

New Witness Debunks Randle/Schmitt/Kaufmann "UFO Impact Site"

The "crashed-saucer impact site" 35 miles north of Roswell, first revealed by Kevin Randle and Don Schmitt in early 1994 in their second book, "The Truth About The UFO Crash At Roswell," based primarily on claims made by their star witness--Frank J. Kaufmann--has been disavowed by Jim McKnight, whose family owned the land and lived nearby in mid-1947. The recent disclosure, in a sworn statement by McKnight, further erodes the credibility of Kaufmann's wild claims (SUN #27/May 1994). In the second R/S book (R/S #2), Kaufmann's wilder claims were attributed to Steve MacKenzie, a pseudonym. (MacKenzie's true identity was revealed in SUN #27.)

In a sworn statement made on Feb. 3, 1997, McKnight notes that the "alleged impact site is located on a part of the ranch that belonged to my aunt and is a little over a mile west of my grandfather's original ranch house....I do not believe that a UFO or anything else crashed at the alleged crash site in 1947 for several reasons. No one in my family had any knowledge of such crash or military retrieval. If a coyote crossed that ranch, my dad or uncle would likely see his tracks....I cannot believe that a convoy of Army trucks and cars could have come and gone without them noticing. If they had seen it, they would have told us about it." (Emphasis added.) McKnight was four years old at the time.

If an Army convoy had been dispatched from Roswell, it would have headed north on highway #285, turned left (west) on what is now Bitterroot Road, and would have passed to within about 200 yards of the McKnight ranch house. This was the route taken by news media (and SUN's editor) on March 25, 1994, when Randle/Schmitt "unveiled" the then-new impact site following a press conference for their new book. At that point, the media transferred to four-wheel-drive vehicles for a very rough, rocky drive to the impact site.

NO ROAD TO (ALLEGED) IMPACT SITE IN 1947

McKnight's affidavit states that "during the 1950s, I rode horseback all over both pastures around the alleged crash site on a number of different occasions." McKnight said he emphasized that he rode horseback "because there were not any roads west from the ranch house [to the alleged impact site]. It was not until the early 1960s that my aunt hired a bulldozer to build a crossing on the Macho [a dry creek that becomes flooded after heavy rains]. (Emphasis added.) In a telephone interview with McKnight, he told SUN that "to get to the alleged impact site, a convoy would have to get across the Macho, which was all but impossible in 1947."

In McKnight's affidavit he said: "In addition to our own ranch, it was customary to exchange labor with our neighbors. We had many discussions and some included the military, their practice bombing ranges and crashed airplanes. We had a practice bombing range on the ranch about 10 miles west of the alleged crash site and one airplane crashed on the ranch. Never, never did the subject of such an event as the Roswell [crashed-saucer] Incident come up for discussion. I know the people who settled in that harsh environment....No amount of military threats would have silenced them, especially when they talked among themselves." [Emphasis added.] McKnight's affidavit concluded that while the "entire Roswell Incident has been of great interest to me and I hope to find the truth some day, I do not have an axe to grind nor a profit to be made from this incident."

TIT FOR TAT

McKnight's affidavit, which was obtained by the Roswell International UFO Museum, might be viewed as the museum's response to Randle's charge that it used "financial inducements" to get Jim Ragsdale to change the location of the (alleged) impact site from the Randle/Schmitt/Kaufmann location 35 miles north of Roswell to another location roughly 55 miles west of Roswell, as first reported in SUN #31 (Jan. 1995). Randle/Schmitt had expressed great confidence in the location of the Randle/Schmitt/Kaufmann (R/S/K) impact site because it seemingly was corroborated by Ragsdale.

In an R/S article in the Jan./Feb. 1994 issue International UFO Reporter published by the Hynek Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS), they wrote: *"Skeptics of UFO crash stories...have clamored for one, firsthand witness to the crash of a nonterrestrial object, with bodies, who would sign an affidavit and whose story checks out. There is now such a witness in the person of Jim Ragsdale, who has lived in Roswell for many years and has been telling his crash story, completely at odds with the [original] press release and Brazel story, since soon after the event. Ragsdale has, indeed, signed an affidavit, and with his public accounting of what he witnessed, the case for Roswell becomes that much stronger."* [Emphasis added.] This affidavit, dated Jan. 27, 1993, had been prepared by Schmitt, based on a tape-recorded interview with Ragsdale. It had been executed by Max Littell, a notary public and Secretary Treasurer of the Roswell International UFO Museum who had accompanied Schmitt on the Ragsdale interview.

