

1971 MIDWEST UFO CONFERENCE

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"UFOs - MYTH AND MYSTERY"

by

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INTRODUCTION

I have had the privilege of speaking about flying saucers ("Flying Saucers are Real") to more than 125 college and professional audiences across the country and in Canada since late 1967. These talks which have always been followed by question and answer sessions and have included many discussions with radio, television, and newspaper reporters have given me a unique opportunity to determine what all kinds of people think about UFOs and related matters. This article summarizes some of the myths and mysteries of UFOs as I see them. Hopefully, it will help lift the "laughter curtain" and the ignorance barrier which have so far tended to prevent meaningful public discussion on this fascinating and important subject. I will stress that my own conclusion is that the earth is being visited by intelligently controlled vehicles from off the earth.

MYTH: "UFO Sightings are Rare"

There are myths and mysteries on both sides of the UFO fence. Almost everyone - believer, nonbeliever, and agnostic seems to believe "Sightings are not common" - the believers say there have been good sightings by respectable people - the nonbelievers shout that the only people who see UFOs are drunks, kooks, profit seekers and other untrustworthy observers. What are the facts?

A Gallup Poll taken in 1966 showed that about 5 million adult Americans believed that they had seen a UFO. An even larger, more detailed (and much less publicized) poll taken for the University of Colorado study on UFOs in 1968 concluded that about 3.75 million adult Americans believe that they have seen UFOs and indicated that the actual number could fall within the range of 1 to 5 million. This gives you some idea of the accuracy of polls in which one is dealing with only a few percent of the small group polled in the first place. A much more recent and more meaningful (to me) poll was conducted by Industrial Research magazine in the winter of 1971. The results help destroy many myths and are presented in their entirety in Table 1.

Table 1. Opinion Poll
(From Industrial Research, April 1971)

Q 1: Do you believe that UFOs exist?			
Definitely	20%	Probably not	23%
Probably	34	Definitely not	8
Undecided	15		
Q 2: Do you know anyone who claims to have seen a UFO?			
Yes	36%	No	64%
Q 3: Have you ever observed a UFO yourself?			
Yes	8%	Perhaps	14%
No	78		
Q 4: Do you think that most people who observe a UFO report their sighting to authorities?			
Most report	15%	Few report	36%
Some report	49		

Q 5: Do you believe that the government has revealed all its information concerning UFOs?

Yes24% No76%

Q 6: In your opinion, were the conclusions of the Condon Report on UFOs definitive?

Yes20% No80%

Q 7: Do you think that the government should support further research to document existence (or non-existence) of UFOs?

Yes49% No51%

Q 8: If you consider the possibility of UFO existence, where do you think they originate?

Outer space32% Communist nations 0.6%
Natural phenomena 27 Undecided35.4
U.S.A.5

(Poll reprinted with permission of Industrial Research Inc., Beverly Shores, Ind. 46301.)

I believe that this poll deserves (and probably will not get) very wide circulation. IR is sent to 90,000 people involved in research and development work across the country. As a scientist I tend to believe that the number of kooks involved ought to be quite small since 27% of its readers have a PhD, another 26% have a masters degree and an additional 44% have a bachelors degree. Incidentally, the magazine is not available on the newstands so the ballot boxes could not have been easily loaded by either side of the opinion conflict. Over 2700 readers responded to the questions presented in the January 1971 issue. Note that 8% of this large group of professional scientists and engineers definitely believe that they have observed a UFO with another 14% indicating that they may have seen one. These figures match extremely well the results of the polls which I personally take after each of my lectures. I have consistently found that 5 to 15% of the people who attend my talks have seen a UFO. Usually the sighters themselves seem surprised that they are not the only ones who have seen one. I also find that only about 1 in 25 of these observers - have officially reported what they have seen. As an interesting sidelight, I have also asked many audiences "How many have had polio?" In every instance there have been fewer victims of polio than there have been UFO observers - though every state has laws about polio inoculations and millions are spent to do something about polio. It would seem that the anguish of the UFO observer who gets laughed at by his friends and the media and is seriously frightened or curious about what he has observed is at least as much of a mental health problem as polio is a medical problem. The myth, then, is that sightings are rare and only by untrustworthy people. The reality is that sightings are common and often by professional, quite trustworthy people.

MYTH: "The percentage of UFO sightings which remain unidentified after investigation is very small (under 3%) and the only reason some sightings haven't been identified is that there wasn't enough information available about the sightings."

This myth has been fostered by both non-believers and the government press releases. It is patently