winner yet again.

He's not shy of touting his intellectual skills and professional successes.

"I could have done anything in this industry."

"We did something far more challenging than Yahoo or Amazon.com."

"People describe me as incredibly rational, very left-brained, highly attuned to risk management, all the qualities that make a good CEO."

The rule in Silicon Valley is adapt or die. To be slow, to cling to tradition, to fail to envision the next big thing, is to ensure extinction. By the fall of 1997, Firmage and his partners were ready to take USWeb public, a move that required a frenzy of activity in preparing the initial public offering (IPO).

He was exhausted. But he decided to surf the Internet.

He'd always been interested in astronomy, physics, UFOs, stuff like that. As a teenager, UFO stories had intrigued him, but he'd concluded that there was no way the flying saucers, or whatever they were, could cross the immense distances of interstellar space.

But on this day he found something. It was a research paper by a man named Bernhard Haisch.

Haisch, as it happens, is a physicist who works just up the road from Firmage, at Lockheed Martin. He's also the editor of the Journal of Scientific Exploration, which often carries articles about UFOs.

The Haisch paper discussed something called the "zero-point field." This is a theoretical field of energy that permeates everything, even the "empty" spaces of the universe. Haisch asserts that what gives a piece of matter its "mass" is an electromagnetic reaction with this zero-point field. The theory is abstruse in the extreme. But if Haisch is right, then mass can, in theory, be modified and engineered. Something as seemingly fundamental as inertia might be subject to cancellation. There are implications for faster-than-light travel and spacecrafts that require no fuel, all sorts of fabulous notions.

Firmage was captivated by the

Haisch paper and its implications. If humans could modify mass, inertia, space-time, then so could... the Visitors. Firmage took a printout home and stayed up late reading. He finally set his alarm for 6:10 a.m. and went to sleep.

Morning arrived. The alarm rang. He hit the snooze button.

"The next nine minute snooze changed the course of my life," he writes.

Without warning, a "remarkable being clothed in brilliant white light" appeared above him, hovering over the bed.

"Why have you called me here?" the entity asked.

Firmage, half awake and half asleep, said, "I want to travel in space."

"Why should you be granted such an opportunity?" said the entity.

"Because I'm willing to die for it," Firmage said.

And then an electric blue sphere emerged from the being and entered Firmage.

"Instantly, I was overcome by the most unimaginable ecstasy I have ever experienced, a pleasure vastly beyond orgasm."

After that, he began writing furiously. He became intellectually hyper-linked to all kinds of new and imponderable theories. He tunneled deep into the world of UFOs. He claims he has had private conversations with some of the top military leaders in America, who have confided that aliens are real. He won't say who these leaders are.

Firmage now believes that aliens get interested in a planet when the most intelligent species on that planet learns how to control gravity. The aliens couldn't possibly stand around doing nothing while humans, so raw and unfinished a species, began racing across the galaxy like teenagers on spring break.

Firmage says he'd love to be in a leadership position if formal contact with the aliens begins—if, for example, "two years from now, we had a craft hovering over Times Square, or landing in the middle of the Super Bowl."

All roads in the Firmage universe lead to UFOs. For Firmage, the visions reported by prophets and religious figures—including Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon faith—are strikingly reminiscent of modern encounters with aliens.

As Firmage journeyed deeper—and after he began anonymously posting pieces of "The Truth" on a Web site called Project Kairos—his position within his own company became problematic. Corey, his partner, says he was sympathetic to Firmage's position on UFOs. "There appears to be a number of data points that appear to come from a lot of credible people," Corey says.

Nonetheless, some members of the company's board were uncomfortable with Firmage's new passion, particularly after he went public with his beliefs in November. There were clients who were appalled that the head of the company was espousing views normally associated with crackpots. USWeb's stock price began to slip. The company had merged with a firm called CKS, and it was a sensitive moment. Any sign of weakness could be fatal in the computer industry. Firmage had already planned to step down as CEO, making way for an older executive, but it became clear that he had to hurry up the transition. He became the chief strategist. Eventually, even that seemed too lofty a title for someone with his beliefs, and he became a mere consultant.

His next step will be to print 100,000 copies of "The Truth" as an elegant hardback, self-published, he says, so he'll have total editorial control. This summer he'll embark on a 20-city book tour. He won't do ordinary book signings but will speak, he vows, in auditoriums and other large venues. He's thinking big all the way.

The Search

And what does Bernhard Haisch, the man behind the zero-point field, think of Joe Firmage?

"He's way out there,"

He thinks Firmage is smart and wishes him luck. Haisch is open to

anomalies, UFOs, government conspiracies. But he's also a scientist, and he knows that his theories about the zero-point field are nowhere close to being verified.

Moreover, a scientist would never write something called "The Truth." A scientist might write "The Theory." To approach the level of a truth, a theory must be tested, vigorously, and should have the potential to be falsified. That's one of the many problems with the UFO mythology. Covert entities can't be disproved. Nor can secret government conspiracies.

Haisch says, "Because he's not a scientist, and because of his youth and his success, he's probably not applying as stringent a filter as he might."

Aliens in UFOs don't survive the violent jostling they receive when they pass through the filters of most scientists. Among those who rejected the idea that aliens have visited our planet was Firmage's hero, Carl Sagan. Firmage knows that. He has an explanation: "Sagan was not aware of zero-point physics."

The professional UFO debunker Philip Klass says of Firmage, "In terms of establishing or proving that we have ET visitors, he adds nothing."

Many scientists note that there is not a single scrap of metal that appears extraterrestrial in any laboratory analysis. "Why doesn't anyone come into my office with an ashtray or a radio knob from one of these things?" asks Seth Shostak, an astronomer at the SETI Institute, which conducts radio searches for signals from extraterrestrial civilizations, and which is loath to be associated with UFOs.

Firmage admits that 80 percent of UFO stories are nonsense. But there is truth out there on the fringes, he insists. The entire cosmos has characteristics of being conscious, Firmage believes. We are spiritual beings coming to terms with the

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(continued from page 2 - POST,
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meaning of our existence. We will someday lose our appetite for material possessions. What we will value are experiences—like traveling in space.

He imagines what that would be like. In "The Truth," he writes:

As you ascend through the clouds, piercing beyond the lung of your world, a silence strikes every sense of your soul. Your gaze shifts from the blue light below, and you look up. A black blacker than sudden blindness hits your senses, or rather doesn't, as your eyes adjust to the silent night of heaven. And ever so gracefully, the campfires of the Cosmos begin to sparkle....

This is an age of searchers, of people who would figure out everything, the future, the significance of human history, the thinking of the gods. The Internet explodes with information that almost makes

sense. Firmage believes in himself, and assumes that his instincts are right. His instincts tell him that change is nigh. We will understand what is happening. We will know the secrets of cosmic intelligence.

"Imagine one day we could plug our Internet into theirs," he says. "That would be cool."

If he's right, he'll be vindicated. No one will mock the UFO CEO anymore. On the day of unambiguous alien contact, he will be undeniably credible. A winner once again.

But what if he's wrong?
"If I go down, I'll take this belief system with me."

Another bold declaration, but perhaps his least plausible assertion. The aliens are durable creatures. They were here in spirit before Joe Firmage, and they will be here in spirit when he is gone.

A Moment in (Recent) History

The truth is out there, somewhere

UFOs: the biggest coverup, or the biggest hoax in history

Part XII
(Conclusion and Summary)
by Jon Baughman

By now you have probably read the prior eleven chapters on the UFO phenomenon, and you are ready to draw conclusions. Maybe you have done so already.

Some of your conclusions may be:

*Jon has gone off the deep end and needs a trustee to be appointed to supervise his affairs.

*UFOs are real and the government doesn't want us to know about them.

*Most UFO sightings can be explained, but the few that can't be explained may be from outer space.

*Most UFO fanatics are nut cases (actually many UFO followers seem like basket cases, but some are sincere).

*The whole UFO thing was concocted by the military and CIA to hide top secret development programs.

*UFOs are real and aliens are in the process of establishing a frightening presence on earth.

*UFOs are a figment of overactive imaginations and are merely part of our popular culture.

Please bear in mind that I have attempted to present the evidence (for and against) in an unbiased manner, making reference to published sources. The series has been read in advance by two friends of the author and were free to make comments in advance of publication. Both have backgrounds in education and science. You have been free to make up your own mind throughout this series. You can believe what you want to believe, and scoff at all or part of it.

The UFO craze is extremely popular today with people from all backgrounds and that is why this series was written.

As a professor conveyed to me recently via e-mail, "This is a fascinating subject that is either an interesting footnote to popular culture, or an enormously important subject."

As this is written, the American military continues to develop aircraft and weapons systems that seem purely out of science fiction. And in a few short years our military technology will be invincible.

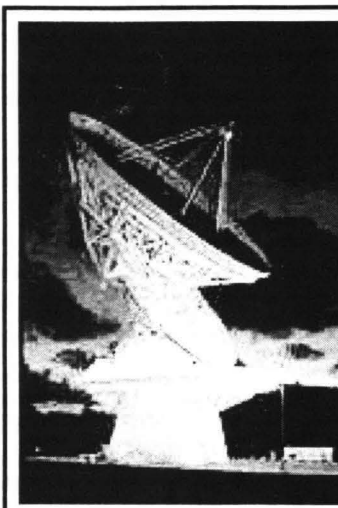
In *The Dreamland Chronicles* author David Darlington quotes military technology expert Mark Farmer as saying, "By the turn of the century our military will be incomparable; nobody will be able to touch us." Farmer has seen UFOs flying out of Area 51. But he doesn't know if they are alien craft or just top-secret American projects.

Researcher Dr. David M. Jacobs believes alien abductions of humans are real. Through hypnosis of alleged abduction victims he has found common themes. The aliens are developing a hybrid human-alien to overcome alien genetic problems. There is reason to believe they are not friendly and that they are a threat to mankind.

John Lear has hinted at the same type of experimentation. He claims that the Star Wars (SDI) technology developed under the Reagan administration (and which is still being developed and deployed in space today) was not aimed at the Soviets but at the aliens.

Former Pentagon staffer Col. Corso confirms in his book that the US has placed particle beams and lasers in space. They are capable of shooting down incoming missiles as well as alien spacecraft. He says they are being used to protect American astronauts from alien spacecraft, and that no manned voyages to the moon or to Mars are being attempted because of that threat.

Darlington concludes that it is



This radio telescope in West Virginia is an important part of the SETI program, scanning the heavens for radio transmissions from intelligent civilizations elsewhere in the universe. So far no such signals have been intercepted.

Now a few maverick researchers working for SETI have proposed looking for laser signals from space, under the assumption that alien civilizations have advanced beyond radio communication to much more exotic technology.

highly likely that the Earth is being visited by aliens from the Zeta Reticuli star system, who have a need for the element boron, and this (plus the presence of many top-secret military facilities there) explains the numerous UFO sightings in that region. "There is some speculation that a deal was struck between the visitors and the US government, allowing for the extraction of boron in exchange for advanced technology."

And even astronauts have seen them. On more than one occasion astronauts aboard Space Shuttle flights have seen and filmed unidentified objects streaking out of the earth's atmosphere at high speeds. They can't be meteors because they can escape from earth's gravitational field with ease. The official government explanation is, "No comment."

In his book *Left at East Gate* American Airman Larry Warren describes an encounter with a UFO and three aliens in the forest outside the Bentwaters/Woodbridge air bases in England. Both the US and British governments deny the incident but several witnesses have confirmed Warren's shocking story.

Following the encounter Warren says he was debriefed by a Naval intelligence officer, who told the men who saw the strange craft, "what we had seen in the forest represented technology far advanced to our own.... numerous civilizations visit this planet from time to time and that some are a permanent presence here. Our government has known of this far longer than most of you are alive."

In 1961 Professor Frank Drake devised the Drake Equation to determine the number of civilizations that might exist in our galaxy. The complex formula took into account the 200 billion stars in the Milky Way, and concluded that thousands of intelligent civilizations may exist on planets in the galaxy, undetected.

Drake is the father of SETI, an elaborate "listening network" of radiotelescopes trying to eavesdrop on alien communications. Drake says there are two possible types of messages from outer space: intentional signals aimed at other planets, or eavesdropping signals (part of a planet's own communications network).

SETI (Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence), funded by the US government, assumes that those civilizations use radio waves. Human civilization has only used radio waves for the past 60 years, and some of those stray broadcasts may only now be reaching distant planets and stars. Other planets may use radio signals for less than 200 years before adapting to more advanced communications. Maybe there are advanced civilizations out there that simply do not send the kinds of signals we can hear.

To date SETI has detected no radio signals from outer space.

This raises several possibilities:

*Other civilizations did not survive long enough to send a reply, or aren't advanced enough, or simply don't exist at all (Earthlings are alone in the vast expanse of space).

*Aliens have advanced to other systems, such as lasers to send messages over long distances (Col. Corso hints that aliens from space who visit earth are doing just that). SETI would not pick up laser signals.

*Aliens exist, but don't want to get our attention but rather have a goal to infiltrate or investigate our civilization without our direct knowledge.

Drake does not believe aliens are visiting earth. But then, if a military cover-up exists, SETI would be funded as part of the cover-up to give the people a false sense of security, UFO buffs say.

Actually one radio message was received from outer space, and not by SETI. In 1969 when the Apollo 11 Lunar Lander prepared to land on the moon, both the astronauts heard weird radio noise, code-like, that prompted Mission Control to ask, "You sure you don't have anybody else up there with you?" Later moon missions (Apollo 12 and 15) reported sighting strange objects fly by their spacecraft, as if propelled or ejected.

In the summer of 1997 Central Pennsylvania experienced its own UFO blitz, as mysterious lights were seen at night in a wide area between Chambersburg and Breezewood. Sightings were reported in Burnt Cabins, Neelyton, Chambersburg, Path Valley, and other locations. Several daily newspapers published articles on the sightings, and a Chambersburg radio station even did a live broadcast about the object (which was seen on numerous evenings).

The DJ himself went to Path Valley and watched the object come up over Neelyton Mountain, describing it as a big ball of light, red and blue, with tentacles coming out of it.

A similar description was given to reporters by a Burnt Cabins woman and a high school student from Neelyton. A Chambersburg man said an object flew so close to his car (at night) that the car's interior was lit up.

People living in the vicinity of Forbes Road schools reportedly watched the object each evening from their porches.

A Burnt Cabins woman described it as a bright light with two smaller lights suspended underneath. It was hovering in the sky but later took off at a high rate of speed.

The identity of the object remains a mystery.

As Americans prepare to celebrate the dawn of a New Millennium, will the mystery remain, unexplained? Or will some great revelation be revealed to the American people?

SUN, San Bernardino, CA - April 21, 1999



GREGG PATTON

UFO puts on a show in Rialto

Normally, serious-minded newspaper reporters stay away from UFO sightings by private citizens.

You can understand the problem. Unidentified flying object information comes in after the fact, and it relies entirely on the credibility of people we don't know. Plus, there is no hard evidence to inspect, like, say, a warehouse with a crashed flying saucer or preserved bodies of aliens like Fox Mulder stumbles across in "X-Files."

On the other hand, everyone likes a good UFO story. Fortunately for you, our serious-minded reporters were busy Tuesday.

I spoke with Michael Hawkins and Lia Simmons, who told me what they saw Monday about 8:10 p.m. while they were lounging in their backyard spa in Rialto staring up into the sky: a disc-like craft with four brilliant green lights. It was at a high altitude, well above commercial air lanes. It cruised eastbound from the Los Angeles area, roughly following the I-10 corridor, before stopping in mid-flight for about 30 seconds slightly to their south.

Hawkins and Simmons said the lights on the craft went dark as two jetliners approached Ontario International Airport. Then the disc showed red "thrustor sparks," and quickly gained altitude out of sight. The whole episode lasted a couple of minutes.

Hawkins, 44, said he runs a small envelope manufacturing business and has lived in Rialto to six years. Simmons, 47, said

she has taught elementary school for 20 years.

"I'm familiar with aircraft and this was like nothing I'd ever seen," said Hawkins, who said he is a former Air Force and Lockheed mechanic. "It was one of the strangest events of my life."

Simmons described herself as a skeptic who "couldn't believe what I was seeing. It startled us. You could plainly see a disc. I said, 'Other people have to be seeing this.'"

Maybe one did.

Hawkins said he didn't report it to the police or any other public agency because "they would think I was a lunatic." He tracked down a more sympathetic ear, the National UFO Reporting Center in Seattle.

Peter Davenport, the director, said Hawkins' report mirrored a call the center got about a UFO over Lakewood around the same time.

I'm not much of a UFO buff myself. The strangest thing I've ever seen was a disc-shaped light appearing to hover outside my window one night. It turned out to be a reflection from my watch, allowing me to get out from under the table where I was hiding.

But seriously, folks, I'm a skeptic. I will be until I get my own ride in a hovering craft. Even after that, I'll probably say, "OK, Mr. Lucas, where are you?"

Most people have to be there. Like Hawkins and Simmons.

"What makes you believe in seeing it yourself," said Hawkins. "I'm not worried about trying to convince other people."

Anyway, that's their story, whatever it was. Maybe it was an illusion — like New Jersey swamp gas, only from Rialto. Or they mistook an IFO for a UFO.

Or... it could be a chapter in the biggest story in the history of mankind. If that's the case, I'm glad I'm smart enough to report it.

Gregg Patton's column appears Wednesdays and Fridays. He also writes "Like Nowhere Else," which runs Sundays in the Sun. Readers may write to him at the San Bernardino County Sun, 399 N. D St., San Bernardino 92401, call him at (909) 386-3856 or fax him at (909) 885-8741

Air Force base may be source

UFO sightings can be explained

Numerous residents in the county reported seeing strange lights in the sky, but no explanation for the lights existed - until now.

The sightings were reported between 8:30 and 9:15 p.m. March 16 by residents from all over the county to Tuscola County Central Dispatch.

The cause may have been flares being dropped from Selfridge Air Force Base planes, according to a base spokesman.

The sightings were made by residents in Novesta, Juniata, and Akron townships, and also by residents in the villages of Caro and Fairgrove.