R/S could never have imagined that little more than two years later--on April 15, 1995--Ragsdale would sign another affidavit in which he made significant changes from his first affidavit, beyond changing the location of the impact site. For example, in the 1993 affidavit Ragsdale claimed that he and his girl-friend, who were camping out for the night, did not investigate the (alleged) crash of the bright object until the following morning. In the 1995 affidavit, Ragsdale claimed they had gone to investigate the crash in darkness and also returned the next morning. In the 1993 affidavit, Ragsdale said they saw *"a number of smaller bodied beings outside the craft."* But in the 1995 affidavit, Ragsdale reported: *"When we looked into the craft, we saw four bodies of a type we had never seen before."* In the 1993 affidavit, Ragsdale said: *"While observing the scene, I and my companion watched as a military convoy arrived and secured the scene. As a result of the convoy's appearance, we quickly fled the area."* But in the 1995 affidavit, Ragsdale said: *"...we heard what we believed was trucks and heavy equipment coming our way, so we left and were not there when whatever it was arrived."*

Highlights of Ragsdale's financial deal with the Roswell International UFO Museum were revealed in the July 1995 issue of SUN (#34). Under the terms of the memorandum of agreement, written by Littell and dated Sept. 10, 1994, the Roswell museum gained exclusive rights to produce and sell a booklet and video on Ragsdale's tale as well as souvenirs such as T-shirts, with 25% of the gross income going to Ragsdale and 75% to the museum. Under the agreement, *"any designation of the impact site, and all material relating thereto will be designated as 'The Jim Ragsdale incident and site.'"*

FRIEDMAN ENDORSES NEW RAGSDALE SITE WITHOUT ANY INVESTIGATION

Stanton T. Friedman, who boasts of his scientific approach to investigating UFO claims, interviewed Ragsdale once on Sept. 3, 1994, and in July of 1995 watched a recent brief videotaped interview made shortly before Ragsdale's death. Based on this, Friedman offered the following assessment when interviewed for "The Jim Ragsdale Story" videotape sold by the museum: *"Over the years I have developed a kind of approach to things. I learned the hard way that you need to verify. I was impressed with his story....I have no reason to doubt it and certainly there wasn't a profit motive here."* (Emphasis added.) Friedman's views may stem from his animosity toward Randle who has characterized the Friedman-endorsed MJ-12 papers as counterfeit.

BUT JOURNALIST BILL BARRETT INVESTIGATES AND FINDS SERIOUS FLAWS

Albuquerque journalist William P. Barrett spent some time researching the Roswell Incident for an article for the July 15, 1996, issue of Forbes magazine (which was headlined: "Unidentified Flying Dollars") and an article for the Albuquerque newspaper Crosswinds. Barrett decided to interview persons who had lived near the Ragsdale impact site. Following are representative comments as reported by Barrett in his August 1996 article in Crosswinds:

* Dorothy Epps, whose family owned land only one-half mile from the Ragsdale site: *"I'm quite sure we would have heard about it if it were true. It's all a hoax."*

* Bill Edgar, who worked as a farm hand near the Ragsdale site in 1947: *"It never happened. I never heard about saucers or soldiers moving around."*

* Kenny Schear, manager of the nearby Armstrong ranch who arrived in 1955: *"I've talked to all the oldtimers over the years. I think it's the biggest damned joke I've ever heard."*

Barrett learned that none of the above had been interviewed by museum officials. Barrett also interviewed Ragsdale's former wife, Vennie Scott, who divorced him after 40 years of marriage. Although they were married in 1953--only six years after the alleged incident--she said that he had never told her about a crashed saucer, but she said she once heard her husband, while drunk, tell the tale to a friend. Ragsdale's daughter Judy Lott, who is featured in the video and booklet sold by the Roswell museum and whose children will benefit from the royalties, endorses her father's tale.

