

Well, since I've received a great many inquiries about a new SGJ, I thought I'd gather more information to bring readers up to date on the ufology/Fortean scene.

Putting Out Fires

By now, many of you will have seen the movie FIRE IN THE SKY, which chronicles the story of Travis Walton and his UFO abduction experience in 1975. Even back then, his story generated a great deal of controversy, and the renewed interest has created another phenomenon unto itself.

Just before it was released, I received a phone call from a Paramount Pictures representative, who asked if I wanted any promotional materials and passes to the local premiere. They had got my name and number from their ufology contacts elsewhere in Canada. I took several passes, and called up the motley members of UFOROM and NAICCR in Winnipeg. Our entourage went to the screening, full of eager expectation.

I had spoken to Tracy Torme, the film's producer, several years ago when he was working on other UFO-type projects and was involved in Star Trek episodes. He was quite knowledgeable on the subject, having done a lot of reading about UFOs and the ETH, and I recall sending him some of my writings back then. I had enjoyed his work on INTRUDERS, the abduction TV movie of a few years ago, and I looked forward to his treatment of Walton's experience.

Halfway through FIRE IN THE SKY, some of my companions were rolling their eyes and groaning. During the climax, when Walton was immersed in brown goo, they were getting apopleptic. After the movie, we congregated outside and discussed the film in detail. While we all generally liked the unfolding of the investigation and story, and the setting of the background and personal lives of the witnesses, something went awry during the abduction sequence. Unfortunately, it was that short sequence that made or broke the movie, depending on your opinion.

What was incredible was the number of good reviews the movie received from ufologists, despite the flaws our group felt were overwhelming. In addition, I noted that some skeptics were lamenting that PR for the movie was going to create something akin to mass hysteria, and poison the public's mind. These and other observations prompted me to post the following review in the sci.skeptic INTERNET newsgroup:

>From sci.skeptic Fri Mar 12 14:11:25 1993
From: rutkows@ccu.umanitoba.ca (Chris Rutkowski)
Subject: MIS-Fire in the Sky

I saw FIRE IN THE SKY at a preview last night. There was mixed reaction from the audience.

First of all, the movie does not resemble Walton's book in the least. I thought his ghostwritten version of what he claimed was bizarre enough without Tracy Torme's "artistic licence". If you like movies with lots of gore, shock effects and gallons of brown goo, this is the one for you. Walton's original claim of a sterile, antiseptic alien spaceship and operating room has given way to an interior that attempts to outdo the ALIEN series of flicks. Membraneous pods, ET-like aliens and slimy honeycombs populate the ship's interior.

Good news for horror buffs: the audience liked that stuff.

What was odd was the complete contrast with the rest of the movie, in which crusty James Garner grilled the other work crew about their apparent murder of Walton. Garner's character, the sheriff, didn't believe a word of the abduction story, and kept trying to trip them up through his investigation. That part of the movie, including the social and public effects of an alleged UFO on a community, was actually very good.

In essence, it's not necessary to debunk the movie because it bears no resemblance to even the original story. I'm amazed that MUFON devoted half of its most recent issue to a preview of the movie, including a new article by Walton. In the movie, APRO investigators, with the group name changed to AFAR, are portrayed as complete geeks with absolutely no scientific credibility. Why a UFO organization would want to be associated with such a portrayal is beyond me.

Walton is said to be rewriting his book, THE WALTON EXPERIENCE, to be released with the movie title. A much more interesting book about the case is Bill Barry's ULTIMATE ENCOUNTER (Pocket Books, 1978), which gives more background and includes skeptics' comments. I doubt if that book will become available again.

In summary, FIRE IN THE SKY is a misfire. Although the investigation process is fairly well detailed and the dynamics of the characters is acceptably portrayed, the movie skews badly after Walton is found, degenerating into a slimy horror flick with no resemblance to the original account, however truthful it was in the first place.