"We were dropping flares at that time," said Deputy Base Public Affairs Director Don Jarosz.

The dropping of flares is a normal procedure, and was a part of a training exercise that

was going on at the time the UFOs were seen by the residents, Jarosz related.

"The flares are one way to evade heat-seeking missiles," he explained.

"The flares attract heat-seeking missiles, instead of the missiles being attracted to the planes."

The flares themselves never touch the ground, he noted.

"The flares disintegrate, so there's nothing that hits the ground," Jarosz stated.

What people reported as UFOs may have been the flares, he speculated.

The residents who saw the supposed UFOs all reported seeing orange lights in the sky to the east.

"When I looked towards Caro, it looked like four lights, a space, then 2 lights," said Rae Beibel of Watrousville.

"I had my family look at it,

then when they saw it, it disappeared."

Beibel noted another couple of lights like that after the original six.

"There was a little bit of time between the six and the two," Beibel said.

"I was scared to go to sleep that night."

Adel DeBoever of Akron Township saw something similar.

"First I saw a small group of orange lights," he related.

"They were just sitting there. Then they went out."

Another "large orange light" then followed, which separated into six lights in a horizontal line.

"After it opened up, I thought I saw a cylinder that rotated to give the impression the lights separated," DeBoever continued.

"It was quite startling to see it

again. That's when it all lit up a second time."

DeBoever had been told there were F-15 fighter jets doing maneuvers at the time of the UFO sightings.

"But they have a white light, so I really doubt I saw the after-burners," he theorized.

"I hope I never see it again."

DeBoever and Beibel both called 911, but there wasn't much the dispatchers could do, noted interim dispatch director Dee Ann Summersett.

"All we do is log them, and put out a B.O.L. ('be on the lookout')," she stated. "We can't send someone to a place they can't get to."

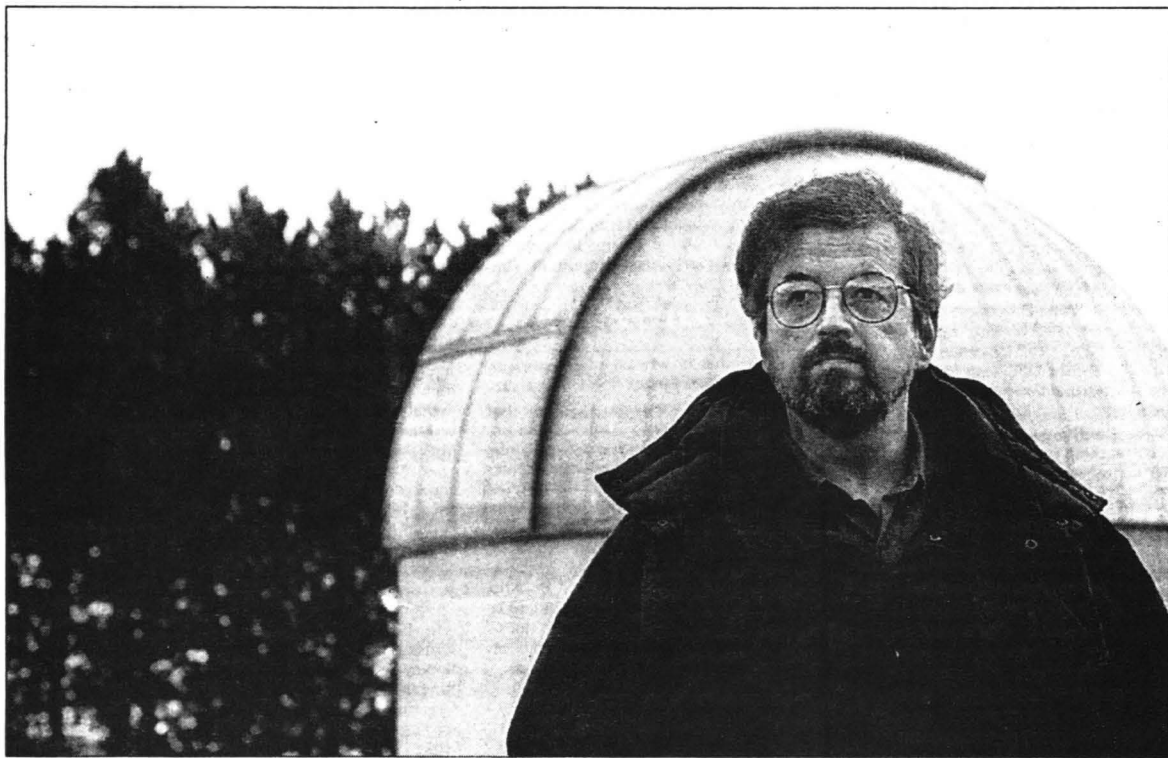
Summersett still advises residents call when they think they see a UFO.

"We have someone from Marlette who calls us every year to get that stuff," she mentioned.

PATRIOT-NEWS, Harrisburg, PA - April 17, 1999

"As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven."

— 2 KINGS 2:11



LAURA MATHEWS / OF THE PATRIOT-NEWS

Robert Young, an amateur astronomer and planetarium educator at the State Museum of Harrisburg, believes that with enough time and information, all UFO sights could be explained. "People see things in the sky for which they have no explanation, but there are military aircraft and meteorological phenomenon that people aren't familiar with," he said.

Regular people record irregular events

The following story is the second in a three-part series on UFOs and religion, part of a larger series of occasional articles focusing on Bible prophecies and other predictions for the end of the millennium.

By TONY PERRY
FOR THE PATRIOT-NEWS

Stan Gordon's parents bought him a radio for his 10th birthday. It was Halloween Eve, 1959. What was broadcast that day was entertainment — the usual scary, Halloween dramas about bad aliens and good humans.

What Gordon heard was destiny call-

"I knew right away that I was interested," says the Greensburg man, who is known in the world of "ufology" as a self-taught researcher. "I started keeping a scrapbook."

When Gordon was 16, something happened in that drew him into his life's passion. People from New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania reported seeing a light in the sky. Local mythology holds that a craft landed in a field a half-mile from Kecksburg, Westmoreland County. Officials believe it was a meteor, and no evidence was found of anything falling from anywhere.

But the Kecksburg incident became a focus for Gordon, who lives near the site. He joined the UFO Research Institute of

Pittsburgh, which took calls of reported sightings and then interviewed those who may have seen something foreign in the skies. When the group folded in the late '60s, Gordon set up his own hot line and started doing research on his own.

"Between those years and now, I've talked to thousands of people," Gordon says. "Thousands of cases right here in Pennsylvania. My files go back to the late 1900s, but are most active from the 1950s to the present."

Gordon is one of many UFO researchers convinced they will, someday, learn the truth about what's out there. They travel when they can, interviewing neighbors and digging up old newspaper clippings, hoping to prove or disprove

sightings.

Some researchers, such as Robert Hostler of Millville, Columbia County, are hobbyists who have been fascinated since childhood with flying saucers. Others, such as Doug Brightbill of Harrisburg, serve as paranormal detectives, happily disproving the sightings they can't lend credibility to the ones that can't be disproved.

Neither Brightbill nor Hostler fits the stereotype of a misfit seeking fame or notoriety by tilting at extraterrestrial windmills.

Brightbill looks and talks like a regular guy. He has a family and a career.

(continued on page 5)

and he's active in his church. But he's been fascinated by UFOs since childhood. As a teen, he joined a civilian force of UFO investigators and went along one night in the mid-1960s when the group investigated a series of reports of strange lights near the 13th Street bridge in Harrisburg.

"So many people were seeing these lights that people would come out in the evening and sit in lawn chairs and wait for the show," Brightbill said. "We went down by the bridge and waited in the real tall grass. All of a sudden right in front of us there was this great big light. You couldn't see what it was, just that it was pulsating."

What was it? He'll never know. "I was gone," he chuckles. "Got the heck out of there. But the next day they had the whole area cordoned off. There was a strange powder on the ground. Tree samples were missing."

"I don't know what I saw, but I saw something."

These days, Brightbill chairs the Harrisburg Strange Phenomenon Club, a group that investigates UFOs and other unexplainable concepts, such as spontaneous human combustion.

Like Brightbill, Hostler doesn't match the image of The Lone Gunmen, three nerds who live in a bunker on Fox Network's "The X-Files." Hostler, a Berwick native, lives in a small town north of Bloomsburg. He works in a factory in Shickshinny. Good job, steady girlfriend, hobbies, loves NASCAR.

He's also something of an expert on a November 1974 sighting in Carbondale, Lackawanna County. Three boys said they saw a saucer-shaped craft land in a pond behind the town park. Others said they saw a green light glowing beneath the surface of the water. The media arrived.

Officials eventually retrieved a railroad lantern from the pond and declared the story a hoax. But the rumor persists that there was some kind of craft, which government workers spirited off on a railroad car before anyone made it to the scene.

"There are lots of reasons not to trust the government," Hostler said. "For one, they lie."

Hostler's interest in UFOs led him to build a diorama of a supposed alien crash landing. The diorama is on display in a museum in Roswell, N.M. He's among those who believe the increasing belief in UFOs will force the government to come clean about what it knows.

"There are too many people who have seen things now," Hostler said. "I think the curtain's pretty well pulled back now."



"I don't know what I saw, but I saw something."

— DOUG BRIGHTBILL, CHAIRMAN OF THE HARRISBURG STRANGE PHENOMENON CLUB

The path of science

"The real serious UFO researchers are academics," says Gettysburg College's Charles F. Emmons. "They work for the government, they're in business or academia. The image that people would imagine is that they're all flaky. There's one astronomer who I talked to who thought UFO researchers were people who sat on hillsides and looked for UFOs."

Emmons speaks from personal experience. He is a consultant to the Mutual UFO Network — MUFON — a loosely knit group of researchers. MUFON, he says, is picky about the people who represent it because the group wants to maintain a scientific approach. It can't look for academic degrees, but it does tests those who might speak on MUFON's behalf.

The group is far from uniform in its beliefs, however.

"There's kind of a continuum," Emmons says, "from nuts and bolts researchers to New Age researchers who look a lot more at mental phenomenon and even try to contact aliens through mental and spiritual connections. There are a wide range of ideas about how to study this."

Peter Davenport, for example, has had many careers. He's a geneticist and biochemist, has a business degree and a commercial pilot's license. But since he saw a UFO — as did hundreds of people near the St. Louis airport on that day in 1954 — he's had an interest in the phenomenon.

Since 1994, he's been the director of the National UFO Reporting Center in Seattle, working as a hard

scientist, collecting facts. "Without facts, without data, we can't test for trends," he said. The center, in operation since 1974, can get up to 200 calls in a single day, from people who have seen something, or from journalists seeking information. It maintains a Web site, where visitors can access a database of thousands of sightings and UFO reports. It has become, in many ways, the clearinghouse for information about UFO sightings.

The center has gotten quite a bit of publicity lately — several appearances on Art Bell's radio show have something to do with that. But the center's reputation is the direct result of Davenport's insistence on taking a scientific approach to something many dismiss as fantasy. "This is a phenomenon of tremendous consequence," he said. "I'm a scientist. I'm not interested in conjecture."

It is for that reason that he dismisses talk of Y2K, and refuses to discuss the theological implications of the possibility of alien life. But he does note Luke 21:11's prediction of "great signs from heaven" as evidence of a phenomenon that has been around for a long time.

Davenport said many callers to the center are emotionally charged by the experience of seeing something inexplicable.

"Some of these are people who all their lives have believed UFOs were fiction and in a matter of moments, had that changed. It's a sudden, abrupt awakening. It makes them start to question who they are, what their place in the universe is."

Davenport has become so good at taking those calls — tens of thousands of them — that he said he listens for certain red flags to tell him whether the caller is on the level.

"You learn to listen to reports very carefully and to listen to the voice very carefully," he said. "There are people who prefer fiction to fact. People just like to tell stories."

He said the media are resistant to stories about UFOs. Most editors and reporters just dismiss the story. And yet, he firmly believes the reports that flood the center are evidence of the biggest story mankind has ever seen.

What's it going to take to get everyone to notice?

"A government that stops lying to its people. There are small countries that are vastly more open about this," he said, naming Chile and Belgium. Britain, the U.S., Australia and to some degree Canada, are tight-lipped about it, he said.

And it's not because they don't know anything. Davenport says he met with several government officials two years ago who said many UFO sightings were exactly what they appeared to be: craft flown by

SIGHTINGS

The National UFO Reporting Center gets calls every day from around the globe from people who report strange things in the sky.

Such as the commercial flight crew who reported their faces sunburned by a green light during a spectacular display of Northern Lights in March. Or the loggers who reported an elk abducted by a flying disk in Washington in February.

And some of those calls originate in Pennsylvania. A review of recent calls posted on the center's Web site include:

□ Nov. 24, 1998: Strange light reported in the sky near Mechanicsburg.

□ Oct. 25, 1998: Caller reported a large disk, bigger than a football field, and two smaller craft at sunset in State College.

□ Sept. 24, 1998: Truck driver was traveling south on I-83 between exits 11 and 10 when, he reported, he saw a fireball appear in the sky, turn white, then red, then green. Driver said other truckers were discussing it on their Citizen's Band radios.

□ July 12, 1998: A brilliant object ap-

peared in the sky near Lock Haven, and changed colors several times before disappearing over the horizon.

□ July 7, 1998: Caller was on a hilltop outside Danville when a reddish ball appeared, hovering for about 10 minutes before it disappeared.

□ Aug. 15, 1997: A bright light appeared in the sky outside West Sunbury and covered a caller in a bright light before streaking off into the distance.

□ April 18, 1997: A triangular shaped object flew over a family as they stood in a church parking lot in Grantville.

□ April 12, 1996: An FAA center near Philipsburg reported a strange object on radar at 40,000 feet elevation. Immediately after, the crew of a jet call to describe a bright ball of light spotted at 40,000 feet.

□ Feb. 25, 1996: A man reported an abduction experience along Route 313 in Doylestown. He said he saw three bright lights in the sky, and the engine in his van stopped abruptly before he became paralyzed and felt something "scan" his mind.

intelligent life. But the officials insisted on anonymity, and although they told Davenport they were worried about the phenomenon, have not spoken publicly about what they know.

The path of skepticism

Most researchers are more skeptical than one might think.

"A lot of UFO researchers don't think UFOs are from outer space," Gettysburg College's Emmons said. "They think they're from another dimension, or caused by natural phenomenon or government research."

Indeed, those who scoff at belief in UFOs often find nature — or humans — behind what we don't understand in the sky.

"If you had enough time and information, all of these sightings would have an explanation," says Robert Young, an amateur astronomer and a planetarium educator at The State Museum of Pennsylvania. "People see things in the sky for which they have no explanation, but there are military aircraft and meteorological phenomenon that people aren't familiar with."

Over the years, Young said, many statistical studies have concluded that at least 30 percent of so-called UFO sightings were astronomical objects.

"People have chased Venus in airplanes and cars. And they've felt it was chasing them. There was even an incident during World War II when a warship fired at Venus. It's often close to the horizon, and in the winter, it's usually in haze and clouds."

And memory, Young says, is a tricky thing.

A quick glance at reports on the Web site of the National UFO Reporting Center finds sightings reported 10, 20, even 30 years after the fact, yet reported in the kind of detail that would escape many when asked to describe yesterday's lunch — or even their wedding day.

In the Kecksburg case, which Young calls a "classic," no evidence of alien life was found. But 14 years later someone called a Pittsburgh radio station saying he had been the fire chief in Kecksburg at the time, and he had seen a 17-foot-long object in a truck with armed guards.

"The story doesn't die," Young said. "You try to remember something that happened 30 years ago."

There are other stories. Nearly 10 years ago, hundreds of people in the Williamsport area reported triangular crafts hovering over their homes. None of them managed to take a single photograph. Most researchers, including Young and Brightbill, believe they were military aircraft. Recent reports in the Scranton area turned out to be people in an ultralight airplane.

Young is among those who don't hold much stock in belief of a government cover-up.

"After 50 years, there isn't a shred of evidence that there's been a visitation. And this idea that the government knows it all and is hiding it? Come on! This would be the greatest discovery of the century. That scientist would get a Nobel Prize."

Another Pendleton resident, Viviane Gilbert Stein, said she was driving south on Interstate 82, about midway between the Tri-Cities and Umatilla, when she saw the fireball streak through the clouds in what looked like a poof of smoke and light up the sky to the east.

"My first thought was 'How far am I from the chemical depot?'" Stein admitted. "I even turned on the radio to see if I was missing something."

"It was a ball of flames," reported

Michelle Moore, who was traveling with her family on Interstate 82 near Prosser when she saw the orange streak. "It came down ... it impacted. There was big flash of blue light."

Many eyewitnesses said it was bigger than they imagined possible. Based on two reports out of Spokane, Davenport said the meteor appeared "larger than the disk of a full moon" and had "some kind of peculiar green tail behind it."

Todd McCallister of Kennewick saw the fiery object appear in the east. "It was traveling very fast," he said. "We only saw it for maybe three to five seconds at most."

Fire ball streaks across Eastern Oregon night sky

By the East Oregonian and The Associated Press

A giant fireball lit up the skies over Eastern Oregon and Washington Wednesday night.

The flaming orange object was seen from the Pendleton, Prosser, Kennewick, Yakima, Walla Walla and Spokane areas and was likely part of the Lyrid meteor shower that climaxed Wednesday, said Peter Davenport, director of the National UFO Reporting Center in Seattle.

Even the Missoula, Mont., emer-

gency dispatch line was flooded with calls, Davenport said.

Suzie Reitz of Athena said she and friend Rose Reich were driving north on Highway 11 near Adams about 9:20 p.m. when they saw the fireball falling from the sky to the east, over the Blue Mountains.

"There were clouds in the sky and then there came a little shot out of the clouds — it reflected off the clouds, so I think it looked bigger than it was. It was a bright yellow light with a tail and it came all the way down," Reitz said. "We

think that it hit in a field out there, but we're not sure ... Some farmer will probably find this chunk of meteor in his field."