Effort To Rebut McCoy Letter To Prevent More Roswell Defections

Because a Nov. 8, 1948, letter signed by Col. H.M. McCoy has been a key factor in prompting two leading Roswell researchers--Karl Pflock and Kent Jeffrey--to become crashed-saucer skeptics, the Hynek Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) tries to rebut the McCoy letter in the Spring 1997 issue of its International UFO Reporter (IUR). The lengthy article was authored by Michael D. Swords, a member of the board of directors of CUFOS which has vigorously supported the crashed-UFO hypothesis.

At the time McCoy's Nov. 8, 1948, letter was written he was Chief of the Intelligence Dept. for the USAF's Air Materiel Command (AMC), headed by Lt. Gen. Nathan Twining and located at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base (WPAFB) in Dayton, Ohio. At that time WPAFB housed the largest concentration of USAF technical specialists and laboratories and McCoy's department contained the largest group of technical intelligence experts in the USAF. If debris from an unusual craft had been recovered in New Mexico in mid-1947, it would certainly have been sent to WPAFB for analysis by its technical experts. Swords does not question that Twining, McCoy and Maj. Gen. C.P. Cabell, USAF's Director of Intelligence in the Pentagon--whose Nov. 3, 1948, inquiry prompted McCoy's Nov. 8 reply--had "Top Secret" clearances. However, Swords does question whether McCoy and Cabell had the requisite "need-to-know."

If the unusual characteristics of the debris indicated that it came from an ET craft, this plus the hundreds of UFO-sighting reports in 1947 would have prompted Twining--and Pentagon officials--to suspect that ETs were reconnoitering U.S. defenses preparatory to an attack. Twining would certainly have informed the Pentagon of this concern so it could alert President Truman, and would have recommended a crash program to try to devise possible defenses. Col. McCoy would have been derelict in his duties if he failed to closely monitor the situation and keep Twining informed. Less than six years earlier, Army and Navy commanders at Pearl Harbor had failed to react properly to the possibility of Japanese attack--with disastrous consequences both for the nation and the two commanders.

The Swords IUR article cites the "Estimate of the Situation" report, prepared by McCoy's Air Technical Intelligence Center (ATIC) in the early fall of 1948, which suggested that some UFOs might be ET craft. The report, classified "Top Secret," eventually reached USAF Chief of Staff Gen. Hoyt Vandenberg. Swords says the report "was batted down as unacceptable," and cites as his source Capt. Edward Ruppelt--who would later head the USAF's Project Blue Book effort. In fact, according to Ruppelt's book "The Report On Unidentified Flying Objects" (p. 45): "The general wouldn't buy interplanetary vehicles. The report lacked proof. A group from ATIC went to the Pentagon to bolster their position but had no luck, the Chief of Staff just couldn't be convinced." (Emphasis added.)

Surely if AMC's technical experts had spent more than a year in analyzing the debris from a crashed saucer, they would have much hard data to demonstrate that the material could not possibly have been made on Earth. They could have brought a small sample of the (allegedly) unusual foil to show to Gen. Vandenberg. If even one ET body had been recovered, a few photos would have convinced Vandenberg. Certainly the USAF's Chief of Staff had a "need-to-know." But Swords, having failed to quote Ruppelt accurately, ignores such issues.

Maj. Gen. Cabell Seeks "Conclusive Evidence" To Identify UFOs

On Nov. 3, 1948, following Vandenberg's rejection of the Estimate of the Situation report, Maj. Gen. Cabell--USAF's Director of Intelligence in Washington--wrote to the Commanding General, Air Materiel Command--Lt. Gen. Twining--as follows:

- (1) *By letter dated 30 December 1947 from the Director of Research and Development, Headquarters USAF, your Headquarters was required to establish Project "SIGN." [The project was intended to determine what UFOs were.]*
- (2) *The conclusion appears inescapable that some type of flying object has been observed. Identification and the origin of these objects is not discernible to this Headquarters. It is imperative, therefore, that efforts to determine whether these objects are of domestic or foreign origin must be increased until conclusive evidence is obtained. The needs of national defense require such evidence in order that appropriate countermeasures may be taken. (Emphasis added.)*
- (3) *In addition to the imperative need for evidence to permit countermeasures, is the necessity of informing the public as to the status of the problem. To date there has been too little data to present to the public....Silence on our part will not long be acceptable.*
- (4) *Request immediate information as to your conclusions to date and your recommendations as to the information to be given to the press...*