Skeptics don't really need to bother with the movie. It should be forgotten soon.

=====

The review was met with general agreement among the readers of the newsgroup, and some readers of UFO newsgroups also agreed with my view. Others called the movie a "must see" and a "milestone".

There the matter rested, so I thought. As the saying goes: "Everyone is entitled to an opinion, no matter how wrong it is."

But then, I received some email from various people, saying that Tracy Torme wanted to get in touch with me by phone. I passed along my number, thinking that Tracy wanted to have another amiable chat about some aspect of ufology for his next movie.

Not.

Tracy was not pleased with my pan of his work. He had several arguments in particular. First, he disagreed that the movie bore no resemblance to the original story. It was still about Walton, was set in Arizona, and involved an abduction. It was only the comparatively short abduction sequence that strayed from reality. I argued that that short sequence WAS the story, and that was what I meant. I pointed out that my review did praise the investigation and character development parts of the screenplay. But "bore no resemblance"? Indeed.

Tracy further explained that the original screenplay was relatively straight and didn't include the fantasy sequence that ended up in the movie. It seems that Paramount execs got upset when *Intruders* and other similar ventures were promoted, showing classic abduction sequences. They wanted something DIFFERENT, so they rewrote the script ending to include the "goo" scenes.

The "goo" was another sore point. "There's hardly any in the movie at all," Tracy argued, "so how could you call it a 'goo-fest'?"

Well, admittedly, there was no goo in the larger part of the movie, so whitewashing (or, rather, goo-splattering) the entire movie was not accurate. But again, I'd note that it's the effect of the fantasy sequence upon the rest of the film that sticks in peoples minds.

Tracy was upset by a small number in the ufology community who condemned the entire movie because of the flawed abduction sequence. Even Travis Walton seemed to endorse the movie version by noting it portrayed his sense of bewilderment and terror during his experience, even if the visual scenes were embellished. I was one of the handful of purists (for lack of a better word) who thought the scenes detracted from the account.

By the end of our conversation, Tracy had cooled down and I had agreed the problem wasn't his original script. We're still friends (I think). In fact, he called me a few months later when he was getting ready to travel to Saskatchewan for an HBO movie western. He wanted to know if there were any Fortean locations in the filming area. I put him onto the medicine wheels there and the Taber spooklights. He told me that after the western, he'd do a movie about MIBs, then back out of ufology for a while.

I think Tracy has done a good job of working with the material he has been given by myself and others, and he has honestly tried to present UFO information to the public by telling stories about actual cases.

Tracy had his secretary send me a bound book (!) containing a large collection of reviews of *Fire in the Sky*, mostly from newspapers but also from other strange sources. One weird one was a favourable review published in what appears to be a newsletter circulated within the Pentagon. FITS was moderately successful at the box office, so I'm told, but the negative publicity it received from some of the reviews probably squashed its attempt to break records.

For what it's worth, I still think that the Walton screenplay could have been lifted right out of Walton's first book and still sell well. I was quite surprised that virtually no one cited Bill Barry's book on the case, which gave many details and covered some of the skeptics' objections as well. Well, that's showbiz.

Crop Circling Again

Well, it's no secret that cerealogy isn't what it used to be in Britain these days. It seems that the top "experts" such as Meaden and Andrews are very hesitant to proclaim new formations "genuine", because of the predominance of hoaxing.

Nevertheless, there are many cerealogists, particularly some who are doing well on the lecture circuits right now, who are adamantly

refusing to concede their trade is full of problems. Paul Fuller in England is always under attack from someone or another, because of his dogged determination to publicize details that suggest certain formations are actually hoaxes. This, despite the fact that there is ample evidence to show that the various collections of crop circle data jealously guarded by some British groups are absolutely rife with contaminated data. Indeed, if there actually IS a "real" crop circle phenomenon, it is buried hopelessly under a flood of hoaxes and poor investigations.