Pendleton resident Karen Zacharias said she was on Interstate 84 between Stanfield and Pendleton when she saw the fireball light up the sky. From that perspective it appeared to be over the Pendleton Airport and she said she wondered at first if it was a burning airliner.

"It was huge. It lit up the sky so you could see the clouds over the Blue Mountains," Zacharias said.

EAST OREGONIAN, Pendleton, OR - April 22, 1999

"As I looked, a stormy wind came out of the north: a great cloud with brightness around it and fire flashing forth continually, and in the middle of the fire, something like gleaming amber. In the middle of it was something like four living creatures. This was their appearance: they were of human form."

— EZEKIEL 1:4,5 (NRSV)

Growing belief in UFOs tied to millennial fears

The following story starts a three-part series on UFOs and religion, part of a larger series of occasional articles focusing on Bible prophecies and other predictions for the end of the millennium.

BY TONY PERRY
FOR THE PATRIOT-NEWS

For years, rocket ships and space travel were the stuff of fantasy, things little boys and girls dreamed about as they pondered a future bursting with possibilities. Movie serials about high-flying heroes gave hope to youngsters who believed there simply had to be something more to life than factory work and domesticity.

In the glossy world of science fiction, the concept of aliens were something to be feared, yet something with which we were fascinated. The very concept of alien life raises huge theological and existential questions: Are human beings the only form of intelligent life? And if they aren't, does that lessen the importance of humanity? And how will that alter our view of God?

The questions may be even more important now. Somehow during the last century, a lot of people stopped believing in the future, and started to believe in aliens.

A belief in UFOs ties in to millennial fears creeping through the culture, says Ted Daniels, head of the Millennial Watch Institute in Philadelphia. "What if it turned out that there were indeed space-faring races out there with an interest in us?" Daniels asks. "Abductions and contact with UFOs generally are seen as one of the signs of the end times."

And as the year 2000 approaches, more UFO groups are coming out of the woodwork, predicting the advent of aliens bent on destroying us, or the arrival of aliens determined to help us be better people.

The persuasiveness of the UFO

culture is clearly seen in the entertainment industry. Orson Wells' 1938 radio broadcast of "War of the Worlds" sent small groups of people into a panic over the belief that Martians had landed and meant to take over. Over time, the concept of alien visitors worked its way into the cultural landscape until it has become inescapable.

Television preachers — using the Bible as proof — talk about Satan's fallen angels and the possible connection to UFO sightings.

Late night radio's biggest hit in years, "Coast to Coast with Art Bell," regularly centers on alien visits, alien abductions, and UFO sightings.

Even the suggestion of an alien visitor brings to most minds the Hollywood vision of a small, gray creature with large, dark eyes and long, scaly fingers.

Small wonder. Aliens and other science fiction works are big business in the entertainment industry. Last year was a banner year for science fiction films. Talk of alien abductions, government cover-ups and secret spaceship landings regularly fills our books and television screens, and many say that means something about who we are.

"It's definitely representative of a healthy skepticism of what people are being told," said Daniel Fierman, a staff writer at Entertainment Weekly magazine. "It's also a metaphor of alienation. Youth, especially male youth, have always identified with this feeling of being alienated from the popular culture."

Some say science fiction only feeds the imagination for things extraterrestrial.

"When you have films like 'Independence Day,' 'Star Wars' and 'Star Trek,' there is bound to be an increased interest in the real

thing," said David Prowse, the actor who portrayed Darth Vader in the first three Star Wars films.

Others say the times, the turning of the cal-

endar, are making us stop and think.

"I think with the turn of the millennium, a lot more focus has gone to the future, and what else is out there beside ourselves," said Chase Master-son, a "Star



CHASE MASTERSON

Trek: Deep Space Nine" actress in town recently for a science fiction convention. "I think its pretty egotistical to think we're the only ones."

But a fascination with UFOs and alien life isn't just a bit of nutty behavior on the fringes of society anymore. It has become a

subculture of its own, and it has permeated human existence through our mythology, our entertainment, our belief systems and our fears.

"As a sociologist, I see problems with mass society," said Dr. Charles F. Emmons, a Gettysburg College professor and author of "At the Threshold: UFOs, Science, and the New Age." Emmons said social change is stressing us out.

"We have a lot of big problems. It's not just that we're coming to the year 2000. The basic problems have been bubbling up in the background for a long time. When we have that in the background, then talk of the millennium or UFOs or spirituality becomes more important to us."

Who is the enemy?

The genre of science fiction and fantasy has long allowed people to talk about things that are taboo. When "War of the Worlds" was broadcast, America feared the unknown. Somewhere along the line, something changed.

In 1953, "It Came From Outer Space" served as a perfect metaphor for Cold War anxiety. In the film, based on a Ray Bradbury short story, a space ship crash-lands on earth and burrows into the sand outside a small Arizona town. The aliens, who need to fix

Trust no one, and watch those cows

While on assignment last week on the Jicarilla Apache Reservation, I poked around the town of Dulce, N.M., to research into a hobby of mine: UFOs and the paranormal.

Dulce is not only the capital of one of the most prosperous Indian nations in the United States, it's also a hub for UFO sightings and other freaky events.

The strange stories began in the late 1970s with a string of cattle mutilations on the Gomez Ranch near Dulce. From 1978-83, they lost 50 head of cattle. UFO sightings and reports of "strange lights in the sky" sprung up around Dulce. Since, stories have circulated of a secret underground

WES R. SMALLING



Wes' Side Story

alien base under Mount Archuleta — a mesa towering over Dulce. During the period of mutilations, a tombstone on the Gomez property reportedly began glowing at night in the shape of a cross.

Herbie Gomez, whose grandfather was the first homesteader in Dulce, grew up on the Gomez Ranch during its UFO heyday.

"There was a theory that it was a beacon for UFOs," said Gomez with a laugh about his uncle's glowing tombstone. But Gomez, who now owns a grocery store next to the Gomez Ranch, is dead serious when it comes to the cattle mutilations. It is reported that the family lost more than \$100,000 in livestock in the six-year period.

While tens of thousands of

NEW MEXICAN, Santa Fe, NM - May 13, 1999

mutilation cases have been reported across North America since the late 1960s, they occur with more frequency in the San Luis Valley of Northern New Mexico and southern Colorado and near Nevada's top secret high-tech military base at Groom Lake — known as Area 51.

Hmmm ... a UFO connection?

The mutilations on the Gomez property prompted an FBI investigation. The 1979 report concluded that the cattle were victims of predator attacks.

Case closed? Hardly. Ranchers as well as UFO researchers consider mutilation cases to be unsolved.

Many believe the FBI overlooked a few key (and obvious) facts that rule out predators: No teeth marks, animal tracks or signs of a struggle were found; no blood was spilled, and in some cases the blood was completely drained from the animal (sucked right out of it); certain body parts (often only the reproductive organs) were removed with surgical precision; and signs of cauterization (the fusing of tissue by heat) were present.

Doesn't sound like a cougar attack to me.

Gomez agrees. "Unless you're training a coyote in medical school to make cuts like a laser surgery, it's not an animal doing it."

Some blame Satanic cults or say the stories were exaggerated by ranchers "wanting attention." Others say space aliens performed experiments on the cattle.

First, the mutilations are too widespread to be the work of Satanists, unless there's some secret coalition of devil-worshipping, laser-trained surgeons out there running amok.

As to ranchers wanting attention, most ranchers are quiet, small-town folks who don't want to be bothered. The last thing they want is a bunch of UFO weirdos (and nosy journalists) camped out on their property peering at the sky through telescopes and asking a lot of dumb questions.

Alien autopsies? C'mon — how

important could a bull's testicles be to a technologically superior race of ETs? Were they teen-age aliens who flew over to our galaxy on a high school field trip to dissect earth creatures for a biology midterm?

Gomez has his own interesting theory as to who was responsible. It's pretty wild, but it makes some sense. And if it's true, it's scarier than space aliens.

"I have a feeling it has to do with Los Alamos," he says with some hesitation. Gomez says that maybe in the 1940s and '50s, before the dangers of nuclear waste were really known, a bunch of radioactive crap was dumped in the mountains around Dulce.

"They didn't know what they had done, so (30 years later) I think they were coming back to see what damage they did. It's just a theory, but if you look at cancers, at the jump of cases in the '60s and '70s, they may have been coming back and checking the cows for reproductive damage."

Gomez says that radiation was 70 percent above normal in some of the mutilated cattle.

Maybe it's true. Scientists couldn't just show up in their lab coats knocking on doors saying: "Do you mind if we check you, your children and that cow over there for radiation, cancer and mutations? Oh, it's just a routine test. Nothing to worry about."

Were the cows exposed to nuclear waste from a government weapons lab, prompting scientists to return years later under the cover of night to assess the damage done? If so, I'm sure the people of Dulce never received the test results.

Or was the radioactivity from exposure to an out-of-this-world energy source sputtering out of a flying saucer's tailpipe?

Both theories are far-fetched, but compared to the official story that predators are to blame ... either sounds believable.

their ship, suck unsuspecting Americans into the ground and take over their bodies after implanting their evil selves into the brain of the humans. The humans, led by the unwavering faith of a young boy, win in the end.

At the time, most Americans feared Communism, which seemed to be an insidious form of mind control, a godless quicksand into which people would lose their humanity.

These days, in Fox network's "The X-Files," intrepid FBI agents Fox Mulder and Dana Scully fight evil aliens and something far worse: humans motivated by money and greed.

"It's incredible to me that one of the highest rated shows on television encourages complete and total mistrust of the federal government," Entertainment Weekly's Fierman said. "It says the government even lies to its own people, that there's this small cadre of white guys who pull all the strings."

And that mistrust may be mirrored by popular opinion. According to a 1996 Gallup poll, just fewer than half the people surveyed said they believe UFOs are real, and that they have visited earth in some form. But 72 percent said there is life of some kind on other planets, and 71 percent are convinced the U.S. government knows more about UFOs than officials admit.

Such mistrusts also is evident in attitudes

about the nation's most well known UFO tale: the crash of an alien spaceship in Roswell, N.M., in 1947.

Popular mythology has it that the craft was recovered and taken to Area 51, an allegedly secret military installation near there. Some ufologists have long believed the government is studying this recovered ship to master alien technology.

You didn't think they made that up just for the movie "Independence Day," did you?

The Gallup Poll revealed that only 31 percent of those surveyed believe a spacecraft from another planet crashed in Roswell. But 64 percent of them also don't buy the government's story that what people saw was a weather balloon and a pair of crash test dummies.

Such mistrust of authority has yet to spread — at least in such severity — to religious institutions.

"I don't think the American populace has gotten to the point where they have the same suspicion and derision of their religious institutions that they have of politics," said Michael D. Silberstein, philosophy professor at Elizabethtown College.

"That would require them to change their world view. That's not something most people are willing to do."

Next week: UFO researchers are convinced they will, someday, learn the truth about what's out there.

'UFO' incident still puzzling after 30 years

Many still insist government not telling everything

By RALPH HEIBUTZKI
Daily News Staff Writer

Thirty-three years ago this week, Hillsdale residents found their city splashed across the nation's front pages after Hillsdale College students reported an unidentified flying

object.

The story itself has taken on new life over the years. It was most recently featured on The Learning Channel's "Alien Invasion Week" earlier this month. Hillsdale College spokesman Dan Bisher said articles on the sighting pop up about every four or five years.

The sighting itself has never been explained. For the late Dr. J. Allen Hynek — who put the incident down to swamp gas — the case would find him "doing more public relations than investigating," the

Learning Channel special said.

The story began at approximately 9 p.m. Monday, March 21, 1966, when residents of Hillsdale College's Mauck Hall, near the corner of Hillsdale Road and Barber Drive, reported a mysterious object that changed colors and moved in a circular motion.

Not knowing what to do, they called the late William "Bud" VanHorn, who was the Hillsdale County civil defense director. He also owned what is now the VanHorn-Eagle Funeral Home, 40 S. Man-

ning St.

VanHorn's widow, Lucille VanHorn, remembers her husband "kind of scoffed" at the first call. However, he told the students to keep watching the object, and to call back if it did not leave the area, she recalled earlier this week.

When another call came to the funeral home, VanHorn went out to see for himself, accompanied by a Hillsdale City Police car, and two Michigan State Police units, according to a March 22, 1966, Hillsdale Daily News story.

Ralph Strait was among the policemen who accompanied VanHorn to the scene that night, along with the late Hillsdale police chief, Harold Caulkins, and the late county sheriff, Ralph Gilbert.

Strait, now 62 and retired, spoke with the Daily News on Friday.

Joined by about two dozen students, VanHorn observed the object through binoculars from 10:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. "It was definitely some type of vehicle. It would rise to a point just below the (Hillsdale Municipal) airport beacon and then

it would start settling down to earth again," he had told the Daily News. He estimated the object had a 20-foot span, with lights that changed from red to bluish green as it moved.

At first, Strait and his fellow officers thought they were seeing an exploding plane, he said. "It was (the object) definitely symmetrical. It was just a bright ball of light, like a flash. I wasn't scared of it — I just thought, 'What the heck is it?'" Strait guessed the object's span at

about 25 to 30 feet. Because of the darkness, and the object's constant motion, nobody at the scene could guess its height, Strait said.

"When it was gone, it was like it (the light) had been turned off — that thing died away so fast," Strait said.

Witnesses at the scene agreed that flashing lights from Hillsdale Municipal Airport, 3998 State Road, "interfered with the object," Lucille VanHorn said.

Earlier that evening, the Daily News reported, three other witnesses reported three similar objects over their Union Street homes between 7:30 and 8 p.m. that were visible in the northeastern sky for about 10 to 20 minutes, about 100 yards east of the college.

"It's not a bird, a plane or a superman, Batman, spaceman, secret agent or plain old cow. It's a UFO and if you don't know what that is, join the crowd — nobody does," the Daily News' March 22, 1966, story said.

Local opinion split along several different lines, Strait said. "Some thought it was (a genuine sighting), some thought it was tricks, other people thought it was balloons," Strait said.

The Hillsdale incident occurred during a week of sightings in the surrounding Michigan area. Other reports came from Ann Arbor on March 14, Milan on March 16, and

"It was more believable coming from Bud. He was a real down-to-earth guy. He had to have seen something, because he was just so upset about the whole thing."

Marv Shull

Dexter on March 20.

There are no photographs of the Hillsdale sighting, and records of it do not exist in Hillsdale County Sheriff's Department files, detective Sam Ramey said. That's because the department, which had just two deputies at the time, lacked a formal recordkeeping system, Ramey said.

The same thing holds true for Hillsdale City Police files, Hillsdale public safety director Chris Gutowski said.

Daily News stories from the week of March 21 to 26, 1966, are kept on microfilm at the Mitchell Public Library.

Strait believes that 1960s technology was probably insufficient to capture a good picture. "Cameras were pretty bulky then. All we had was a Polaroid (for crime scenes), and what good is that? You would have needed a shutter speed from today (to get the right picture)," he said.

Marv Shull, 60, was an assistant at the Hillsdale funeral home, where he works today. He spoke with the Daily News on Wednesday.

When Shull came to work on Tuesday, March 22, 1966, he found VanHorn handling ABC, CBS and NBC radio and TV reporters on all three lines. Numerous national papers, including The New York Times, also sent reporters to Hillsdale, Shull said earlier this week.

"It was more believable coming from Bud. He was a real down-to-earth guy. He had to have seen

something, because he was just so upset about the whole thing," Shull said.

In response, the U.S. Air Force sent the late Dr. J. Allen Hynek to Hillsdale. Hynek was a Northwestern University astrophysics professor who also headed the Air Force's "Project Blue Book," which worked to explain UFO sightings by scientific means, as the Learning Channel noted. Hynek promised a solution in 24 hours.

In a March 25, 1966, press conference in Detroit, Hynek said the sightings were the result of swamp gases which had been released during spring thaws. He also speculated local youths had been playing pranks with flares, claiming that such evidence had been found near the site.

Strait has his own theories. Officers found no evidence of flares at the site, he said. "I don't know how they could have gotten that high — it was a whitish light. It wasn't red, like a flare would be. Personally, I think it's something that the government's been messing with, that we don't even know about," he said.

The official explanations did not satisfy Bud VanHorn, especially since Hynek never got out of his car to examine the site, Lucille VanHorn said. "He (her husband) felt that it was something unidentifiable — where it came from, he didn't know," she said.

Shull recalls VanHorn being especially upset by Hynek's press conference. "He (Hynek) was practically calling Bud a liar, and it made Bud mad," Shull said.

VanHorn said the March temperatures were too cold to allow swamp gas, telling the Daily News that Hynek's investigation "made me and the others involved look rather stupid."

Hynek told VanHorn in a March 29, 1966, letter: "...I think it would be most unfortunate if you and I found ourselves in opposite camps. I'm sure that we both want to know what the actual facts are."

Without a clear-cut explanation behind it, the subject eventually died down after two to three weeks, Strait said.

"We (the officers) got so much scrap (from people), we just quit talking about it," Strait said.

Bud VanHorn died in 1989, still believing that the Hillsdale sighting had not been an ordinary matter, his wife said.



T H E M F I L E S

Minnesotans enjoy a reputation as a rock-steady people of no-nonsense traditions. Yet going back as far as 1897 they have been reporting things like strange lights in the sky and weird circles on the ground. What explains Minnesota's long list of alleged encounters with UFOs?

Star Tribune Illustration by Eddie Thomas

By Roger Pinckney

Northwestern Minnesota is severe and beautiful country. It is still pioneer country, without the luxury of fantasy, high art or popular delusion.

Bobby Hanson is heir to all this. A bachelor living out on a Becker County farmstead. A no-nonsense, 40-hour-week, regular kind of guy who's spent 30 years bending and shearing metal for heating system ductwork. But Bobby Hanson is a regular guy no longer.

This past Feb. 20, his life was changed forever. That night, Hanson saw his first UFO. He sincerely hopes it will be his last.

It was a little after 7, and Bobby was coming home from Saturday supper at his mother's. He looked from his living room window and saw broad beams of light rising from the timbered hills to the north. His neighbor had a collection of derelict farm machinery parked in a hollow there, and Bobby assumed someone was down there, robbing a wheel, a belt, perhaps a bearing.