Col. McCoy's Nov. 8, 1947, Response

Following are the "crashed-saucer-related" highlights of a 2-1/2 page letter signed by Col. McCoy and dated Nov. 8, 1947, which responded to Gen. Cabell's Nov. 3 letter:

"In attempting to arrive at conclusions as to the nature of unidentified flying object incidents in the United States, this command has made a study of approximately 180 such incidents. Data derived from initial reports have been supplemented by further information...from interrogations of other field agencies, and by personal investigation by personnel of this Command in the case of incidents that seem to indicate the possibility of obtaining particularly significant information....Some of the objects sighted have definitely been identified, upon further investigation, as weather or upper air scientific balloons of some type....Some of the objects have been identified as being astro-physical in nature. For example, in daylight sightings, the planet Venus has been reported as a round, silvery object at extremely high altitude... (Emphasis added.)

"Although explanation of many of the incidents can be obtained from the investigations described above, there remains a certain number of reports for which no reasonable everyday explanation is available. So far, no physical evidence of the existence of the unidentified sightings has been obtained....All information that has been made available to this Headquarters indicates that the discs, the cigar shaped objects, and the "balls of light" are not of domestic origin....The possibility that the reported objects are vehicles from another planet has not been ignored. However, tangible evidence to support conclusions about such a possibility are completely lacking...(Emphasis added.)

"There is as yet no conclusive proof that unidentified flying objects, other than those which are known to be balloons, are real aircraft. Although it is obvious that some types of flying objects have been sighted, the exact nature of those objects cannot be established until physical evidence, such as that which would result from a crash, has been obtained..." (Emphasis added.)

Swords Claims That McCoy's Letter Does Not "Negate Roswell"

In Swords' IUR article, he writes: *"It is my opinion that, though interesting, the McCoy letter has nothing to do with the Roswell incident, although it is understandable that people who have not studied the context from which the letter arises might think that it does."* (Emphasis added.) Although Project Sign had been created to try to identify the reportedly mysterious vehicles that were penetrating U.S. airspace, Swords concludes that its analysts were never told about the Roswell crashed saucer recovery. Swords claims that *"Project Sign was set up to conduct, as traditionally as possible, T-2 intelligence gathering and analysis of reported incidents of U.S. (and other) airspace violations."* (Emphasis added.) But he fails to document his claim that Project Sign analysts were instructed to investigate "as traditionally as possible" and IGNORE physical crashed-saucer evidence which could quickly resolve the UFO mystery.

Swords writes: *"Everything that I have read in the available Sign and Pentagon documents seems consistent with a technological problem that was taken seriously, with certain top-secret facts known only to a very few individuals at high levels and in specific locations."* If UFOs, including crashed ones, were classified "Top Secret," Gen. Cabell, as the USAF's Director of Intelligence, and McCoy both had the requisite clearances and need-to-know. Cabell's Nov. 3 letter could have been classified "Top Secret," if its contents so required. Instead of pressing AMC to determine what UFOs were, Cabell would have pressed AMC to develop techniques to discriminate between UFOs which had prosaic explanations and those which were ET craft--to enable the Pentagon to better assess the potential threat and their likely targets.

In the IUR article, Swords asks: *"Would McCoy himself have known? Well, maybe or maybe not. If he did know (as chief of T-2 in July 1947), would he have insisted on inserting that knowledge suddenly into this Project Sign response to Cabell? Hardly."* Swords suspects that McCoy would knowingly have lied to a high-ranking superior officer, risking dismissal from the USAF. Recognizing the irrationality of this hypothesis, Swords comments: *"I think that it's just as easy to imagine that Colonel McCoy was not in on Roswell. Surprising as that might sound, I believe it is defensible."* Swords explains that Roswell debris would have been taken to laboratories located at Wright Field, while McCoy and ATIC were located at Patterson Field. Swords fails to mention that ATIC was only a 10-minute drive away from Wright Field's labs.