However, this is not the opinion of all researchers or interested readers. For example, the following post appeared in the alt.alien.vistors newsgroup:

"From: esc@festival.ed.ac.uk (Clinton Dogposture)
Date: Fri, 27 Aug 1993 10:31:02 GMT
I can't believe people are still doing research into crop circles. Are you listening ? They are a hoax. A recent Fortean Times issue documented at least 15 hoaxers and the type of circles they made,size etc. and there were hundreds more groups they could have mentioned. On some 'supernatural' topics I've got an open mind but crop circles - NO NO NO NO !!!"

This cleverly-named debunker obviously had some disagreement with cerealogical endeavours. Certainly an open mind isn't something to have with regards to all fields of study as it would lead to objectivity. He (or she) further described his (or her) position in a response to another poster's reaction:
(spelling and grammatical errors are in the original)

"From: esc@festival.ed.ac.uk (Clinton Dogposture)
Date: Mon, 30 Aug 1993 11:27:12 GMT
Initially all early circles were of very simple nature. When the hoaxers got bored with this they decided to build more and complex patterns and sure the patterns take some planning but nothing that a fairly intelligent person couldn't do. The more complex the formation the more likely it is to be hoaxed. The complete asymmetry in some of the really complex circles is totally unnatural - thats because they are. There have been various programmes, magazine articles that have documented stories of psychics,new-agers or whatever walking in MAN-MADE circles and declaring allsorts of bullshit -some of them even collapsed because of the sheer 'power' they felt."

This last reference might be to some in the ETH camp, who have claimed to have felt "energy" flowing through their bodies when they were inside some formations. Of course, some of these sites were later suspected to be hoaxes, so the subjective sensations may be of less importance than is claimed. Chad Deetken noted that while sleeping overnight in a Canadian crop circle, he was overcome by "bad vibes" and was forced to flee. Gord Kijek of AUFOSG is plagued by severe migraine headaches, brought upon by stress and environmental factors. He

visited the same sites as those who claimed headaches and vibes inside them, but experienced nothing out of the ordinary. The question is, therefore, not what energy is responsible, but why are some people more sensitive to things within crop circles?

Dogposture contuned:

"The scientist who developed the mini vortex hypothesis was set up to examine a circle hoaxed by a television programme and he proclaimed it totally genuine and was prattling on about how the circle was a classic blah blah..

When told it was fake he almost broke down .He has now given up his work and believes firmly that all circles are faked."

"Show me an unexplained crop circle and I'll find you somebody that will give you a perfectly good explanation for it. How can you lean towards something when there is absolutely no proof? I believe you are right when you say that the circles are created by 'some intelligent phenomena of nature' - it's called HUMAN INTELLIGENCE. Surely any sensible human being must at this time go with the explanation which has most evidence supporting it. Why do you believe in something when there's no 'proof'?"

As I and others pointed out in later posts, Meaden has hardly given up. True, he has reconsidered his position on complex formations, but is still quite convinced that a vortex mechanism still exists. Other scientists such as Ohtsuki and Snow are still working on the idea, too. And Paul Devereux is still advocating "earth energy", so the interconnected concept of atmospheric energy vortices is not dead in any sense.

Of course, one must then define "sensible". His opinion on the "show me" approach was interesting. A "perfectly good explanation" for the Alton Barnes formation was that it was a hoax, yet there was no "overwhelming" evidence as to its creator. The ETH camp would point to the woven nature of the crop, the "molecular crystallization" effects and so forth, but neither those who believe all are hoaxes nor those who believe them to be real are talking about the same kind of "perfectly good explanation".

A lengthy rejoinder came from none other than Marshall Dudley, who supplied the following critique:

=====
>From alt.alien.visitors Tue Aug 31 12:22:09 1993
From: mdudley@dwbbbs.nlbbbs.com (Marshall Dudley)

How long have you been researching crop circles? how many have you personally investigated? What scientific team were you are part of? I suspect from your above post that you have looked personally at very few, if any circles.