But then the lights rose above the trees and Hanson saw something he wishes he had not. "It was twice as big as a semi," he recalls. "At first I thought helicopter. But it was too big, and it didn't make a sound."

He rushed outside. The thing moved silently northwest, closer now, not more than a quarter mile away. And then Hanson saw something he hesitates to talk about: a figure standing in an open door.

"There was a red light all around it. It had on coveralls — some kind of flight suit. And a helmet that came all the way down to its chin." The figure was playing a light into the woods below, as if it was looking for something.

Did it see him? Maybe so. The spotlight went off. Silent still, the machine gathered speed, 80, 90 mph. Bobby isn't sure. And then it was gone.

Aliens ate my deer

Hanson called neighbor Jerry Buhr. Buhr has known him for years. He rushed right over. "He was shaking and white as a sheet," Buhr says.

About the same time Bobby Hanson was wrestling with reality, another neighbor — one Craig Orum — was on his way home from his day shift. Orum puzzled over brilliant lights streaming from beyond the hill, but saw no craft.

The hill in question belongs to Charley Dieke. Charley Dieke saw nothing, since his windows face the other direction. A lifelong resident, Charley knows those woods like the back of his hand, remembers stories from old timers about that old bugaboo of UFO hunters — swamp gas.

His wife's grandfather used to flick matches at bubbles rising from the creek. They exploded like .22 shells. Swamp gas or not, Charley Dieke knows rock-steady Bobby Hanson.

"If Bobby says he saw something," Dieke says, "he saw something."

The power company sent a crew out the next day to check on reports of a strange draw on the lines. They found nothing. But then everybody is wondering about the deer.

The woods were full of them this spring. Suddenly, the deer are gone.

So Bobby Hanson joins a long list of his Minnesota neighbors who have seen strange things in the sky.

An honored tradition

The first tale beats the Wright Brothers by six years. The Becker County Record, April 16, 1897: "The much talked about air ship was seen sailing over Detroit Lakes last Wednesday evening about nine o'clock. Red, white, and blue lights were displayed by the navigators of the air as they wended their way to the northwest against a strong head wind. The strange visitor has been seen by many people whose word cannot be doubted. Strange to say, the same lights were seen last night about the same hour, by a number of people who had climbed the courthouse tower for that purpose."

On June 1, 1950, something resembling a gigantic pocket mirror hovered over nearby Ponsford most of the morning — not over the liquor store, as one might presume, but over the Pine Point School, being seen by a Becker County commissioner, five teachers and the entire student body of 150.

Six years later, in December 1956, three Minnesota game wardens got a lesson in the paranormal while waiting in ambush for a notorious deer shiner near Henning. Just before midnight, a thing whizzed out of the east over Paul Krueger, O.B. Olson and Al Schadd. The men grabbed their field glasses and got a good look: round, rotating, with red flames shooting out from its perimeter

emitting an eerie light "like a welding arc."

Respectable denial

In 1970, Al Orsund, the mayor of Pelican Rapids, was readying himself for bed. Near midnight, there came a mighty roar like a tornado's. The yard, the trees, the lake were lit an eerie blue, as bright as lightning, hot like a welding arc. The thing roared overhead, disappeared beyond western hills.

The mayor rushed to the telephone. "Did you see that?" he breathlessly asked his neighbor. The reply was immediate. "No, I did not." There was a pause. "And you didn't, either."

Another denial: Late one August night in 1994, two sheet rockers were buzzed by an unknown object east of Erhard in Otter Tail County. It seemed mechanical, with girders and trusses.

Given the hour and their choice of refreshments, neither wanted to venture comment. Finally, one said, "I didn't see nothing. Did you?"

Perhaps that UFO was headed for Edwards, Minn. Tiny Edwards is a few more miles down County Rd. 3. A Norman Rockwell kind of place — no zip code, but a beer-and-burger joint, bait shop, Lutheran church, farmsteads, a cluster of white clapboard houses.

That's where Dorene Milbeck found her mare cut ear to ear. The veterinarian, laboring with needle and thread, remarked that the incision was clean and bloodless, more precise than he could have done with a scalpel. Dorene went looking for barbed wire, an electric fencer gone berserk. What she found changed her life.

There were two concentric rings — one 18 inches, one 36 inches — cut by a counterclockwise rotation into the pasture sod. About 10 feet from the center were a number of indentations, as if the object had been stabilized by outstretched mechanical arms.

Whatever caused those marks in Milbeck's pasture came back on Aug. 12, Aug. 19, on Aug. 26. When Dorene realized events would be ongoing, she began keeping a journal, taking snapshots. There is now an album of photos and some 30 pages of notes, detailing 24 visitations over the past four years. Some details are consistent — always unseen, always at night, always the same size marks, always a counterclockwise rotation.

(continued on page 9)

(continued from page 8 - STAR TRIBUNE,
Minneapolis, MN - May 2, 1999)

Other details vary. Once the unknown machine bumped an old tire, tried again until it found even footing. Once it landed in a nearby slough, cut down a broad circle of tall grass, flailed and bounced up onto dry ground.

Milbeck dismisses the fanciful or spectacular, continues looking for answers, finds none. A government project gone amok? She has noted changing weather patterns, the phases of the moon, the day of the month and the week. Nothing makes sense. "The only ones who know are the horses," she says.

And the horses, so far, are mum.

Up close and personal

The most bizarre Minnesota close encounter seems right out of a Spielberg movie. On Aug. 27, 1979, patrolling Marshall County Deputy Val Johnson saw a bright light in the middle of Hwy. 220 near Stephen, Minn. A dope-smuggling airplane? An illegal cropduster? Johnson gave chase.

Unknown to Deputy Johnson, other strange things were happening in the neighborhood. A Warren hospital administrator had an intense blue-white light stalk his car. Near Viking, another swooped so low and bright it turned off a farmyard security light.

Johnson and the light met head-on. The sheriff's radio log tells it best: "Get someone out here right away! Something's attacked my car! I heard glass breaking, my brakes locked up! I don't know what the hell has happened!"

Details: Deputy unconscious for 40 minutes, his watch stopped for 14. Windshield smashed, antenna bent, headlight broken, hood dented. Ambulance dispatched, medical treatment for gazing into welding arc. Temporary memory loss, an interview on Good Morning America.

There is continuing widespread belief that the government is up to something out here, since being up to something, these folks say, is the nature of government. The area's proximity to Air Force installations at Minot and Grand Forks gives credence to that suspicion. Wide-open Minnesota spaces, locals claim, would protect against discovery.

Swamp gas, government projects, hallucinations? Bobby Hanson is sure of one thing: Whatever slipped over that timbered hill met three criteria. It was unidentified, it was flying, and it definitely was an object.

— Roger Pinckney is a freelance writer who lives in Pelican Rapids, Minn.

DAILY NEWS, Hillsdale, MI - April 3, 1999

UFO sightings were 'frightening'

By RALPH HEIBUTZKI
Daily News Staff Writer

When a local woman and her mother reported an unidentified flying object over their home 33 years ago, a U.S. Air Force investigator insisted they had seen the spring discharge of swamp gas.

But the objects Susan Pollman saw as a 12-year-old in the northeastern sky on Monday, March 21, 1966, gave her the fright of a lifetime.

"I was playing at the (Hillsdale College) Fieldhouse. It was dusk, and I came running home to tell my mother, that's how it frightening it was. You could see the outline of

three objects, in a formation," Pollman said.

Merrill went outside her home, at 263 Union Street, to see for herself. "It (one object) would go to the left, and then to the right, and the others would follow," Merrill said.

Susan Jones, a neighbor of the Merrills who lived at 276 Union Street, also reported seeing the objects.

Pollman, 45, and her mother, June Merrill, 65, spoke with the Daily News on Friday following last week's story about the sighting that followed their own — when

as part of the Learning Channel's "Alien Invasion Week."

The next morning, on March 22, Bud VanHorn was handling the media on all three phone lines at his funeral home, while the Merrills had the media knocking on their door.

Merrill, an artist, drew a picture for the Daily News. "Somehow, the picture got to New York, and was published in The New York Times, probably because my mother lived in New York at the time," Merrill said.

Like her daughter, Merrill saw three objects, about 20 to 30 feet wide, with a band of light dividing them in the middle. They hovered "just above the tree tops" over Union Street, and moved at extremely high speeds, Merrill said.

"You blinked your eyes, and all of a sudden, it was gone," Merrill said. The finished drawing reminded her of "two saucer plates being pushed together," Merrill said.

Pollmann never talked to any of the college students. When she heard about their sighting, "I was relieved, because I thought, 'There's more people to back up what we're saying,'" Pollmann said.

In response, the U.S. Air Force sent the late Dr. J. Allen Hynek to Hillsdale. Hynek was a Northwestern University astrophysics professor who also headed the Air Force's "Project Blue Book," which tried to explain away UFO sightings using scientific means. Hynek promised a solution in 24 hours.

Like VanHorn, however, Pollmann found Hynek uninterested in what local residents had to say about their experiences. "He was one of the most pompous SOB's I ever met — he made fun of us, he insinuated that we were lying."

In a March 25 news conference in Detroit, Hynek said the sightings were swamp gases which had been released in spring thaws. He also speculated local youths had been playing pranks with flares, claiming such evidence had been found near the site.

Many reporters implied the locals were not smart enough to accurately describe what they had seen, so the family stopped talking to them, Merrill said.

"People called from Indiana, wanting to know if we'd seen little green men, so we had to take the phone off the hook," Merrill said.

The fireball was not observed by the Hanford weather center, but it drew a handful of calls to the Franklin County emergency dispatch center about 9:20 p.m.

Todd McCallister of Kennewick was on Columbia Drive near the Richland Y when the fiery object appeared in the east. "It was traveling very fast," he said. "We only saw it for maybe three to five seconds at most."

He described it as a giant falling star — "massively huge ... magnified by a thousand times."

To submit a report to the National UFO Reporting Center, go to www.ufocenter.com on the Internet.

Reporter Mike Lee can be reached at 582-1542 or via e-mail at mlee@tri-cityherald.com

dormitory residents at Mauck Hall, on Barber Drive, reported an object that appeared to change colors and moved in a circular motion.

March 21, 1966, was a busy night for Hillsdale County's late civil defense director, William "Bud" VanHorn, who owned what is now the VanHorn-Eagle Funeral Home on 40 S. Manning St. He died in 1989.

The Merrills and their neighbors saw objects over Union Street between 7:30 and 8 p.m., followed by the Hillsdale College sighting at 9 p.m.

When the students called again, VanHorn went to the scene, accompanied by seven Hillsdale city police officers, and sheriff's deputies. They observed the object from 10 p.m. till 1:30 a.m. Tuesday morning.

The college sighting has been written about over the years. It was recently featured earlier this month

"It was always at night, never during the day. It never changed, because it was always the same (unknown) ship," Pollmann said.

"You'd look up (in the sky) and say, 'Oh, well, here they are again,'" Merrill said.

Pollmann does not necessarily think the objects came from another galaxy, she said. "From my college courses, I realize the government oppresses a lot of information," Pollmann said.

The Merrills eventually moved north to Eaton Rapids, in Ingham County, when Pollmann turned 15. She has recently returned from Arkansas to care for her aunt, who is 97.

Pollmann hopes that future investigators make a greater effort to check out sightings of the kind that scared her so long ago. "I certainly wouldn't make fun of them — I realize the trauma they can realize from this. We didn't ask to have this happen to us."

Sanity doubted

"About 85 percent" of the town doubting VanHorn's sanity, as well as those of the officers who accompanied him to the college, Pollman said.

"I have a 20-year-old son, and I just told him about this six or seven months ago. When he saw the (recent Daily News) article, he said, 'Why didn't you say something?' We were just put through so much garbage," Pollmann said.

Hugh Nivision, who served as Hillsdale assistant police chief and detective from 1958 to 1966, sympathized with the Merrills' position, he said. He now owns Nivison Security Service Inc., at N. Howell St., and spoke with the Daily News on Friday.

While Nivision also lived on Union Street, he missed the sightings. "I was asleep, and they (the city) didn't call me — I was really mad," Nivision said. As a result, his involvement was limited to taking witnesses' statements.

"I'm in the belief those people saw something, because they came across as sincere. Bud wouldn't make up anything," Nivision said. The official explanation "stunk — they (the investigators) just wanted to get out of town," he added.

The ridicule died when the Merrills stopped giving interviews, but they still saw more mysterious objects over a six-month period in 1966.

Tri-Citians report seeing giant fireball

By Mike Lee
Herald staff writer

A giant fireball flashed over Eastern Washington on Wednesday night, appearing to some to crash somewhere in the farland northeast of the Tri-Cities.

The flaming orange object was seen from Prosser, Kennewick, Yakima, Walla Walla and the Spokane area and was likely part of the Lyrid meteor shower that climaxed Wednesday, said Peter Davenport, director of the National UFO Reporting Center in Seattle. Even the Missoula, Mont., emergency dispatch line was flooded with calls, Davenport said.

"It was a ball of flames," reported Michelle Moore of Kennewick, who was traveling on Interstate 82 near Prosser when she saw the orange streak. "It came down ... it impacted. There was a big flash of blue light."

It came down ... it impacted. There was a big flash of blue light.

Michelle Moore, Kennewick

Based on two reports out of Spokane, Davenport said the meteor appeared "larger than the disk of a full moon" and had "some kind of peculiar green tail behind it."

Descriptions of the light flash mirror those from the night of Jan. 7, 1998, when Tri-Citians reported a ball of fire crashing into the Columbia River near the blue bridge. It was never found.

Typically, meteors burn up by the time they hit the ground and usually are only seen several miles high, meteor experts told the Herald after last year's incident.

Wednesday's sky fire wasn't close enough for the Benton County Sheriff's Department to investigate, said Sgt. Rick Welch.

"The Nephilim were on the earth in those days — and also afterward — when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown."

— GENESIS 6:4

UFO experts explore 3 theories about aliens

Countdown to the MILLENNIUM

The following story is the third in a three-part series on UFOs and religion, part of a larger series of occasional articles focusing on Bible prophecies and other predictions for the end of the millennium.

BY TONY PERRY
FOR THE PATRIOT-NEWS

There are those who believe UFOs carry creatures who have come here to:

- a) protect us from the evil aliens;
- b) teach us a new form of consciousness;
- c) serve us for supper.

According to Alex Heard, author of "Apocalypse Pretty Soon," the idea that UFOs are piloted by gentle space brothers has been around since long before Heaven's Gate.

In his book, Heard, an editor for The New York Times Magazine and a contributing editor for Wired magazine, cites the Unarius Academy of Science, which since 1954 has claimed extraterrestrial beings from Venus want to warn mankind not to build nuclear bombs.

Around the world, Planetary Activation Organizations are preparing for a mass landing of UFOs just after the turn of the century. The aliens are supposed to invite earthlings into a galactic federation of peace.

These believers are seeking a better world, Heard said. They see the aliens bringing a quality of life that has escaped humanity.

At the core of the belief is a narrative that goes like this: The Earth is evil and screwed up, we're going to be punished, things will change, and everyone will feel better, Heard said.

Others hold a decidedly darker view.

Evangelist Chuck Missler regularly lectures that aliens are the offspring of Satan through fallen angels and humans. In radio broadcasts, in books and on his Web site, Missler says such creatures, called Nephilim, dwell in the other planets of the solar system, but come to Earth disguised as benign aliens to deceive mankind.

David Flynn says he won't be deceived.

Flynn, 36, of Helena, Mont., describes himself as just "a student of God's Word," who holds no church title.

But Flynn and his wife, Brenda, maintain a Web site designed to "spread the message of the Gospel" and to counter "the lies of Satan and his minions in extraterrestrial guise."

According to Flynn, these supernatural be-

ings are what the Bible refers to as the powers of the air, and are the angels who aligned themselves with Satan during the rebellion mentioned in Isaiah 14.

"Their primary purpose is well defined by Scripture," Flynn says. "They seek to destroy mankind by leading them away from God and his provision for salvation."

Flynn and Missler say an increase in UFO sightings is to be expected as the world nears the end and Satan works to lead as many humans astray as possible before the Second Coming of Christ.

"This is done by an increase of visual manifestation in the heavens combined with an incredibly powerful lie, which will actually cause men to follow Satan's counterfeit messiah before Jesus Christ returns," Flynn says. "The lie is, 'Satan is God.'"

The connections between fear of demons and fear of aliens are there, even for some of those who look for UFOs.

UFO researcher Doug Brightbill of Harrisburg says a foul smell is associated with alien abductors and with demonic possession.

He says it's no coincidence that those who say they've been abducted report reproductive experiments, and that Genesis 6 depicts fallen angels coming to Earth to breed with humans. The theory is that fallen angels have no eternal souls, and seek to gain them through their offspring.

"We have to remember that the Bible was written when we didn't have technology," Brightbill says. "What was the wheel in the middle of the wheel in Ezekiel? What was the pillar of light by night and of smoke by day that the Israelites followed?"

"I believe in God, but who says how God did things? If you see someone taken up in a fiery chariot, well, that's how you'd describe a space shuttle if you'd never seen one."

Flynn says belief in aliens overlooks the uniqueness of human life, which is that Jesus came to Earth and God made a covenant with mankind. To his knowledge, that didn't happen anywhere else in the universe.

And Flynn isn't alone in that belief.

"I think most people have the view that humans are at the center of God's universe," said Michael D. Silberstein, assistant professor of philosophy at Elizabethtown College. "We also used to think the world was flat and the Earth was the center of the universe."

Weiner says he's also heard people use UFO stories to explain the elaborate visions depicted in the book of Ezekiel.

"I think the writer was sampling some of the flora of the area. That's a much more believable conclusion."

FILLING A VOID

Even if aliens don't exist — if every single sighting and abduction claim could be explained away with natural and man-made events — the very notion of aliens from other planets seems to be serving a purpose, filling a cultural void.

Phil Patton, author of "Dreamland: Travels Inside the Secret World of Roswell and Area 51," says many religions spring from threats, and the parallels between the rise of ufology and the rise of the Cold War are easy to see.

