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CENTER FOR UFO STUDIES

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1982 — VOLUME 3 NUMBER 4

Professors Join In UFO Study Forum

(The following article appeared in a recent Stanford University publication and is presented here to alert interested UFO researchers to the existence of the new society under the leadership of Peter A. Sturrock, and ASSOCIATE of CUFOS.)

Over 100 professors of North American universities have joined together to form a society which will provide a forum for discussion of such "anomalous" phenomena as parapsychology and unidentified flying objects (UFO's), according to a letter published in *SCIENCE* magazine.

This organization, the Society for Scientific Exploration, is the outcome of some six years of negotiation among a founding committee of 14 scientists. Three are members of the National Academy of Sciences. Bart Bok, professor of astronomy at the University of Arizona, Thomas Gold, professor of astronomy at Cornell, and Roger Shepard, professor of psychology at Stanford.

Members range from Allen Hynek of Northwestern University, one of the more outspoken supporters of UFO research, and Charles Tart of the University of California at Davis, an advocate of studies in parapsychology to staunch skeptics including eight members of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, including its chairman, philosopher Paul Kurtz of the State University of New York at Buffalo, and University of Washington psychologist Ray Hyman.

The first president of the society is Peter A. Sturrock, professor of space science and astrophysics at Stanford. Sturrock has long been interested in the UFO phenomenon.

(Continued on Pg. 3, Col. 2)

(Continued from Pg. 1, Col. 1)

He says that there is no scientific organization that provides an outlet for serious papers on anomalous science.

"If anybody wanted to know facts about the UFO phenomenon he couldn't go to a physics library and find journals covering the subject, couldn't find textbooks written by responsible, well-known people covering it," Sturrock says.

"There's nowhere that you can go for reputable information."

He says that the society will not duplicate the work of the Kurtz committee. "The society is open to all points of view, and it can grow indefinitely. A committee is necessarily limited in size, and members usually have a common viewpoint."

The committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal publishes a journal, usually devoted to debunking claims of paranormal phenomenon like the Bermuda Triangle and "psychic" Uri Geller.)

"The Society will be neutral. Its purpose is to provide a forum in which information can be exchanged and every shade of opinion can be expressed."

"The society includes not just physical scientists and astronomers, but anthropologists, historians, MD's, philosophers, psychologists, and sociologists. We would like to add a few good trial lawyers."

"We also hope to learn from history by reconsidering, for instance, the meteorite controversy. How could the French Academy of the 18th century have saved itself from a historic boo-boo when it decided that meteorites are stones struck by lightning, since 'stones cannot fall from the sky'? How can scientists of the 20th century avoid making a similar mistake?"

"The fact that something sounds crazy does not mean there's nothing to it. If we did not have the theory of relativity to guide us, what is called a 'black hole' would sound absurd."

"Most of our members are completely uncommitted."

Several Stanford scientists are members of the society, including Ronald A. Howard, professor of engineering-economic systems, who is editor of the journal; and Persi Diaconis, professor of statistics and Shepard, who were members of the founding committee; Sidney Hook of the Hoover Institution; John D. Krumboltz, professor of education and psychology; William A. Tiller, professor of materials science and engineering; Walter G. Vincenti, professor of aeronautics and astronautics, and Arthur B.C. Walker Jr., associate professor of applied physics.