Swords' article goes into much detail on the early history of the USAF's investigations into UFOs. But he does not mention the letter of Gen. Twining, dated Sept. 23, 1947, written less than three months after the Roswell incident. Twining's letter, which provided AMC's current opinion of what UFOs might be, was in response to a request from Brig. Gen. George Schulgen, a top USAF intelligence official in the Pentagon. In Twining's letter he cited "the lack of physical evidence in the shape of crash recovered exhibits which would undeniably prove the existence of these objects." It is not surprising that Swords opted not to mention this Twining letter in his IUR article because it would corroborate McCoy's Nov. 8, 1948, statements.

Swords concludes his IUR article as follows: "In summary, the Roswell incident may yet rise or fall, but not on the basis of McCoy's November 8 letter....I find it astounding how often people are willing to grab onto any (often flimsy) item to debunk the case. It is not only the Air Force and Philip Klass-type skeptics who do this, but many allegedly sympathetic ufologists as well." [Emphasis added.]

SWORDS SEEMINGLY PREFERS TO BASE HIS VIEWS OF THE ROSWELL INCIDENT ON WHAT HE CONSIDERS TO BE "LESS FLIMSY" EVIDENCE--THE TALES TOLD BY JIM RAGSDALE AND FRANK KAUFMANN, AND THE NURSE/ET-AUTOPSY TALE OF MORTICIAN GLENN DENNIS.

Words Of Great Wisdom From A "Cosmic Messiah"

"As the old order of the world all around us is collapsing, and as a new order, however embryonic, is evolving, we stand at a point in history of great potentiality. These potentialities include, but are not limited to, the integration of human civilization into an interplanetary civilization; the development of means of communication and travel which will dwarf current human capabilities; and the exploration of a unity in consciousness which transcends both the relative differences amongst ourselves and between various planetary species. It is imperative that those who wish to join in this visionary, and yet practical, endeavor, continue to prepare themselves and their colleagues for further potential [extraterrestrial] contact. Given a correct setting and an adequately motivated and trained group, it is our assessment that the possibility for an [ET] landing and on-board encounter is very high. While the precise timing of this is not known, we can discern that it is relatively near...

"It should be pointed out that [our] goals of establishing working groups of individuals capable of significant Close Encounters of the 5th Kind [i.e., observer-invited contact] has reached its ten year goal point in one and a half years...with vision and perseverance, we can create a new reality, a reality which includes the empowerment of humans to enter into a sustainable relationship with other planetary life forms....Of greatest importance at this time is the evolution of cohesive unified teams which are competent to fully participate in a high level Close Encounter of the 5th Kind, to include a landing and an on-board (and possibly off-planet) experience....To this end [we are] increasingly dedicated to sponsoring extensive training sessions lasting days, and in the future, hopefully weeks so that people will be adequately prepared...we must also appreciate that we are laying the foundation for a future interplanetary unity..." [Emphasis added.]

This cosmic wisdom comes from Dr. Steven M. Greer, International Director of Center for the Study of Extraterrestrial Intelligence (CSETI), who aspires to become the nation's most prominent pro-UFO spokesman. A recent Greer pronouncement: "The time has come for the world to know that we are not alone in this vast universe. The era of excessive secrecy, which is so corrosive to a free and democratic society, must end."

CSETI BARS SUN'S EDITOR FROM ITS WASHINGTON PRESS BRIEFING

To publicize Greer's efforts to get Congress to hold hearings on his charges of government UFO cover-up, CSETI held a "press briefing" at the Westin Hotel in Washington D.C. on April 10. But CSETI officials refused to admit SUN's editor to hear seven witnesses describe their (alleged) UFO encounters while in military service--tales that Greer claims they are eager to tell if Congress holds an open hearing. (MUFON press briefings are open to all media, including SUN.) CSETI spokesmen said that attendance at the press briefing was "only by invitation," and we had not been invited--despite the fact that we had made a modest financial contribution to CSETI last year in response to its fund-raising drive. Furthermore, they would not even allow us to stand in the hall, 20 feet away from the briefing room, and called the hotel security chief to force us to go upstairs to the main hotel lobby.