I spent 5 weeks in England in July and August of 1992 as part of the Argus scientific team investigating crop circles. I can state catagorically that the above comments do not fit the data. In fact, I have not found any rational explanation that, as yet, fits the data.

I was fortunate that the first circles I encountered were all hoaxes, created for the hoaxing competition. So I started out knowing exactly what a hoaxed circle looked like, and what the hoaxers were capable of. The competition which offered about \$6000 as first prize (in pounds of course), had a dozen or so competitors. Several surprises came out of this competition. First it was obvious that the true circle makers did not compete. Some of the things that were to be replicated that show up in real circles simply did not appear or were very crude. Secondly, it was found that several items previously assumed to be not hoaxable were indeed easy for the hoaxers to duplicate. Creating a circle between the tram lines with no sign of entry fell into this category. Also several items which some researchers thought were signs of a hoax, did not show up in the hoaxed circles at all (such as "construction lines"). Another interesting thing is that although no one was able to create a circle with all the specified features, a quite nice pictogram appeared on a hill several miles away the night of the competition, which did contain many of these features. Whoever (or whatever) created this circle could have easily walked away with \$6000 and fame, but did not.

When I saw the first circle which was thought to be genuine, I immediately found two things which seemed to be different than the hoaxed circles. We returned to the hoaxed circles to check and found both things consistently showed up in the unexplained circles, and did not show up at all in any of the hoaxed circles.

The first was the issue of buried grain heads. In all the hoaxed circles in the competition, all the investigated circles we felt sure were hoaxed, and some of the circles we were unsure of, there were buried heads of grain when you lift the top layer of grain. In none of the circles we thought were genuine were there buried heads, except where the heads were on immature and short stalks. The explanation for this is quite simple. In a hoax the wheat (corn if in England) is pushed down between the standing stalks. Then when the standing stalks are pushed down they end up on TOP of the previously lodged crop, burying the heads. In a genuine circle it happens differently. Either the crop goes down backwards (pulled down over previously flattened crop) or it all goes down at the same time. This results in all the heads laying on top of the stalks, with no heads buried except for the few on immature short stalks. Absolutely NONE of the hoaxed circles showed this very consistent characteristic of genuine circles.

The second thing found unique with the genuine circles was that the stalks are bent to follow the flow. Thus a circle (or actually a swirl) is smooth. In ALL the hoaxed circles from the competition the crop was straight, but laid in a polygon approximating a circle or swirl. This characteristic continued in the genuine circles until later in the season when the crop became brittle and begun breaking.

Several things that Stanly Morcom has found also differentiate the hoaxes from the genuine. One is that of defect amplification. If you look for standing stalks or a group of standing stalks in a circle you will find they virtually always are associated with some type of defect in the wheat. A missing drill line can result in a series of standing stalks on the "upwind" side of the missing line. A group of standing stalks will surround a patch where no wheat grew (usually from a fertilizer spill).

Discontinuities in the wheat result in what appears to be a change from a laminar flow to chaotic flow characteristics of whatever force pushes the wheat down. Although these were consistently found in genuine circles, they were never found in ANY of the known hoaxed circles. Finding defects in the distribution density of standing wheat is difficult in broad daylight, and virtually impossible at night.

[Editor's note: Dudley uses the word "genuine" a bit liberally. While even he in an upcoming paragraph acknowledges that some circles are hoaxes, he, like some others, insists that he can tell the difference between a "real" circle and a "fake" one. This may or may not be true, depending on who you listen to.]

Also the East field of Alton Barnes was being watched all night long by over a dozen "crop watchers", and the field was being walked by one individual. One watcher was using an infrared nightscope, which could spot rabbits in the field on moonless nights. It was being photographed every 10 minutes with 10 minute exposures all night. During this time the huge "snail" formation formed. The field walker had walked through the area where the snail was, and found nothing only 10 or 15 minutes before dawn, only to be amazed by the formation when the sun came up. Nothing was seen by anyone, and nothing unusual showed up on the film or the sniperscope.

