

place that was accessible yet not too inviting." Along with the press releases announcing the termination of Project BLUE BOOK in December 1969, SAFOI advised base commanders to inform anyone calling with a UFO report that the Air Force was no longer involved in UFO investigation. "If inquirers are concerned about their safety as a result of a UFO, they should contact a law enforcement agency. If they believe the UFO sighting has scientific value, they should contact the nearest university."

They're Still Here!

After following the preceding sorry tale, the cynic might conclude that the facts show that UFOs are real—and it is the Air Force that is imaginary, as the 17 Apr. 1974 McNaught Syndicate cartoon showed. The public has steadily increased its belief and acceptance of UFOs. A Gallup poll taken in 1947 reported that 90 percent of the U.S. public had heard about the flying disks reported over the Northwest earlier that year. Nineteen years later another Gallup poll indicated that more than 96 percent of those polled had heard or read something about flying saucers. This 1966 poll asked respondents whether they thought the disks were real or imaginary and 46 percent said the disks were probably real, 29 percent said they were imaginary, and 25 percent offered no opinion.

In 1966, five percent of those polled claimed to have seen a UFO. Projecting this percentage to the total adult population yielded 5 million Americans who had experienced a UFO sighting. Today their ranks have tripled. A November 1973 Gallup Poll reported that an astonishing 11 percent of the adult population, or more than 15 million Americans, claim to have seen a UFO. This latest survey showed 51 percent now believe these flying objects are real and not just figments of the imagination or hallucinations. In addition, the latest survey shows that 46 percent of all persons interviewed believe that there is intelligent life on other planets. This represents a sharp increase in the percentage with this belief since the 1966 survey, when this figure was 34 percent.

It should be noted that this latest 1973 poll was taken just after, and probably motivated by, a rash of UFO sightings that filled the newspapers in the fall of 1973. One of the most fascinating UFO happenings ever reported was the 11 October experience of two Pascagoula, Miss., shipyard workers, Charles Hickson and Calvin Parker. As they were catfishing on the Pascagoula River just after dusk, a

strange blue light started floating across the water toward them. The men report the light materialized into a cigar-shaped craft that settled down; a door appeared in its side and three wrinkled creatures with pointy ears, mouths without lips, and crab-claw hands floated out.

According to *Newsweek* of 29 November 1973, Parker fainted, but Hickson kept calm. He said that "one of the weird thinglets touched him...and he immediately became weightless." Then the two men floated through the air and over to the spaceship. Hickson later said that he "hollered and cried and that one of the creatures made soft buzzing noises as if to reassure him, while a glass eye as big as a pizza plate fixed to the cabin wall scanned him from head to toe." According to Hickson and Parker, after the "creatures" examined them they were "gently set down again on the pier. The other-worldly captors floated back to the glowing ship, which whirled off into the night."

As soon as the wire services spread the story of this occurrence, the UFOlogists beat a trail to Pascagoula. Although the men were grilled separately, their stories remained parallel and unwaivering. One of the most interested and capable researchers to trek to Mississippi to verify the story was Dr. J. Allen Hynek. He questioned the men while they were under hypnosis which, medical authorities assert, rendered them incapable of lying. They recounted their experience vividly and, Dr. Hynek reported, it was quite obvious from the emotional trauma these men experienced while describing their ordeal, they had experienced something very real. Dr. Hynek carefully avoids endorsing any specific hypothesis regarding the origin of UFOs, interplanetary or terrestrial, but insists it would be foolish to deny there is something going on.

What Can We Do Now?

Now that the burlesque of Project BLUE BOOK has played to its finish, many scientists feel the serious study can begin. It clearly has been established that:

1. There is some phenomena that is worthy of systematic, rigorous study.
2. Available data point to an aspect or domain of the natural world not yet explored by science.
3. The available data require major organization, systematization, and the adoption of a uniform terminology for their description and evaluation.
4. BLUE BOOK and the Condon Report are examples of fruitless efforts because they rejected one or all of the above.

5. Further work of an unbiased character is clearly the next step.

As was true of many other fields of study in their infancy, scientific respectability is won slowly, with comprehensive study possible only after the subject is accorded some measure of acceptance. Even if UFO reports were to cease as of this moment, the data that now lie scattered about, if properly processed, could establish the substantive nature of the UFO phenomenon beyond reasonable doubt. Sophisticated methods of information retrieval, pattern recognition, and significance testing could extract meaning from these data. A second potentially productive approach to the UFO problem would be examination, in depth, of individual multiple-witness cases, particularly those of recent origin. Concentration here should be on cases where a UFO was reported at close range and possibly landed, leaving an earth impression or other physical evidence. A handful of trained investigators with immediate reaction capability could visit the site of the occurrence to reconstruct the circumstances of the reported event. With dedicated study of carefully selected cases and communication of their results, perhaps at national or international meetings, investigators could soon answer the important question: is there a genuine UFO phenomenon that represents something truly new to science?

The general confusion surrounding the subject and the lack of attention by scientists have effectively prevented proper data collection. After more than 20 years of effort by the Air Force and private organizations, there exists only a formidable collection of heterogeneous data, often consisting of little more than discursive, anecdotal accounts. The 12,740 Air Force cases are arranged only chronologically, with no attempt at cross-indexing, and the same is true of the files of many private investigators and organizations. Thus, the first step means starting almost from scratch with data gathering and processing. This may seem to be a most pedestrian approach to an exciting topic, but so far there exists only an airy, unsubstantial structure built on a quicksand foundation of unprocessed, generally incomplete, and qualitative data.

Who Will Do It?

Dr. Hynek recommends that an institute for the study of UFOs, on a continuing basis, be established around a nucleus of interested scientists in this country and abroad. It would sponsor a journal and conduct symposia to encourage com-