Several members of Congress and about a dozen Congressional staffers reportedly showed up for a CSETI briefing on April 9. Apollo astronaut Edgar Mitchell, with a long-standing interest in far-out subjects, introduced and praised Greer but admitted he had not himself seen any UFOs. Other speakers included a retired Navy officer who reported once seeing a glowing green object emerge from the ocean. The most startling tale came from a man from Atlanta who claimed he had been kidnapped by the USAF, taken to Area 51 and forced to repair a captured flying saucer. Greer decided that the saucer repairman's tale was a bit too wild to include in the press briefing on April 10. Greer also withheld from the media that he believes he was given crashed UFO-debris by a Los Alamos scientist, which allegedly has been analyzed by a Pentagon scientist and found to exhibit amazing levitation properties.

One Congressional staffer who attended the April 9 briefing offered the following comment: "Typical UFO tales like the hundreds you find in the old Project Blue Book files, with a few that seem inspired by the X-Files TV show." But a young female staffer was quite impressed. One reporter said he found the CSETI briefing "about as interesting and informative as watching a chicken lay an egg." However, he said that Greer "has great charisma, as do all cult leaders."

Roswell Plans Big Bash To Celebrate 50th Anniversary Of "UFO Crash"

Tens of thousands of people are expected to deluge Roswell during its week-long "Roswell UFO Encounter '97" celebration to be held July 1-6. The city's roughly 1,000 hotel rooms have been sold out since February. Other visitors must stay in towns up to 100 miles away and commute daily. The carnival-like festival is slated to include an all-night rock-music concert on July 5th. A two-page feature article on the event in the Mar. 31 issue of U.S. News & World Report quoted mortician Glenn Dennis--who now heads the Roswell International UFO Museum and Research Center--as saying: "It makes the whole UFO phenomenon look real cheap."

The dozen invited conference speakers will cover a wide spectrum of subjects, ranging from Erich von Daniken, who claims "Ancient Astronauts" helped build the pyramids, to Linda Moulton Howe, who promotes the idea that ETs kill and mutilate cattle--possibly because they like to eat their rectums and sex organs. Independence Day (July 4th) lectures, ironically, will focus on tales of UFO abductions by Budd Hopkins, Dr. John E. Mack and Whitley Strieber. Strieber, who is a "frequent flyer of abductees," also will be the featured speaker at the July 4th banquet which will be held in an old hangar at the former Roswell Army Air Field. Only two of the 12 speakers are Roswell crashed-saucer specialists: Donald Schmitt and Stanton Friedman. (The list of speakers says Friedman is "recognized as the most trusted scientific ufologist in North America." SUN would add: "And the most modest.") Roswell researcher Karl Pflock, who has recently publicly renounced his earlier belief that a UFO crashed near Roswell [SUN #43/Jan. 1997] and Kevin Randle, who has challenged the Ragsdale impact site, were not invited to be conference speakers. However, Pflock and Randle will debate on July 2, at 8 p.m., at the UFO Enigma Museum, Roswell's other major museum, operated by John Price.

WHAT REALLY CRASHED NEAR ROSWELL--FREQUENTLY

Those who visit the planetarium on Roswell's Main Street to see the movie "The Great UFO Mystery" will have the opportunity to see debris from "space vehicles" that are known to have crashed near Roswell. The planetarium's name will be unfamiliar to many visitors: Robert H. Goddard--America's rocket pioneer who helped launch the U.S. into the Space Age. In 1930, Goddard moved his rocket lab and test facility from Massachusetts to a much less populated area--a ranch near Roswell. There he could more safely test-fire and fly his experimental rockets which often crashed. SUN hopes that some of those who visit the planetarium to see the UFO movie will take a few minutes to view the reconstructed Goddard machine shop and examine some of his early rockets, including crash debris. SUN suspects that few visitors, eager to see the UFO movie, will even notice a Goddard rocket standing outside the planetarium.