One formation (the Milk Hill #2 also known as Gods's telephone), which I have a video tape of our team being the first in was under watch by about 30-40 people who were staying the night as part of Steven Greer's CSETI experiment. They reported seeing an orange ball floating over this field just before dawn in what appears to be exactly the same spot where the formation was later found. This formation is especially intriguing because it started with what was undeniably normal wind generated lodging, which then went on out and swirled two circles connected by a straight run. Both circles were clockwise, and the shaft between them had wheat from each circle coming into it, and piling up where they ran together. The formation has construction lines, making any natural explanation extremely difficult. The crop was bent over at about 6 inches off the ground, and there was no sign of foot prints or any damage. I have a video showing that the first person into the formation destroyed it, since the wheat, and entire formation was about 6" off the ground. One walk through the formation left a trail like walking on new fallen snow. This as well as the circle being formed at exactly the same time, and as an extension of, wind damage tend to discount the possibility of human hoaxers. I consider the source of this circle as unexplained, having characteristics of both naturally and intelligently guided formation.

> I think its fair to ridicule when all the evidence (so far), and
> the evidence is overwhelming , points towards a perfectly reasonable
> explanation for the formation of all circles.

How's that again? That is not how scientific investigation is done. Evidence is collected and analyzed. Possible explanations are formed and checked against the evidence to see if they fit. Ridicule does nothing to further understanding. I am am not aware of any overwhelming evidence that these are ALL hoaxes. I know that some are hoaxes. What is the

evidence, and where is it? Why did you not present it to any of the scientific groups who are still head scratching? Ridicule is typically used by uninformed debunkers when they find they are not on solid ground.

=====

Dudley also wrote a paper last year which he claims shows to a very high degree of statistical accuracy that hoaxes and genuine circles are two very different sets. The paper follows:

=====

An analysis of the hoax theory using dates of the formations.
by Marshall Dudley

World attention was focused on England last year when a pair of elderly men claimed they had hoaxed many of the formations over the last 14 years. A question arises whether this theory can stand up to a statistical analysis.

If one assumes that most hoaxing is done by students or employed persons then a logical assumption is that most hoaxes would be done during times when one could stay out late. Thus one would expect that there should be statistically more hoaxes done on Friday and Saturday than on other days of the week.

Crop circles are generally not found until the next morning at the earliest. Since several researchers such as Jurgen Kronig, Busty Taylor John Macnish and George Wingfield overfly the most active areas several times a week, it is unlikely a significant formation will go unnoticed for more than a couple of days. Thus if the majority of crop circles are hoaxes, one would expect to find a significant number of them on Saturday, and Sunday. The least likely day of the week to find a hoax would therefore be on a Friday.

Last year two men, commonly referred to now as "Doug and Dave," were filmed inside a circle with Pat Delgado. Pat pronounced the circle genuine, and Doug and Dave then claimed they had made the circle. That a claimed hoax is accepted as such without any supporting evidence is itself disturbing, but the entire setup, co-ordinated by the Today Newspaper, stinks of sensationalism. Speaking with several people in England, I am led to believe it is fairly widely believed that the circle that Pat was "trapped" with was indeed genuine. When one compares pictures of this circle with the one created the following day within the view of television cameras, one is struck by the differences in appearance. It is interesting that they can supposedly make a quite impressive circle in total darkness, but only able to create a messy approximation during the day. But of course this does not yield any good statistical evidence, so let us proceed.