Patton, who grew up in an Air Force family, said he was struck by the connection between those in the area who searched the skies for alien crafts, and those who looked for experimental military planes.

"It was like two religious groups looking at the same star of Bethlehem and drawing different conclusions," he said.

In the 1950s, Patton says, newspaper accounts of UFO sightings often appeared on

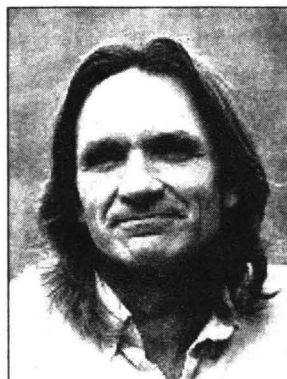
the same pages as stories about mounting East-West tensions. Even the fanciful tales of a government cover-up — and talk of something called the MJ12, a group of 12 Americans chosen by Harry Truman to know the truth about UFOs — contain elements of Cold War fears and biblical symbolism.

But the Cold War ended, which may be stressing people even more.

"We all get used to our enemies as ways in which we define ourselves," Patton says. "There was a post-traumatic stress syndrome to the end of the Cold War. We need to define ourselves, to find a simple explanation to this chaotic world around us. That is what religion has always offered."

Daniel Kealey, associate professor of philosophy at Towson University in Towson, Md., says people may be seeing strange things that have always existed.

"When the Old World view, or the old paradigm, no longer works, when people no longer have faith in it, then all sorts of anomalous phenomenon become noticeable," Kealey said. "We see a lot of this unrest, whether it be Virgin Mary appearances or near-death experiences or the UFO phenomenon. Certainly there's an indication that there seems to be a change, that the way things were won't last. People are grasping for something new."



"When the Old World view or the old paradigm no longer works, when people no longer have faith in it, then all sorts of anomalous phenomenon become noticeable. We see a lot of this unrest, whether it be Virgin Mary appearances or near-death experiences or the UFO phenomenon. . . . People are grasping for something new."



"We all get used to our enemies as ways in which we define ourselves. There was a post-traumatic stress syndrome to the end of the Cold War. We need to define ourselves, to find a simple explanation to this chaotic world around us. That is what religion has always offered."

— PHIL PATTON,
AUTHOR

"If it turned out there are lots and lots of other creatures out there, than we'd have to change our ideas about who we are in relation to God."

Flynn and others say Scriptures bear witness to the singularity of human importance.

"But exactly what the Scriptures say is a matter of interpretation and translation," Silberstein said. "If you asked me, I'd say no, there's no overt passage that's properly interpreted as saying we're 'it.'"

More problematic, however, would be the teaching that humans were created in God's image. The existence of other life forms would suggest that view of God is suspect, Silberstein said.

There are many religious leaders, however, who look at Scriptures and don't see aliens. To them, talk of aliens and demons is just a bit over the top.

"Certainly the great pyramids defy our understanding of ancient engineering, but I don't think UFOs came and set the blocks into place," said Rabbi Daniel Weiner of Temple Ohav Shalom. "I think we would be arrogant to think we're the only ones in the universe. I don't have a completely human-centric view of the universe, but to think there are these aliens running around is a bit much."

Anxiety that the world is quickly changing is just exacerbated by the coming millennium, Rabbi Weiner says.

"I think UFOs are just part and parcel of this feeling of uncertainty," he says. "When people feel uncertain, they grasp onto something that gives them a sense of control."

Kealey and others say the UFO culture shows no signs of waning.

"I saw a very funny postcard the other day," mused Patton, also a contributing editor for Wired magazine and author of the "Public Eye" column in the New York Times. "It had a Renaissance painting of the crucifixion, but the face of Jesus had been replaced with an alien head. And the halo in the original had been turned into a glowing saucer."

Fifty years after Orson Welles terrified radio listeners, ordinary people are buying such sacrilegious items, along with "X-Files" coffee mugs, "Star Wars" posters, and boxer shorts adorned with glow-in-the-dark aliens.

Patton marvels at the relative speed in which the concept of alien life has become part of the cultural landscape.

"These are the most important issues mankind has ever dealt with," he says. "Yet in no time, it has been reduced to a Wal-Mart knickknack."



FOREIGN NEWS

[All British clippings courtesy of Timothy Good, unless otherwise credited.]

NEWS, Richmond, B.C., Canada - April 18, 1999 CR: G. Conway

It's not time to call the *X-Files* quite yet

Steveston residents report seeing UFO in the sky; astronomer says they're seeing the planet Venus

BY CHANTAL BRASSEUR
Special to the News

Several people have recently sighted a bright disk-like object hovering over Richmond in the past three weeks.

The unidentified object, seen hovering over the Western sky since approximately March 31, has been described by some as "an incredibly bright light with a dark disk-like centre and bright sparkles around the core."

Carol Spencer, a counselor who is among those who have reported seeing the object almost every night in the past few weeks, says that she has seen the object behave very differently from night to night.

"There have been times where it hasn't moved," said Spencer, "but I've also seen it change shapes — and very rapidly at times."

According to Spencer, the circular object has transformed itself into a rectangular body and has also shown an ability to flatten itself.

"It shifts in shapes," she

said, "it's difficult to describe but it reminds me of a black river flowing from one form into another."

Another young woman who has reportedly seen the object, said she saw it move and then disappear.

"I watched for quite some time on one particular night and noted that it was around the corner from my house," said the woman who wishes not to be identified, "and after I went inside (my house) for a moment, I returned to find that the object had moved and was now right in front of my home."

Richmond RCMP Sgt. Willy Laurie says no one has officially been reported missing as a result of the recent sightings.

The phone lines have been much busier at the offices of UFO BC however. Graham Conway, president of the organization, says that when it comes to unusual sightings, Richmond is a hot spot of activity.

Drawing upon several years of experience researching UFO sightings, Conway

does not feel the particular rash of phone calls his organization is receiving is the result of UFOs.

"It appears to me that what is being reported resembles a planetary sighting," says Conway. "In particular, I believe Venus is at the root of all this attention."

Conway's interpretation matches those of experts from the National Research Council, the University of British Columbia and the University of Victoria.

Dave Balam, a UVic research associate who spends most of his time conducting research at the NRC's Dominion Astrophysical Observatory on Vancouver Island, says Venus is unusually bright at the moment and it generates so much light that it is able to cut through even the thickest of cloud covers.

"Venus is always a shocker and it will continue to puzzle people for another month," he said, "and that is why it doesn't appear to people to be a star or a planet because they can't see anything else in the sky," he

said. Balam also explained that because the atmosphere is very unstable right now, the way in which light is refracted through the thousands of columns of hot and cold air gives the illusion that the planet is moving.

Jaymie Matthews, an associate professor at UBC's physics and astronomy department agrees with Balam's conclusions.

In fact, he says Venus is often described as something hovering over the Western horizon.

"Another reason that the planet appears to be moving is that there is a great deal of movement in the human eye," Matthews says, "and without a frame of reference in the sky to compare the image against, the brain interprets the image as moving."

Another fact that experts agree on is that the black core of the sighting can be attributed to the shadow cast by the exceedingly bright planet.

"I agree that this series of sightings appears to be Venus," says Conway, "but

having said that, it should also be noted that many of the sightings reported in Richmond are definitely not

Venus and have definite UFO characteristics."

The truth then, is still out there.

NOW, Surrey, B.C., Canada - May 15, 1999

UFOs

Strange lights reported over White Rock

The president of UFO B.C. says the weekend reports add up to a collection of 'good eyewitness stuff.'

tom ZYTARUK
STAFF REPORTER

From a galaxy far, far away?

White Rock appears to have enjoyed a special preview of *Star Wars* this past weekend, as four independent sources are claiming to have seen strange goings-on in the night sky there on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

North Delta resident John Conway, president of UFO B.C., is quite impressed with the number of unexplained sightings.

"I don't understand what's going on," he said. "For some reason there's a lot of activity going on in White Rock. This is such a collection of such good eyewitness stuff."

A man reportedly ran into the Ocean Beach pub about 10 p.m. Friday, "stuttering like mad" that he'd seen a huge blue plasma ball cruising over Semiahmoo Bay.

"He said it was monstrous," said UFO tracker Bill Oliver, of Guildford. "He was rattled big time."

Whatever it was cast such a bright light it lit up the sea beneath and "apparently acted in an intelligent manner," said Conway.

The thing apparently cruised over the bay, around Kwomais Point and "out of sight."

Then on Saturday, the really interesting stuff began. Two young women and a girl, South Surrey residents, were at the McDonald's restaurant on Johnston Road when they claim to have seen a huge boomerang-shaped object with eight lights on front, at about 10 p.m. Shaking with fear, they watched it move "very, very slowly" for about eight seconds before it took off. Conway said the experience left the 11-year-old girl crying and one of the women, 18, so disturbed she slept with her light on the following two nights.

About five minutes after that sighting, two women were standing on White Rock pier when they claim to have seen a wedge-shaped object — a flying triangle — traveling below the tree level. They watched it for about three or four minutes as it headed across the bay, away from White Rock.

Then on Sunday, about 10:15 p.m., Jen Pieschel and her boyfriend Kevin Pearce saw a

wedge-shaped object flying over Highway 99, near the Crescent Road turnoff. They saw it had blue and red flashing lights, and then spotted an amber flash, like a flare, from a second craft.

"We saw something weird," Pieschel said. "We just want to know what it was."

They searched the Internet and found something like what they saw: An F-117A Nighthawk stealth bomber. Only thing is, Stealths can't hover. Or can they?

The sightings this past weekend weren't the first such sightings in the White Rock/South Surrey area, either. Richard Desilets of Aldergrove was near Zero Avenue and Pacific Highway earlier this year when he saw what looked like "two headlights" blinking on and off just above a set of power lines.

"It sounded like a plane, like a turbine motor, but very very quiet," he said. "It just

slowly took off."

In spite of the four sightings this past weekend, Transport Canada, NAVCAN, Vancouver International Airport's Traffic Control tower, Surrey and White Rock RCMP, the weather office, National Defence, and Vancouver Planetarium astronomer David Dodge either hadn't heard of anything unusual, or didn't know what to make of it. Dodge noted, though, that the U.S. Whitby Island naval base is not far away from White Rock.

"If it's a military thing, they don't keep me informed," Dodge said.

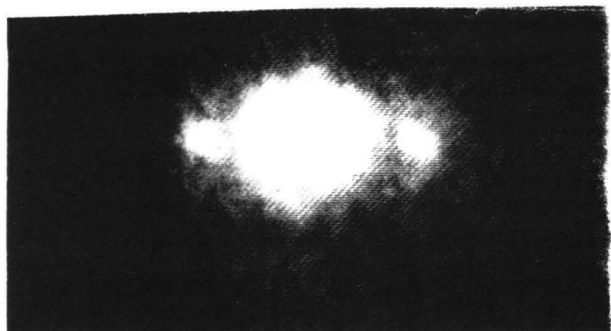
Still, an official at the naval station told the *Now* the wedge-shaped objects aren't theirs.

"They're pretty cool, but we don't have them here," he said.

The UFO B.C. sightings hotline is 878-6511.

CR: G. Conway

BORDER MAIL, Albury, N.S.W., Australia - March 16, 1999 CR: P. Norman



● Please explain: Ms Wilson wants to know the origins of strange light

UFO mystery as night lights spur speculation

By NICK HIGGINS

IT was eight months ago that Ms Denise Wilson first noticed strange lights appearing in the sky through her bedroom window.

Through a pair of binoculars, Ms Wilson, a Lavington resident, observed three stationary pulsing lights, well above the ground somewhere between Monument Hill and Red Light Hill.

Over the next few months, Ms Wilson said she continued to see them between lam and 2am.

The multi-coloured lights did not move but would disappear after several minutes.

"I told friends and workmates and they all said, 'oh, she's a bit loopy'," Ms. Wilson said.

Recently, she was able to record the lights on video, after borrowing a video camera from a



● A video image of the lights she observed

friend.

The video camera had a zoom which enabled Ms Wilson to get a close-up view.

The close encounter left her with a feeling of unease.

"I got scared when I zoomed in and started to shake," Ms Wilson said.

"It's not knowing what it is that bothers me - I'd just love to have it explained."

Albury airport staff were unable to provide an explanation.

Air traffic controller at Albury Airport, Luke Chandler, said there were three red construction warning lights for aircraft along the Nail Can Hill ridge line.

Unlike the lights Ms Wilson saw, the hill lights are about 10m apart and are on from dusk until dawn.

Picture: PETER MERKES

Looking for some signs of life

IN The X Files Fox Mulder is convinced that the truth is out there. He's not the only one. More than half of us believe that alien intelligence exists according to a new survey. But where's the evidence? Chief Features Writer **EMMA ANDREWS** reports.

THE golden-coloured dome shape hovered silently in the night sky above Bellingham in Northumberland. Fascinated and intrigued, Peter Nelson managed to tear himself away from the strange sight in the sky above his garden to rush indoors for his camera. With just seconds to spare, Peter managed to take a quick snap of the glowing outline before the lights suddenly brightened and it sped off to the north. He heard no sound. That was four years ago and Peter's photograph has since been examined by experts worldwide. No-one, however, has been able to come up with an explanation of just what Peter saw that night. Some argued the strange craft was a jet and the patches of red and orange like the hot, glowing gases being emitted from a jet or rocket engine. But American photoanalyst Jeff Sainio concluded this was not the case and further added to the mystery with his declaration that he knew of no conventional object that would generate this image. It sounds like a case for Mulder and Scully but as this intrepid pair are trapped in the world of fiction, it's over to Gloria Dixon from Wideopen, the Director of Investigations for the British UFO Research Association. Ask Gloria how she feels about being compared to flame-haired Scully and her answer is short and to the point. "I hate it," she said. She warms slightly when you tentatively point out that Scully's scientific, analytical, rational approach to the weird and wonderful world of extra-terrestrial activity is not that far removed from her role.

Studies go back years

MODERN research of UFOs is believed to have started with a sighting by pilot Kenneth Arnold in June, 1947, who reported "nine peculiar aircraft" near Mount Rainier, Washington State, USA. But there is evidence that reports may go back to ancient times. The emperor Charlemagne in the year 810 was reported as being thrown from a horse when a strange silver sphere came down from the sky. A few hundred years later Giordano Bruno, a 16th Century Italian monk, dared to put forward

his theories of other worlds - along with believing the heretical suggestion that the Earth orbits the Sun - and in 1600 was burnt at the stake for his troubles. A latter day Giordano Bruno, the former head of Britain's armed forces Lord Hill-Norton, claimed last year that aliens attacked a British nuclear weapons store. But he has always refused to explain what evidence he has for his bizarre allegations. Lord Hill-Norton was the chief of the defence staffs during Lady Thatcher's premiership.

Anyone who thinks that anyone researching UFOs is some sort of crank can think again. Gloria is certainly not some UFO freak with an over-active imagination fuelled by images of little green men from Mars. She is clear thinking, articulate, rational and non-judgemental. "I will investigate any report of any sighting but we will always try our very best to find an explanation," she said. "We don't start off on the understanding that this must be a UFO. Instead we assume there must be some explanation and we are determined to find it. "But there will always be some that remain a mystery." Ever since Orson Welles rocked a nation with his live radio broadcast the War of the Worlds, the world has been fascinated by the prospect of life outside our planet. A flood of TV series like The X Files, Star Trek, Dr Who, Dark Skies, Millennium and films like Mars

Attack, Men In Black and Independence Day have fuelled the public's fascination and stoked over-active imaginations. A recent poll in Focus magazine found more than half of us believe there is intelligent life on other worlds. In many ways aliens and UFOs have become the new religion of today. "As we turn away from God, people are looking to the skies to find something else to believe in to give some sort of spiritual meaning to their lives," said Gloria. "The aliens of today are the angels and demons of yesterday." But is there any real evidence to support the theory that unidentified flying objects are in fact crafts from outer space? No, says Gloria. "There is absolutely no conclusive evidence to support that theory," she said. "But once we have ruled out any possible explanation people make their own interpretations about what they have seen." If Gloria is the North East's Scully, then the Ministry of Defence's Nick Pope would have to be our real life Mulder. Nick, who describes

himself as a sceptic turned believer, has all the enthusiasm of a convert and the boyish enthusiasm of Mulder. When Nick was first appointed as the MoD's UFO investigator, he was slightly bemused by the prospect. "I was determined to prove that there was nothing out there," he said. "I thought there would be an explanation for everything, no matter how strange. But I have been proved wrong." The turning point for Nick was March 30 and 31, 1993, when a wave of UFO sightings was reported across Britain. In once incident two RAF personnel reported seeing a triangle-shaped craft, the size of a jumbo jet, flying directly over their base early one morning. "These were trained military observers," said Nick. "One of them heard a low humming noise and felt vibrations. A thorough investigation has never been able to clear up the mystery and in my mind the only possible explanation is that it was a UFO. We ruled out the possibility of a weather balloon, satellite or unknown jet. "In other cases visual sights have been backed up by radar and RAF jets have been scrambled. And crafts have been identified with speeds and manoeuvrability skills far beyond anything that we have on earth." Nick describes his three year posting as UFO researcher as a life-changing rollercoaster ride of excitement and revelation. He investigated up to 900 sightings in three years, including sights in Newcastle. A geographical plot showed the majority of sightings were over the major cities in the UK, London, Bristol, Birmingham and Newcastle. These were the UFO hotspots. And the most common sighting was of large triangle-shaped crafts like giant slices of pizza giving out a low humming noise. Gloria is still sceptical that these triangular crafts are not new aircraft being tried out in secret by the MoD. And she is a lot more cautious than Nick in her beliefs - but there's one thing they both agree on. These

experiences can change people's lives forever. "It puts everything into perspective," said Nick. "Suddenly a traffic jam or a rain storm doesn't seem quite so important in life's daily routine. "Once you have seen something that convinces you there is something out there, it can change your whole outlook on life." People who report sightings often become far more aware of the planet, far more environmentally friendly and far more determined to make the most of life. "It's a kind of faith," said Gloria. "People seem to find new meaning to their life. Some start writing poetry, some make life-changing decisions. It is amazing to watch." It may be four years since Peter Nelson reported seeing the golden-coloured dome in the skies above Bellingham, but it is a memory that is still vivid in his mind and it is one that has helped him choose a new direction in his life. Peter, who injured his spine in an accident, has now moved the beautiful remote Scottish island of Lewis to a Loch-side cottage where he has started to write a poetry book. And he couldn't be happier. "I am certainly more aware of nature, of the world around me," he said. "Before the sighting, I was a sceptic. If anyone had told me they had seen a UFO I would have laughed in their face. Now I am far more willing to listen to what people have to say, to have faith in something out there. It does change how you feel about life on this earth." ● You can catch up with the latest news on the BUFORA web site on <http://www.bufoa.org.uk/aboutbuf.htm> Anyone who wants to report a sighting can call the UFO hot line on (0891) 12 18 86. Calls cost 39p per minute cheap rate.