Short Shrift

* A superb commentary on California's UFO cults, authored by Joel Achenbach, was featured in the April 13 edition of The Washington Post. The headline was "ALMOST HEAVEN" and the sub-head read: "Maybe There IS Something Out There, Behind the Comet. No, Not Aliens. Something More Nebulous. Call It Faith." One of Achenbach's more astute observations, after interviewing many UFO cult leaders: "Aliens are angels with a scientific veneer." Because of the tales told by some UFO-abduction gurus, such as Budd Hopkins, SUN would amend Achenbach's comment slightly: "Aliens are angels or demons with a scientific veneer." In the article, Achenbach reports: "In January several cultists, including leader Whiteapple, paid \$3,600 for a computerized telescope with a 10-inch mirror. They used it to look at Comet Hale-Bopp, and search for the 'companion object.'" When they failed to see any UFO, "they returned the telescope to the store and asked for their money back," according to Achenbach.

* Two popular UFO-abduction books were found in the library of the ill-fated Heavens Gate cult, according to Achenbach: "Abduction: Human Encounters With Aliens," by Harvard University's Dr. John Mack, and "Secret Lives" by Temple University professor David Jacobs. SUN Comment: Regrettably the cult's library did not include my book debunking tales of UFO abduction. Its preface concluded with the following caveat: "UFO-Abductions: A Dangerous Game is the story of how the relatively harmless UFO myth has become a dangerous cult. It is a cult that threatens the mental health, perhaps even the life, of those who unwittingly become participants."

* Budd Hopkins Plays Hooky In London: The popular British magazine Fortean Times agreed to the request of Budd Hopkins' publicist that he be added to the list of speakers at the magazine's two-day conference in London, April 19-20. Hopkins was in London to promote the just-published British edition of his new book, "WITNESSED: The True Story of the Brooklyn Bridge UFO Abductions" [SUN #42/Nov. 1996]. Other UFO speakers included: Patrick Huyghe (pronounced "Whee"), Jim Moseley (editor of the popular Saucer Smear newsletter), SUN's editor, and two prominent British UFOlogists: Hilary Evans and Jenny Randles. All of the UFO speakers, plus Dennis Stacy (editor of the MUFON UFO Journal) were also scheduled to participate in a panel discussion on the second day--but Hopkins opted not to attend. A written statement by Hopkins, read by Huyghe, explained why: "Many years ago I resolved never to appear on a TV program, a radio or conference panel with Philip Klass, due to my objections to his behavior with those reporting UFO abduction experiences. Mr. Klass is aware of my policy but perhaps the organizers of this conference are not. I regret that I can not appear on Sunday's discussion panel and hope that this will not cause inconvenience to those attending..." When Huyghe finished reading Hopkins' statement, some members of the audience booed loudly.

* SUN's Editor's Responded: "I find this ironic because when I was invited to speak here I considered focusing my lecture on debunking--rebutting--the now-famous Budd Hopkins / Linda Cortile "beam-me-up-Scotty" case featured in his new book....Shortly, I learned that Hopkins would be here and would be on the panel. So I decided it would be in bad taste for me to sharply criticize his work [in my main talk which immediately followed Hopkins' lecture]....One final comment: I do agree with Budd Hopkins that this case is the most impressive of all UFO-abduction cases. I believe it to be a hoax. But I do not--and I underline NOT--believe that Budd Hopkins is the hoaxer. I believe Hopkins to be the victim." At the conclusion of the friendly one-hour panel discussion, moderator Ian Simmons criticized Hopkins for "lack of courage and conviction to show up and face the music. We'd like to ask him some questions..."

NOTE: Opinions expressed in SUN are those of its Editor--unless otherwise noted--and do not necessarily represent the views of any organization with which he is affiliated--or his spouse. We thank Dr. Gary Posner for help in proofreading.

SKEPTICS UFO NEWSLETTER (SUN) IS PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY. SUBSCRIPTION RATE (SIX ISSUES) IS \$15/YEAR FOR U.S./CANADA. OVERSEAS RATE (AIRMAIL) IS \$20/YEAR. (PLEASE MAKE CHECK/MONEY ORDER PAYABLE TO PHILIP J. KLASS.)