In the issue 5 of the Cereologist magazine, George Wingfield wrote an article about the hoax in which he commented about Ms. Bower that "She must be the doziest person in the world if it took six years to notice his nightly absences." The large number of circles claimed by them would indicate they would have to be working at least several night a week on them so George's viewpoint is not hard to understand. Doug's wife responded with a letter to the editor in the following issue, in which she demanded an apology with the explanation that they were gone usually on

Friday nights 'not weekly'. This falls into the pattern we previously proposed, and since most crop circle dates of discovery are recorded, this is easily analyzed. For instance, taking a list titled "Famous Crop Circle Hoaxes" compiled in May of 1992 by Jenny Randles, Paul Fuller and Terence Meaden (the group which is attempting to prove that crop circles are caused by an elusive ionized plazma vortex), we find that the second entry, HO2, is a formation found on July 4th, which is claimed to have been hoaxed by Doug and Dave. (Note that England does not celebrate July 4th as we do in the US). This was a Wednesday. Thus it is highly unlikly this was hoaxed by Doug and Dave if we are to believe Doug's wife, that they did their hoaxing on Friday nights.

This study is not totally inclusive. The analysis is performed using 2 documents, one published by the CCCS of crop circles compiled by Stanley Morcom, and the second one the aforementioned paper "Famous Crop Circle Hoaxes". These references are used in total without any additional selections, so there can be no possibility of any bias added by this author. Formations without a day given are simply omitted. It is understood that there may be several hoaxes which have found their way into the CCCS document and several formations identified in the "Famous Crop Circle Hoaxes" paper may well be legitimate. However, for this statistical analysis we only require that a larger percentage of hoaxes are properly identified in the hoax paper than are found in the CCCS document. The better the identification the more definite the study will be, but 100% accuracy is not expected or required.

(note the following table is 139 charaters long and may wrap on your viewer)

THE DATA						TOTALS (AVERAGE per day)				STANDARD DEVS		
	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	overall	weekday	weekend	expected	actual
CCCS formations -												
Wiltshire formations:	0 0%	1 3%	5 14%	6 17%	6 16%	11 31%	7 19%	36 (5.14)	29 (5.8)	81%	7 (3.5)	
	19%	2.26	3.71									
Hampshire formations:	1 8%	0 0%	2 15%	0 0%	1 8%	7 53%	2 15%	13 (1.85)	10 (2)	77%	3 (1.5)	
	23%	1.36	2.41									
Total:	1 2%	1 2%	7 14%	6 12%	7 14%	18 37%	9 18%	49 (7)	39 (7.8)	80%	10 (5)	20%
	2.65	5.74										
Hoaxes	8 35%	1 4%	3 13%	2 9%	2 9%	2 9%	5 22%	23 (3.3)	10 (2)	43%	13 (6.5)	56%
	1.81	2.43										

The Hampshire data is broken out because of the claims by Doug and Dave that they made most of them. The trend however is better correlated with the Wiltshire data than the "hoax" data.

It can be seen that there is a significant divergence of the data. For instance, two days, Saturday and Sunday, account for well over half of the hoaxes, yet in the CCCS tabulation, the total for these two days are significantly below the number found on Friday alone, both for the Wiltshire and Hampshire formations. The hoax document has over 3 times as many formations per day during the weekend than during the weekday. The CCCS data shows there to be slightly more formed during the weekdays. One would

expect essentially the same rates for weekdays as weekends if the phenomena is not from human actions. Thus it can be argued that whatever selection criteria was used to differentiate between hoax and real phenomena separates data so that the aforementioned theory is confirmed. One curious aspect is the lack of formations found on Monday in both papers. The large number of formations found on Friday is totally unexpected, and it almost appears that the phenomenon is purposefully avoiding the weekends! However, part of this clustering on Fridays can be attributed to the fact that some of the pilots do more overflying on Fridays (and Saturdays) than other other days of the week.

CONCLUSION

The obvious conclusion is that although there are certainly hoaxes, there is also another category of events which can be shown to be statistically independent of the hoaxes.

<end of included article>

=====

While I don't necessarily agree with Dudley, it is clear that the skeptics and the believers are not communicating effectively with one another. I think that much of what is perceived to be mysterious or anomalous could be linked to what can be called "the investigator effect" in many instances.