A simple explanation clears up most reports

NINETY-FIVE per cent of all sighting reports can be explained. Common explanations include:

- Airplanes: There is no doubt that the largest culprit for sightings is aircraft, both military and civilian, observed at unusual angles and distances sometimes in extreme atmospheric conditions.
- Laser lights in the sky such as from nightclubs.
- Meteors.
- Fireballs.
- Bright stars.
- Planets and

space debris. Venus, in particular, is a major culprit for UFO reports due to it being extremely visible and brilliant at certain times of the year.

- The moon. Some people have wrongly confused the moon with a UFO.
- Weather balloons.
- Airships.
- Birds: In some rare incidents birds have been reported as UFOs. This can occur when the underside of certain birds reflect the sun and can look oval or disc shaped.



BELIEVER: Gloria Dixon from Wideopen investigates UFO sightings from all over the country **PICTURE BY ANDY LAMB**

Danish X-File team to investigate sighting of battleship-sized UFO

DAVID MONTGOMERY
and SIGNE TERKELSEN

A BATTLESHIP-sized object spotted at 28,000ft over the North Sea by a British pilot is to be investigated by Danish UFO experts, it emerged yesterday.

The object was sighted 58 miles off the Danish coast during a private charter flight between Linköping in Sweden, and Humberside.

Shortly after spotting the UFO, which was silver-coloured and pencil thin, with square windows along the fuselage, the cockpit of the BAe 146 jet was immersed in "incandescent light".

Toke Havnstrup, the president of Scandinavian UFO Information, which investigates all unexplained sightings, said yesterday: "This does sound very strange. We would definitely be interested in investigating this sighting."

The captain of the Debonair flight on 3 February joins a list of 3,500 private and commercial pilots from around the world who claim to have seen UFOs.

Graham Birdsall, editor of

UFO Magazine, said: "While it is estimated that only 10 per cent of the general public come forward, I would have thought the percentage for pilots was much lower because of the risk of ridicule and damage to their careers."

"But reports from pilots are not to be scoffed at, and even most cynics agree that these people would not bring their names into the public domain unless they were damn sure about what they had seen."

Mr Birdsall said descriptions of huge craft were not uncommon and for the pilot to have so accurately described the UFO added credibility to the claim.

"These are professional observers, and no matter how long it was visible for, it was enough for the pilot to compare it with, and one by one dismiss, all alternative possibilities," he said.

While sceptics might dismiss the UFO as perhaps nothing more than a clandestine military flight, Mr Birdsall said this was unlikely. "We are always on the lookout for reports which could be tied in with exotic aircraft being tested in remote regions," he said. "But

it's important to stress that the military are very careful to ensure their flights do not impinge on civil aircraft routes.

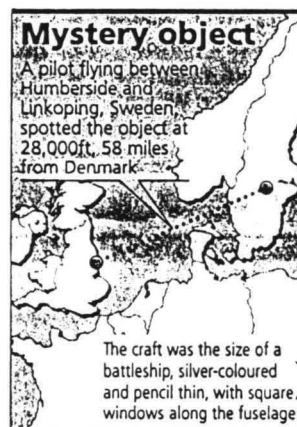
"The times that it does happen are usually well recorded, rather than becoming something that defies all logic."

A spokesman for the Civil Aviation Authority said the sighting had been logged but no further inquiries were being made. He said: "No near miss was reported by the pilot and it was not a safety-threatening incident. It was merely a report of a sighting which merits no further investigation."

When asked if reports of UFOs were common, he said: "They are fairly unusual, but they do happen from time to time."

A spokesman for the Ministry of Defence said the object was outside British air space and radar coverage. He said that any decision on whether an investigation was to be held would be the responsibility of the Danish authorities.

"Our only interest in UFOs is whether they may or may not impact on the integrity of the UK air space," he said. "We do



get reports from the public, but quite honestly there has always been an explanation for it."

A spokesman for Debonair Airlines said the pilot was on holiday and no other details were available on the incident.

Pilot's close encounter with UFO

BY SIMON BIRD

A BRITISH charter jet has had a close encounter with a UFO said to be "the size of a battleship".

The shocked pilot and crew of a Debonair BAe146 plane reported being buzzed by "a long, cylindrical object" as they flew over the North Sea.

Three other pilots have also independently logged seeing the bright object 58 miles off the coast of Denmark.

Last night the Civil Aviation Authority admitted it had received a report of the sighting. It says the crew first became aware of the object after the plane's underside was immersed in "an incandescent light".

A CAA spokeswoman said: "The captain reported seeing an unnatural bright light below his aircraft while flying at 28,000ft. The area below him was illuminated for about 10 seconds by incandescent light and it was certainly not a light from another plane."

"Three other aircraft saw it moving at a high speed or static. However, air traffic control were informed and confirmed there were no other planes in the vicinity. Then, five minutes later, there was a brief radar return from a spot 75 miles away. We believe there

Battleship-sized craft 'buzzed jet'

The Luton-based 96-seater plane was flying executives from Linköping, Sweden, to Humberside airport. A spokesman for Debonair, which runs cut-price flights throughout Europe, said chief executive Franco Mancassola had been informed that a "great red light in the sky" had been spotted near a company plane. At one stage, the report says, the UFO came to an abrupt halt before accelerating past the jet at thousands of miles an hour. A CAA source says the object was tracked by a military radar station in Yorkshire after it entered UK air space.

A spokesman for the 6,000 member British Pilots Association said: "We get reports of this nature from our members but they are few and far between. In the past 10 years or so I would say there have been around six cases of UFO's being sighted."

"Many pilots are reluctant to make such claims because it tends to lay them open to ridicule. So when they do go as far as making a report we do

DAILY MAIL, London, England - April 27, 1999

Riddle of a silver UFO 'the size of a battleship'

CONSPIRACY theorists had a field day yesterday over reports that a UFO 'the size of a battleship' had been spotted 28,000ft above the North Sea. Both the Civil Aviation Authority and the Ministry of Defence confirmed they were aware of the alleged sighting but denied they were investigating it. "This may sound silly," said the CAA, "but it is a matter for the MoD."

The MoD commented: "Our people have been looking at it but we are not investigating." One UFO spotter declared: "Well, they would say that, wouldn't they?"

The mysterious craft - said to be silver-coloured and pencil thin with square windows along the fuselage - was reported by a pilot on a private charter flight between Linköping, in Sweden, and Humberside on February 3.

The pilot, from the Luton-based airline Debonair, was flying a BAe 146 jet off Denmark when the cockpit was immersed in "incandescent light".

A CAA spokesman said 'He saw an unidentified bright light below the aircraft. The area was illuminated for ten seconds.'

"Three other aircraft reported seeing it moving at high speed, or static. As far as we are concerned, the matter is closed."

Debonair refused to name the pilot. 'He is on four days leave,' said a spokesman. 'He definitely saw a big red light.'

expect it to be given credence."

A Ministry of Defence spokesman insisted there were no military aircraft in the area adding: "We saw nothing."

● A councillor in the Stirlingshire village of Bonnybridge has recorded a CD about the thousands of UFO sightings witnessed there in the past decade.

Billy Buchanan plans to send his songs to Roswell in America, scene of the world's most famous UFO incident in 1947.

His accompanying message says: "I believe our two areas have an affinity and I give you greetings from my area to your area. My quest for the truth goes on."

LOOKING BACK

She saw a saucer -- wishes she hadn't

By JOHN DOIG
Star staff writer

It's amazing how coy some people get after they see a flying saucer. In some ways, they're as much of a nuisance as the kooks who cry Unidentified Flying Object every time they spot an obvious weather blimp.

At least that's how Toronto housewife Carol Brown is beginning to feel after her own vain attempt to find witnesses to a "saucer" sighting.

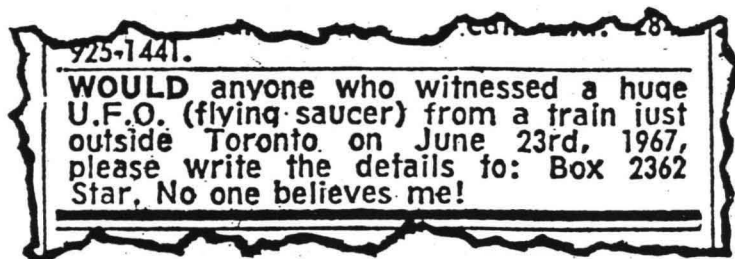
Mrs. Brown, an attractive 32-year-old mother of three, married to a successful businessman, lives in a sumptuous Bayview home and has no apparent urge, or need, to escape from reality.

Her interest in UFOs started 10 years ago, she is a member of two reputable, non-profit United States UFO data-collecting agencies — National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) and Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (APRO)—and she has built up her own, foot-thick private file on the subject.

But until June 23, 1967, Mrs. Brown (that's not her real name), never claimed to actually see a saucer in action.

Now that she has, she almost wishes she didn't.

She swears that several people in her company on a crowded train



AD CAROL BROWN PLACED AFTER SEEING FLYING SAUCER

that June day saw the mysterious thing in the sky, too.

When she told her husband about it later he said, "You were dreaming—you must have fallen asleep."

"It haunted me for months," said Mrs. Brown. Eventually, a month ago, she put an ad in The Star's "Personal" column.

It said: "Would anyone who witnessed huge U.F.O. (flying saucer) from a train just outside Toronto on June 23rd, 1967, please write the details to Box 2362 Star. No one believes me!"

In the next few days Mrs. Brown received six letters. Two advised her to report the sighting to NICAP and APRO. One came from a member of a train crew who gave the exact location, and who saw the object in size and shape much as Mrs. Brown did—but 12 hours earlier.

Another typed a few lines in the

centre of an unsigned piece of paper and apologized that he couldn't help Mrs. Brown because he was inside the saucer looking out.

But what about the people in the CN Rapido bringing Expo visitors back to Toronto that sunny afternoon?

"I was reading 'Worlds in Collision'—it has nothing to do with UFOs—when it happened," Mrs. Brown told The Star.

"I couldn't have been dreaming. The car was so crowded that they could only find me an upright, unadjustable chair. Then there was a buzz of conversation around me, kind of startled, as though people were saying, 'My God.'"

"I glanced out the window and there was this huge wierd thing in the sky, glinting in the sunshine. I guessed it must be 200 ft. long, although I don't know much about measurements."

She sketched The Thing—a fat, cigar shape. (The train crew member said it was "oblong or egg shaped", 100-200 ft. long and that he didn't know of anything that could travel that high that fast.)

Mrs. Brown said: "A lot of people—at least a dozen—moved to the windows and looked out. We saw it for, I suppose, 90 seconds before an embankment got in the way."

"I was like jelly. It shook me up so badly—here I'm supposed to be ready for this kind of thing, cool and collected so I can make an intelligent report, and I didn't even remember my camera on the rack."

"But the sight of the thing was just too much."

Dr. Gordon Patterson, director of the University of Toronto's Institute for Aerospace Studies, has some sympathy for Mrs. Brown.

Patterson has been heading studies, for the last five months, of reported UFO sightings in Canada.

It's been his experience that there's a "good deal of reluctance" to tell, among people who see things in the sky.

"It's the old thing—people don't want to get 'involved.'"

Does he believe in flying saucers?

"Scientists don't have the privilege of believing," says Patterson. "All I can say is that there is no positive proof—either way."

British flying object

'It' stopped the engine, doused lights

By JACK HILL
Special to The Star

SOUTHAMPTON, England—Shaking with fright and unable to believe his own eyes, truck driver Karl Farlow sat transfixed in the cab of his vehicle for two minutes Sunday night watching a 15-foot wide, egg-shaped UFO hovering over the surface of the road ahead.

There, 15 yards in front of him, rock-steady in

the air only 10 feet above the tarmac was this almost unbelievable saucer-shaped thing . . . glowing green with a shallow, whitish colored dome beneath.

Twenty-five-year-old Farlow of Dawley, Shropshire, was not the only person to see it.

On the other side of the UFO (Unidentified Flying Object) forced off the road on to a grassy

shoulder as he approached from the opposite direction sat the driver of a white Jaguar sedan. A woman was with him in the car.

Both drivers sat and stared. The object, noiseless and apparently heatless, rose vertically for 40 feet. Then it glided off easterly, at a "fantastic" speed.

Instantly — without apparent reason—the lights of both vehicles blazed on again.

Minutes earlier as they approached the hovering object from different directions all their lights, the horns, a portable radio in the truck and the gas engine of the Jaguar failed.

The two drivers approached each other cautiously in the dark.

The Jaguar driver asked Farlow "what the bloody hell was that . . . ?"

Farlow drove to the nearest call box and dialled 999 — Britain's emergency services number.

Immediately a Hampshire patrol car rushed to the spot and met Farlow. They heard his story.

They examined the road and found—nothing.

The Jaguar witness had driven off. He did not want to get "involved."

Monday night Hampshire police were trying to contact him to check details of the story.

Declared police constable Roy Nineham, "Mr. Farlow appeared to be quite sober and very frightened."

Another policeman said: "There is no explanation for this. We have no reason to suspect the informant was lying."

On his way back to Shropshire last night with a return load, Farlow told the story in his own words.

"I'm not a drinking man. It was late but I was not a bit tired. It was like nothing on earth."

Space visitors to land soon, group says

MAINZ, West Germany (Reuters)—Flying saucer enthusiasts from 18 countries today called on world governments to work out emergency measures to deal with eventual landing of beings from outer space.

A resolution adopted by the Seventh World Congress on unidentified flying objects here said increased UFO reconnaissance activity suggested a rather unfriendly approach to earth.

The resolution, submitted by the New York-based intercontinental UFO research and analytic network, appealed to all countries and the United Nations to unite and solve the "vital and overdue global problem" of UFO.

The complete lack of international protests against infringements of air space proved that governments knew that UFO came from outer space—but they kept quiet, the resolution claimed.

Canada won't talk about what a Manitoban saw

OTTAWA (CP)—A report arising out of a federal investigation into the sighting of an unidentified flying object at Falcon Lake, Man., this year won't be made public.

"It is not the intent of the Department of National Defence to make public the report of the alleged sighting," Defence Minister Leo Cadieux said in a written Commons reply to questions by Ed Schreyer (NDP, Springfield).

He said the report last spring by Stephen Michalak was investigated by the defence department, the federal health and welfare department and the RCMP.

In May, Michalak claimed he was burned by exhaust gases from one of two flying saucers as he walked 80 miles east of Winnipeg. He said the saucers were about eight feet high and 35 feet long.

There was no joint Canada-U.S. investigation but an independent look was taken by representatives from the Universities of Colorado and Arizona, he said.

Was mysterious stone a grave marker?

That's the translation revealed by Leoti man of stone uncovered in 1919

By DAVID CLOUSTON
The Salina Journal



File photo
Archaeologists say this tablet is a hoax.

the stone tablet as a hoax, Jeffries believes it's a marker for a grave, perhaps several graves. He revealed his translation of the stone Friday night at a fund-raising dinner for the Lincoln County Historical Society's museum.

The stone originally was part of a limestone slab discovered by a farmer near Beverly in 1919. About a foot long, 9 inches wide and 2 inches thick, it features carved hieroglyphic characters framed by a beveled edge. The stone was turned over to the county museum in 1993 by the Kansas Historical Society, whose archaeologists declared it too clean

and distinct to be authentic.

Jeffries, an amateur epigrapher from Leoti, is convinced the artifact was carved by Europeans who traveled the area before the arrival of Columbus to the Americas in 1492.

Text on stone a death chant?

According to Jeffries, this is what the first three lines on the stone says: "Thy song, strength which powers their journey. Above, the one who strengthens all. Oh, thy song! Then follows the last line — 'Wealth, health, youth.'"

The text is a death chant, Jeffries said.

"The song gives them strength for their journey. I believe they're talking about a resurrection. All ancient people had a strong belief in an afterlife."

Jeffries believes the first three lines are written with Iberian-Punic characters, and the last line is Ogham script. Both are part of the Gaelic or Goidelic group of languages belonging to the Celtic subfamily of Indo-European languages. Jeffries had translated much of the stone as far back as 1992, but it wasn't until recently when he deciphered the word "song" that the translation fell together.

"I had some outside help there," he said. An epigrapher from southwestern Colorado who has since died offered the theory that the symbol for song was three letters connected, not a single letter as Jeffries first thought, thus s, n and g. Ancient languages such as these were mostly written without vowels, he said. "I'm really pleased with (the translation)," Jeffries said. "It reads so nice, once I figured out he was talking about death and life again." Jeffries said he wouldn't be surprised to find graves in the location the stone came from. The trouble is, the location wasn't fully recorded.



FORTEANA NEWS

POST, Denver, CO - May 21, 1999 CR: P. Noonan

Idaho anatomy professor stalks legend of Bigfoot

Footprints don't sway skeptics

By Dan Gallagher
The Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — For most people in the Northwest, Bigfoot — or Sasquatch — is a mythical figure, the stuff of hair-raising tales around the campfire.

For Idaho State University anatomy Professor Jeff Meldrum, North America's own great ape is a tantalizing possibility, an endless topic for research and an interesting hook for his students. It also would be proof of the first ape to walk upright.

"I acknowledge there are good questions that need to be answered," he said. "Regardless of those questions, if the physical evidence is there, you can't sweep it under the rug."

Evidence questioned

Meldrum's proof is the dozens of plaster casts he and other Sasquatch enthusiasts have taken from tracks found out in the field.

But footprints still are not enough to convince other academics.

"I have to approach it that an organism which lives that long requires a breeding population of a certain size," said David Hyland, a biology professor at Mercyhurst Archaeological Institute in Erie, Pa. "There is no evidence but footprints and anecdotal accounts. It begs the question of whether they exist."

Meldrum has appeared as a Bigfoot authority on several television documentaries, including "Into the Unknown," narrated by actor James Coburn.

Sasquatch has been part of Indian legends for many generations. The name is the English version of the Salish Tribe's word for wild man, or hairy man. Most modern accounts focus on the Northwest, although they have supposedly been spotted in nearly every state.

Meldrum has spent several years collecting casts of tracks and considering how the foot muscles and bones would act in a primate described as tall as 10 feet and weighing 1,000 pounds.

Footprints fascinate

"A significant number of footprints are not so readily explained away," he said in a December position paper written in cooperation with Richard Greenwell of the International Society of Cryptozoology in Arizona.

"These tracks display anatomical details that a would-be hoaxer would be unlikely to have a knowledge of," Meldrum wrote. "These tracks are not simply enlargements of human feet. Rather, they exhibit distinctions in proportion and anatomy that are consistent with the size and purported gait of the Sasquatch."

Hyland refuses to look at such evidence with anything other than a jaded eye, but he concedes Bigfoot's allure.

"These sorts of legends abound throughout the world," Hyland said. "The evidence of most of them is greatly lacking to nonexistent."

But even if it is a myth, Hyland said, "it still reflects the culture of the Northwest region of this continent. It's fodder for interesting research."

Meldrum and Greenwell did just that several years ago when they camped in northern California's Siskiyou Wilderness, Sasquatch Central for sightings such as the famous 1967 footage of a supposed female filmed by Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin at Bluff Creek.

"We did find footprints there, as well as having a disturbance in camp," Meldrum said. "We found our food stolen and packs rifled without the typical signs associated with bears. The footprints were unmistakably left by a biped."

He also documented a trail of more than 40 footprints — about 13 inches long and 5 inches wide — he encountered along a muddy road adjacent to the Umatilla National Forest near Walla Walla, Wash.

Those footprints show the muscles and bones adjusted to the contours of the road, including marks where the toes slid in the mud, he said.

The foot of such a creature would be much more flexible than the human foot with its high arch and would flatten out the track. It also would be better adapted for steep mountain terrain.

Ancient primate?

Some Bigfoot buffs think it might be Gigantopithecus, an ancient primate whose nearest cousin was the orangutan. Gigantopithecus could have migrated from Asia — home of Yeti — eons ago over the frozen Bering Strait and would have the huge dimensions that the Sasquatch tales describe, Meldrum said.

It also would be a reclusive animal apt to hide in the dense forests of the Northwest and Canada.

Critics argue no one has turned up any Sasquatch bodies or bones. But Meldrum points out there were rumors of mountain gorillas in Africa throughout the 19th century, but it took until 1902 to find them. And it was not until much later that primatologists like Dian Fossey discovered they are largely passive animals.

"Some say it's fine to have monsters over there, but it's less palatable that there might be monsters, or at least an unknown large animal, over here," Meldrum said.

The light way to track an alien

Scientists have a new way of contacting extraterrestrials, says Nicholas Booth

IF ET is trying to contact us, he won't be phoning — he will use the powerful flashlights that are lasers to draw our attention. Like lighthouses on the unpopulated seas of space, these unique flashes of laser light, which astronomers can detect with simple equipment, will soon tell us whether any stars are harbouring advanced civilisations.

That is the startling claim of the American inventor of the laser, Charles Townes, who has long urged his colleagues to look for such tell-tale signs of alien intelligence. All scientific searches to date have involved listening for radio signals from alien civilisations; now a team from the University of California at Berkeley will use a simple, antiquated telescope to try to spot the laser flashes.

At 83, Professor Townes, a Nobel prize-winner, is delighted to be vindicated. "I proposed this idea in the Sixties," he says. "Now a group of astronomers will start to make a search this autumn. I am very pleased."

This attempt is the start of a new era of astronomy. The method is, according to the astronomer in charge, "embarrassingly simple". Embarrassing because it could have been undertaken at any time in the past four decades, but Professor Townes's

notion of looking, rather than listening, was largely ignored.

"If there are aliens sending us messages by laser, we will see them," says Dan Werthimer, the director of Berkeley's Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) programme.

Unlike the aliens in movies, who frequently speak English, the real ones would probably not use Morse code. "They would send very short, powerful pulses of laser light that would be unmistakable. It doesn't require that much energy to do," Dr Werthimer says.

Later this autumn, he and his colleagues will use a 30in telescope — modest by professional standards — at Mount Leuschner, about 20 miles east of Berkeley, to look for laser flashes. Light captured by the telescope will be split into two and fall on to photo-multiplier tubes, which will amplify the signal. If both see unusual flashes at specific wavelengths — lasting perhaps a few billionths of a second, with a power output greater than that of the stars they are looking at — they will have hit the jackpot.

Seeing signals in the two separate halves of the beam means that they could not be artefacts of the detection process.

Lasers are the only way that bursts of light could be sufficiently concentrated. As with the powerful search beams of a lighthouse, they could be directed to specific stars such as our Sun. Lasers work by exciting gas atoms and forcing them to give up their energy in the form of an intense flash of light.

"We could easily send a message into space to other civilisations," Professor Townes says. His Berkeley colleagues agree. According to Dr Werthimer, you could attach a simple laser to an optical telescope and direct it to nearby stars and send messages. "You could do that with a laser that transmits one megawatt," Dr Werthimer says. "That's about the same power as a television station."

But that is far into the future. For the moment, the Berkeley team is starting its own modest search; improbably, this opti-

cal work will cost just \$20,000 (£11,400) a year, a sign of the times for SETI research. Searching for aliens has been criticised by some as a kind of wishful thinking, a subject without a science. And American legislators certainly agree: Nasa's ambitious program of SETI research using radio telescopes was cancelled in 1993.

However, with private funding from supporters such as the science fiction author Arthur C. Clarke and the film director Steven Spielberg, SETI struggles on.

Others have said that finding evidence for alien civilisation will be impossible. A similar thing was said to Professor Townes during the late 1940s after he proposed the forerunner of the laser, the maser (which produces microwave radiation rather than light). As a researcher at Bell Labs in New Jersey, he was a world expert on microwave spectroscopy, the probing of gases using radio waves. He realised that by using molecules to amplify signals, he could generate a powerful source of radiation. After he discussed the method in a scientific journal 50 years ago, "more than one Nobel laureate said it would never work. It was viewed as a crazy, cute idea and there wasn't much to it."

Early one spring morning in 1951, while sitting on a park bench in Washington, Professor Townes had what he calls "divine inspiration" of how to make a maser work and its possible applications. "I recognised that it could be a sensitive amplifier or atomic clock," he says.

Throughout the 1950s, the wavelengths used to probe gases were made progressively shorter — so much so that he could get down to optical wavelengths. Together with his brother-in-law, Arthur Schawlow, he developed the laser. Accordingly, Townes won the Nobel Prize in 1964 (along with two Russians who had independently come across the same principle). Lasers can now be found everywhere, from supermarkets to home CD players to hospitals.

"It comes home to me when I hear of friends who have had their sight restored," Professor Townes says. "To me, it was clear that the most important uses would come from connecting up optics and electronics."

Proof positive comes from the telescope now being used by Dr Werthimer's team (it is normally used to train Berkeley undergraduates). In 1959 — the same year in which a workable maser was developed — two radio astronomers declared that detecting radio signals would be the only way to find aliens. As a result, the scientific community tended to dismiss any other wavelengths that could be used to send messages.

By the mid-1960s, Professor Townes had moved to Berkeley and was working at the Space Science lab. By then, his idea was bolstered by the discovery of naturally existing masers in space. There are vast clouds of gas between the stars which can act as masers. Their constituent molecules are naturally excited to such an extent that they amplify microwaves across the vast firmament of the heavens.

Any sufficiently advanced alien civilisation would be well aware of that and could emulate the process. Professor Townes points out that these clouds have

been emitting intense radiation in all directions, but it was only recently that humanity has acknowledged their existence. "If we'd have found them earlier, then we could have developed the laser sooner," Professor Townes says. "We didn't look. Other civilisations might have taken their cue from natural masers in space."

This autumn, the Berkeley group will systematically look at 2,500 nearby stars. The criterion is fairly simple: they will be Sun-like stars, around which planets like ours — and corresponding civilisations — could have evolved.

All involved agree that the search is a long shot, with truly astronomical odds against it.

But the final word goes to Professor Townes, who insists that, as with the invention of the laser, the discovery of life in space is simply a matter of looking hard enough.

"We don't know what we will find, so we must keep looking."

SCIENCE Q&A

The Boston Globe

Q In searching for extra-terrestrial life, should we be sending light into space and looking for those same transmissions coming back, instead of listening for radio or electric signals?

A As a matter of fact, scientists started looking for bursts of laser light from out there just last October. And they're looking for signals from far away from a spot pretty close by, at the 61-inch optical telescope in Harvard, Mass.

Physicist Paul Horowitz is the principal investigator. For years he's run a search for extra-terrestrial intelligence, one of several such SETI projects, listening for radio signals from outer space. The thinking is that any intelligent life that wants everybody to know they are out there would use radio waves.

But American physicist Charles Townes has persuaded SETI scientists to use light as well, by showing them how bright it can be. A laser at the U.S. Department of Energy's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California can put out a nanosecond (one billionth of a second) burst that outshines our sun. If we have something like that, Townes reasons, civilizations on planets that are billions of years older than ours, which would presumably be more advanced, would have even more powerful light sources. Townes and the SETI folks reason that advanced civilizations might use light instead of radio waves.

Since October, Horowitz's device has detected three dozen events whose electrical signatures are the same as a flash of light. Is that a sign of extraterrestrial intelligence? Astronomer Robert Stefanik, who runs the observatory doing the work, says, "We don't know of any natural phenomenon that creates pulses like this."

REELLED IN BY TED KLEINE

phenomenon is not culture specific, lending even more evidence to the idea that it is not caused by a mass hallucination, since mass hallucinations don't jump cultures very well. The stories also show that the phenomenon is a continuous one which has occurred in the Pacific Northwest for more than 150 years. Bigfoot sighting stories and footprint stories from Eurocentric and indigenous cultures have been written down for the past 150 years, the oral history of the indigenous peoples is much older.

Hair Samples

Purported bigfoot hair samples are being studied, but no one wants to talk about it yet. Rumor has it that results will be announced one day, and that there has been some trouble sequencing the DNA.

Why can't our satellites see any?

They could, it's just that (a) the

satellite images would need to be enlarged to a suitable size and (b) the images would need to be of an area which happened to have a visible bigfoot in it. The cost and effort of doing a large enough survey would be enormous.

How do I know if some "Susquatchas" are around?

A) There are huge barefoot human-like tracks.
B) Every creature in the forest becomes utterly silent.
C) The call of a nightbird is heard during the day, or the call of a daytime bird at night.
D) A powerful, indescribable animal smell is present.
E) A roaring scream, a screaming roar, louder and unlike any other animal, is heard.
F) Trees 4" thick are being snapped in half by a very strong creature that

is apparently just out of your sight.
G) A large creature is hitting large sticks against large trees, again apparently out of your sight.
H) Animals are found hung in trees, heavier and higher than a cougar/mountain lion could carry them.
I) Strange pits or rock-calrns are found in remote places.
J) Trees 4" thick are found broken off, ten feet above the ground.
K) Stumps are found in remote places, ripped out of the ground.
L) One apparently speaks to you in your native language.
M) One helps you when you break your leg in the remote wilderness.

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ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE, Little Rock, AR - May 16, 1999

Mysterious sewage from sky splattering Utah houses

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SALT LAKE CITY — Maybe it's a bird, maybe it's a plane. But it is certainly sewage.

And it's no joke in the Salt Lake Valley, where gobs of thick, raw sewage falling from the sky a dozen times since April 9 have soiled up to seven houses at once.

Neighbors are pointing fingers at aircraft, but the Federal Aviation Administration says commercial jets aren't designed to jettison sewage. A biplane was spotted before one attack, but federal agents said the tip didn't pan out.

Sheriff's deputies are studying "splatter patterns" and firefighters are hosing down houses. Prosecutors have assigned an investigator to the case, and authorities are issuing stern warnings.

"It has never been funny," said Mayor Janice Auger of hard-hit suburban Taylorsville. "The experience is really gross. The smell is terrible. This is a health issue. There's a lot of diseases in fecal matter."

"It is feces, but they can't tell if it's animal or human," sheriff's Capt. Lee Smith said of the first lab tests on the foul emissions.

The initial strikes have spawned crude, ground-launched copycats, and edgy residents are reporting even minor bird droppings on their cars.

Tom Perkins says it would take a "600-pound pigeon with diarrhea" to produce the coverage that prompted his son to ask, "Dad, what's all the mud doing on the house?"

It took 500 gallons of water and 30 gallons of bleach to clean the house, which is 2,000 feet below a flight path where jets glide at 200 mph toward Salt Lake City International Airport.

The aviation administration has all but ruled out jets as a culprit because it says their toilet tanks can be flushed only from an exterior valve.

Any leak would contain a tell-

tale bluish disinfectant, the federal agency and aircraft manufacturers say, and none of the splatterings had a trace of blue.

NEWS, Taos, NM - May 13, 1999 CR: D. Perkins

Strange cattle deaths renew investigation

By Phaedra Greenwood
The Taos News

TRES RITOS RANCH — The headlights of two pickups shone at cross angles through a tangle of branches as three men struggled to load an 1,100-pound dead, and possibly mutilated, cow into the back of a pickup to take to a veterinarian for necropsy.

When the come-a-long power pull failed to haul the carcass up over the tailgate, ranch manager Tom Reed had to go get the bobcat to finish the job.

That was May 4, close to midnight, at the Tres Ritos Ranch five miles north of Questa. The men on the crime scene were investigating officer Gabe Valdez and livestock inspector Gary Mora.

Former state police officer Valdez has been investigating strange animal deaths for over 20 years. He is currently employed by the National Institute of Discovery Science (NIDS) who does the testing and chemical analysis on blood and tissue samples.

Reed said he found the dead cow the afternoon of May 4. She was lying on her left side, next to a fence under a tangle of trees with a large branch across her nose. There was no blood on the ground. The right ear was missing; the left one with a tag seemed to be clipped about half way down, and there was a large hole in the neck, which may or may not have been caused by predators. Bird droppings were observed on the hide, and the up-facing eye had been pecked out. According to Reed, the cow, a 5-year-old Red Angus-Romanola crossbreed, had calved March 29.

Following a complicated protocol, Valdez performed a series of tests on the cow that included skinning back large sections of the hide to inspect it for hemorrhaging under the skin. He discovered some bruising of muscle tissue. When the animal was rolled over, an acrid

chemical smell was released. The necropsy, performed by Dr. Leroy Martinez, showed liver damage and hemorrhaging in the muscle tissue. It will take about a month to obtain test results from NIDS, Valdez said.

On the morning of May 8, Reed discovered a dead and possibly mutilated calf. Reed said, "All the innards were gone — the heart, guts, lungs stomach and sexual organs." The calf was 1 or 2 months old.

Reed said his ranch has lost eight cows in the past 10 years from strange animal deaths on the 3,200-acre spread that he manages for Robert Waltrip, who lives in Texas. Several years ago as he was running calves through the chute to give them their shots, Reed said he noticed that seven or eight of them had the tip of one ear snipped off in a concise way that "looked like a laser cut."

Several of the Tres Ritos cows, one of them full-grown, were found drowned in a nearby stream in six inches of water. "One of the drowned calves had a stone on its head," Reed said. When he burned the carcass of another mutilated cow, he noticed that a ring of rocks appeared around the ashes a few days later. He said, "I had been after some deer poachers. Maybe they were trying to scare me off."

Valdez stressed that it is important to be able to collect tissue samples within 24 hours of the animal's death to get accurate tests. Cattle mutilations seem to be a seasonal thing, more prevalent in the months between early spring and late fall, with very few discovered in winter. They also seem to occur more often on weekends.

If you find an animal inexplicably dead, that you suspect may be "mutilated," keep clear of the area, don't blot out possible clues or handle the animal. Call Valdez as soon as possible at home in Albuquerque, 505-275-5943, or on his pager, 505-857-1717.



JEFF SCHEID / OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Radio announcer Art Bell is shown in May 1998 at his home in Pahrump, Nev. Bell hosts America's most popular overnight radio show.

Broadcast beams down paranormal

Art Bell's radio show parlays UFO fascination into popularity

BY TONY PERRY
FOR THE PATRIOT-NEWS

The caller claims to be a reptilian alien whose sole goal in coming to Earth was to find a new source of food: Humans.

The talk radio host is noticeably annoyed and disgusted by the call, which sounds vaguely like the plot of the 1980s science fiction television show "V." But the host is not without a sense of humor.

"To serve man," he says, referring to an old Twilight Zone episode. "It's a cookbook!"

So goes another moment in the growing phenomenon that is "Coast to Coast with Art Bell." From the relative nowhere of his double-wide trailer in Pahrump, Nev., Bell, 52, holds court over all that is suspicious, wondrous, and paranormal.

Aliens? Conspiracy theories? The imminent end of the world? Crop circles? They've all been the focus of Bell's show, which includes interviews with expert witnesses and callers from around the globe.

Remote viewing, what used to be called ESP, is a reg-

ular topic as are modern-day prophets of anything from the end of the world to the transformation of humans into a higher species.

Time was, Bell's listeners and callers were a small group who barely registered on pop culture radar. His show airs in the wee hours — 1 to 6 a.m. Eastern time.

But Bell's popularity is growing. Five years ago, his show was broadcast on 75 affiliate radio stations. Today, he is heard by 8 million to 10 million people a week on 420 stations, including WHP-AM 580 in Harrisburg and several superstations in Cleveland, Richmond and Windsor, Ont., which can be heard late at night throughout the midstate.

Bell's signals broadcast well into South America, and Steve Burgess, his affiliate supervisor, says there's no way to tell how many millions listen over the Internet.

The talk radio host appeared recently — portraying himself — on the paranoia-driven TV drama "Millennium," further evidence of his becoming. And if that

weren't enough, "Coast to Coast" now claims to be the fourth most popular radio show in the country behind Rush Limbaugh, Dr. Laura Schlessinger and Howard Stern.

For some, "Coast to Coast" and its weekend version, "Dreamland," have become Oddball Rumor Central, fielding tips on spaceships hiding behind the Hale Bopp Comet or mysterious radio signals emanating from the Pegasus constellation.

Religion often plays an important part on Bell's show. Several of his guests have called to make the connection between the rising reports of UFO abductions and their spiritual beliefs. Others say they believe the Earth is going through a period of change that will result in death, destruction, and the physical change of the continents.

Bell calls this process "The Quickening," and, in his book of the same name, he asserts that the rising numbers of natural disasters, heinous crimes such as children killing children, and political and financial upheaval all signal a coming change.

He refuses all interviews these days. In October, he abruptly announced that a personal issue was forcing him to leave the airwaves for good. After several weeks of fans flooding Internet bulletin boards wondering where he had gone and why, Bell just as suddenly announced that his network had helped him to the point where he could return.

Some detractors called it a publicity stunt, a charge Bell denies both on the air and on his Web site, www.artbell.com.

This isn't the first time Bell has had to field criticism. In 1996, several guests on his show talked about the possibility that there was an object — possibly a spacecraft — approaching Earth in the tail of Hale-Bopp. One amateur astronomer described it as a "Saturn-like" object about four times the size of Earth. The next night, another guest said three professional psychics had detected the comet-trailing object and found it to be a metallic object full of aliens.

The next year, 39 members of the

Heaven's Gate religious group committed suicide, claiming Hale-Bopp was just ahead of a spaceship that would take them from Earth as they transcended their bodies. Some people blamed Bell for hyping the comet. He has said he can't be responsible for those deaths.

Yet there is no doubt Bell has influence, and some who work in the paranormal fields fear he could taint them all.

"Once the Hale-Bopp comments were made on the air, everyone believed that everyone who works in the paranormal believes this," laments Bob Hieronemus, a Maryland researcher who hosts a radio talk show in the Baltimore area. Hieronemus is critical of Bell, not just from a competitive standpoint, but because, he says, Bell doesn't do enough serious research.

"Primary researchers are not interested in going on the radio. They don't want their name in lights," he said. Hieronemus was most critical of claims on Bell's show last year, that on Dec. 7, a massive UFO landing would occur.

But on the air, even Bell seems to understand where some of his guests and listeners get their information. On one recent night, he invited anyone claiming to be the Antichrist to call in to the show. The next night, he described it this way:

"Here's what I find disturbing: Obviously a lot of the calls I got last night from people claiming to be the Antichrist were people who had not had their full, proper dose of medicine for the day."

Furthermore, Bell said, the volume of calls was a "comment on the human condition. I'm not sure exactly what the comment says, but it's a comment!"

Bell's critics say he just adds fuel to the flames of paranoia sweeping through the culture. His regular advertisers include a company that makes night vision goggles, a firm that markets emergency food rations and a group that makes a crank-operated radio for the day that the power goes out.

Because his show focuses on the unexplainable, and often the unprovable, it is common for his guests to touch on religion or veer dangerously close to what some would call blasphemy. Among those on the show recently or scheduled in the future are:

■ Author Heather Anne Harder, promoting her book: "Interdimensional Communication: The Art and Science of Talking to Ghosts, Spirits, Angels and Other Dead People."

■ Matthew Alper, whose book "The God Part of the Brain" postulates that God is a creation of humanity, a necessary mythology generated to explain the unexplainable.

■ Larry Arnold, former president of the Harrisburg Strange Phenomena group, and an expert on spontaneous human combustion.

■ Dannon Brinkley, who after two near death experiences, writes books and lectures on spirituality.

■ Benjamin Crème, an author who believes in the Maitreya, the next Buddha, a "World Teacher" who emerged from the Himalayas in 1977 and sporadically appears to people to help us grow spiritually. Crème's Web site says Maitreya does not intend to build a new religion around himself, nor to create followers, but to teach humanity "the art of Self-realization."

■ Maj. Ed Dames, founder of Psi-tech, an institute that trains remote viewers. Dames recently trained his professional psychics on Satan, and claims to have found proof that the devil is working with certain government officials in the Middle East to instigate a war with Israel. Dames also said remote viewing showed him that the Antichrist is alive on Earth, born to a mother who abandoned him in a Dumpster.

■ Joe Firmage, former Silicon Valley wunderkind who abandoned his self-made technology firm this year to uncover what he believes to be the truth about UFOs. Firmage released a book-length treatise on ufology, "The Truth," on his Web site.

■ Elizabeth Clare Prophet, head of the Church Universal and Triumphant, a New Age faith that teaches its followers to become an individualized manifestation of the God Flame.

New solar system, new notions of God

By Karen R. Long
Newhouse News Service

Discovery enlivens theological debate

The possibility that humanity is not alone in the universe has heated up with news of the first solar system outside our own.

Astronomers meeting with theologians at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History rushed to update their slides and reword their presentations. After 11 years of painstaking observations, researchers announced April 15 that they had detected a trio of planets orbiting Upsilon Andromedae, a star similar to our own sun about 44 light years from Earth.

"You can expect the announcement of dozens of new planets over the next several years, gaseous as well as rocky planets," declared Harvard University astrophysicist David Latham, who is running his own search at the Keck Observatory in Hawaii.

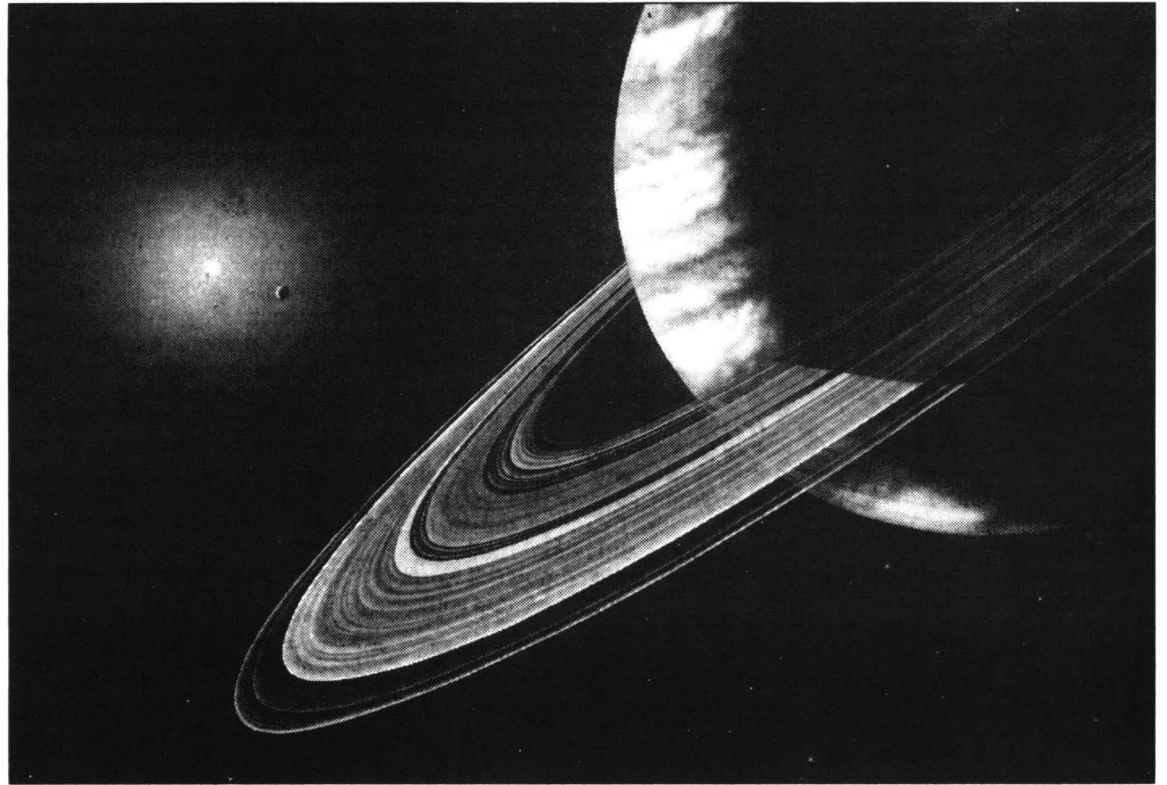
The eclectic crowd of 400 included Noble laureates and Montessori teachers, Mormon scientists and brown-robed monks, a retired Dallas couple who learned of the conference on the Internet and a 14-year-old Ohio boy whose parents thought he might be interested. Also attending was Jill Tarter, director of SETI, the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence project and the model for Jodie Foster's character in the movie "Contact."

Into this mix waded a few theologians, who are starting to work on how the discovery of extraterrestrial life might recast notions of God. What might happen to the three Abrahamic religions, Islam, Judaism and Christianity, with their concepts of "the chosen" and "the special elect" if God turns out to have other children?

"Any encounter would be a chance to broaden our understanding of the divine," said John F. Haught, a theology professor at Georgetown University. "The fact that we have SETI illustrates our cosmic impulse at socialization. It would not be so surprising that other civilizations are centralized and reaching out toward us."

Owen Gingerich, a Harvard University professor of astronomy and a conference organizer, said, "From a perspective of religious humility, we are not in a position to limit God's creativity to us."

Some scientists, such as Harvard University anthropologist Irven DeVore, don't care how many planets the astronomers manage to count. "I personally cannot discern a shred of evidence for a benign, cosmic presence," he said. "I look at evolution and I see indif-



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The discovery of a new solar system, rendered here by an artist, has prompted some theologians to examine how the discovery of extraterrestrial life might recast notions of God.

ference and capriciousness. What kind of God works with a 99.9 percent extinction rate?"

Looking for life

Researchers are eager to find out. Kenneth Nealson, NASA's top astrobiologist, is leading a quartet of Mars missions over the next decade designed to retrieve rocks from the surface and scour them for hints of microbial life.

"My guess is we'll have a boost of knowledge about our solar system equivalent to the Apollo coming back from the moon and putting samples into our hands," he said.

Although SETI rents radio telescopes and systematically listens to portions of the night sky for signals that might indicate an advanced technological society, Nealson suspects the majority of life in the universe would be of a more humble sort. "From the point of view of SETI, Earth would have scored as negative until we developed radio waves about 70 years ago, despite the pyramids and everything else here," Nealson said.

Nevertheless, the drive to keep looking goes very deep.

"Finding a second Genesis in our solar system would greatly strengthen the argument for plentiful life in the universe," Tarter

said. She also thinks it might mean a lot to humanity.

"I always have this Pollyanna hat I wear," she said, "that given independent evolution of life somewhere else, we would have to recognize the differences between ourselves and any others would be vast, and this would trivialize any differences among humans, the tribal differences with which we now have so many difficulties."

But Haught, the Georgetown theologian, was more interested in what advanced extraterrestrial life might have in common with humanity.

"ET would share our cosmological limits, the constraints of physical laws and entropy," Haught said. "If alive and intelligent, ET could share our capacity for religion. Would ET know about fate, suffering, death or guilt? Would there be a possibility of sharing our mutual creation stories?"

Seth Shostak, a SETI scientist, warned the religionists against becoming too cozy with the idea that they can rejigger their theology to make room for extraterrestrial intelligence. He pointed to the 18th-century reaction of the people on the South Sea Islands when Capt. James Cook sailed into their harbors.

"They took one look at his ship, his guns, his wheels and assumed

his religion must be more advanced," Shostak said, "and they threw off their religion for his."

Evolutionary doubts

Some of those least inclined at the three-day Smithsonian conference to sit still for such speculation were the evolutionary biologists.

"It's not at all obvious to me that the evolution of intelligent life is inevitable," said professor Sara Via, a University of Maryland expert in ecological genetics.

"Natural selection is ongoing and blind, a zig-zagging opportunistic course," Harvard's DeVore said. "If you remember only one thing, remember that 99.9 percent of all species have gone extinct. With perhaps 50 billion species over the history of the planet, only one achieved the ability to send radio signals."

Tarter and Shostak wager that the universe is so big there must be more, because there are more stars than grains of sands on all the beaches of Earth. At SETI headquarters in Mountain View, Calif., the team keeps a bottle of chilled champagne on ice.

"Even if the evolution of biological intelligence is very rare," Shostak said, "it can't be zero probability, because we are here."

Dogs' killer a cat, bear, or 'sign from God'?

By LESLIE GROSS
Staff Writer

WOODLEAF — People in this rural Rowan County community kept close watch over their pets and children Thursday after nine dogs were mysteriously killed there in the past two weeks.

All of the dogs were attacked in the middle of the night and suffered deep puncture wounds in their necks. No one knows who or what is responsible.

"We feel like our dog getting

"The whole thing is just strange. We have no clue. I just wish we would come up with something."

"The Predator."

Others are calling it "The Woodleaf Wampus Cat." A wampus is a strange, or monstrous person or thing.

"I keep saying it was a bear," Rucker said. "Others are saying it was someone with a bow and arrow. I think everybody is getting paranoid."

Rowan County Animal Control has set traps to catch the killer, said Clai Martin, animal control supervisor.

CLAI MARTIN
ANIMAL CONTROL SUPERVISOR

killed was a sign from God to protect our kids," said Tammy Summers, whose Rottweiler Kane was killed May 17. "He had to warn us some kind of way to let us know our kids were in danger."

Debra Rucker, who lives on the same street as Summers, is not taking any chances with Destiny, her 10-month-old Rottweiler. As Rucker pulled into her driveway Thursday, Destiny sat close by, in the front passenger seat. Aside from walks, Rucker is keeping Destiny inside the house. She has nicknamed the elusive killer

"The whole thing is just strange," Martin said. "We have no clue. I just wish we would come up with something."

The first attack occurred May 9 and the most recent was on Monday. Animal control officers have not been able to find any tracks or other clues in the area around Joe Summers Road where the animals were found.

An autopsy on the dog killed

Monday showed 11 puncture wounds, one to the heart, and a perfect slit to the dog's trachea, Martin said. No one has witnessed any of the attacks.

One Woodleaf woman, Marsha Renaud, was so scared Wednesday night when a neighbor's pet pig started fighting with her dog Bumpers, that she fatally shot the pig, which she had thought was a wild black boar with tusks.

Renaud thought the animal could have been the dog killer.

"It was just all the rumors that something was in the area," she said. "I thought it could have been a Western Carolina black bear."

Animal control officers have said the animal was a neighbor's pot-bellied pig. Officers have already buried the pig, Renaud said, and she questions why they didn't

first take tests to see whether the animal was the killer. Animal control officials were unavailable for comment.

Woodleaf resident Herbert Geter Sr. said he doesn't blame Renaud for killing the animal.

"If I walked out and saw something in my yard, I might shoot first and ask later," he said.

Until the killer is found, Eric and Tammy Summers won't let their 15-year-old daughter Dekeita and 9-year-old son Cory play in the thicket of trees next to their mobile home. That's where Tammy Summers found Kane dead.

She thinks a wildcat murdered the dogs.

"Everyone is panicking," Eric Summers said. "I hope it's an animal and not a person."

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Nostradamus fever grips Japan

TOKYO (AP) — Every week, millions of Japanese TV viewers tune in to watch a couple of men building a bunker for the end of the world. It's a race against time. They have to finish before July.

As the end of the century nears, Japan has come under an odd spell — the apocalyptic preachings of the 16th century soothsayer Nostradamus.

Bookshelves are lined with Nostradamus spinoffs. Celebrities comment earnestly on his predictions. The Internet is awash with thousands of Japanese Web sites devoted to the French prophet of doom.

"Will mankind be extinguished in 1999?" one typical Web site says. "This is not an issue to be taken lightly."

Nostradamus, whose prophecies made him so famous in his lifetime that he came under the patronage of Catherine de Medicis, has been a household name in Japan for over two decades. And he's always been big during times of crisis.

During the oil shock of the 1970s, a Japanese author penned the best-selling book that first introduced Nostradamus' prophecies to a mass audience in Japan. It sold more than 2 million copies. Another wave of interest in Nostradamus broke out during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, which spawned a cottage industry in World War III predictions. But the current gloom of Japan's recession and jitters about the international situation — from the war in Kosovo to missile tests by North Korea — have created the most virulent Nostradamus boom yet, experts say.

"It's excessive," said Teigo Yoshida, a professor of cultural anthropology at Japan's prestigious Tokyo University. "In times of social uncertainty, these theories gain popularity."

As evidence of Nostradamus' popularity, two dozen books on him or his predictions were published in Japan last year. Eleven more have been released so far this year.

Timing, of course, has given Nostradamus a strong boost.

Nostradamus predicted millennium doom, writing that "the great king of terror will fall from the sky in the seventh month of the year 1999."

Nostradamus' prophecies, which were written in verse and collected in a book called "Centuries," are extremely cryptic and open to a wide range of interpretations.

But that hasn't prevented Nostradamus buffs from making some very precise inferences.

In a book published in February, author Akio Cho even purports to have discovered "through scientific research" the precise hour and date of the great cataclysm: 5 p.m., July 24, 1999. Few people are seriously preparing for the end — to most Japanese, the boom is more an entertaining distraction than anything else.

But a recent poll conducted by Japan's Kokugakuin University found 20 percent of the people responding give some credence to the Nostradamus prophecies. And the trend does have its hardcore believers, and a darker side.

Many of the beliefs espoused by Japan's Aum Shinri Kyo "Supreme Truth" cult — which killed 13 people in a 1995 subway gas attack — appear to have been inspired by Nostradamus' writings.

The cult, which has been increasing in popularity lately even though most of its leaders have been arrested, is preparing for an Armageddon that it claims will come in early September.