The Investigator Effect

In a recent letter to me from a well-known researcher (whom I will not identify here), the investigator effect is described most succinctly:

"... it's time everyone stood back and took a good, long hard look at what can only be called the investigator effect, the tendency to believe that, if you're out looking for crop circles, absolutely everything else that happens from the time you leave home until you return in the morning is somehow intimately connected to an anomalous phenomenon, from flat tires and military helicopters, to grasshopper warblers, drained batteries, camera failure, men in black, including government and papal conspiracies, visitors from another planet and so on."

Frankly, I think the effect is running rampant in both ufology and cerealogy. It's very easy to invoke a conspiracy when one is confronted with conflicting data and faced with an affront on one's beliefs. In phone conversations I have had with some researchers, every click, whoosh and static was a catalyst for a paranoid claim that "they" were listening. This, even given the fact that such noises are not in evidence for modern surveillance techniques. As for camera malfunctions and beeping noises, if one counted the times when such noises were absent versus their presence, there would not be any question that the sounds are spurious. There was a cerealogist who was convinced that insects were absent from crop formations and that this indicated the presence of a fourth-dimensional space insect. When I pointed out that I had seen many dragonflies, mosquitoes and butterflies at the sites I had examined, there was a long silence at the other end of the line. Then: "So it's changed its characteristics,

has it?"

This is all the more relevant when applied to some of the crop circle research that is done (or claimed). This includes the "squashed porcupines" that were found inside some Saskatchewan circles and described at length by Chad Deetken in his authoritative report on Canadian formations. What isn't emphasized is that neither of the two carcasses were examined by veterinary pathologists, and even Deetken admits he saw neither of them. Yet the squashing of animals by vortices or aliens is accepted without much quibble, despite the fact that the physical evidence is completely absent. Are we reading too much into synchronous events, or is Jung's spirit at work in the circles?

Problems in Britain

As many of you will know, on July 28, 1993, Doug Bower gave a lecture and "came clean" about his crop circle hoaxing endeavours. According to one of my correspondents who was there, some of the revelations were shocking, to say the least.

One of the major revelations was that Bower made the 1980 Westbury circles, "the very first ones that Terence Meaden ever saw." Evidence was presented which convinced even some of the doubters that Bower did indeed fake those formations. The implication of this is that since Meaden began developing his vortex theory as a result of these circles, the vortex theory itself is on some shaky ground.

Another disturbing piece of information came from Matthew Lawrence, who was instrumental in relaying discoveries to Colin Andrews and Pat Delgado. Lawrence gave an "unrehearsed statement" about the circles at Cheesefoot Head. To wit: "Lawrence stated that in every case he either found footprints underneath the crop, damaged crop, mud on top of the crop or broken heads. This evidence never appeared in Circular Evidence." In other words, many "genuine" formations had obvious signs of human intervention.

Then there's the people who proclaim that they know how the circles were created, hoaxed or otherwise, but won't tell you how they did it! Viz:

>From alt.alien.visitors Thu Dec 10 09:19:05 1992

From: darkshot@rock.concert.net (Michael B Garrett -- Chudys)

Subject: Crop circles- a scientific approach

In the course of a long and touchy life, I have had to deal with a few things that were not explainable. I had, of course, relegated the idea of "crop circles" and such to this category, and waited for more data. It was not forthcoming. One day my wife, having seen some damned tabloid-tv-style show feature on the things, asked me what I thought of them. Like Twain, I was gratified to be able to answer promptly, so I did. I said I didn't know.

She followed up her earlier query with this bombshell, which is indicative of why she's my wife- "Well, if somebody wanted to hoax people with such, how would they go about doing it?"

This led to what we called "Project Flying Deer"- an attempt to re-create these phenomenae. It was entirely successful. I solved the basic problem in just about 20 minutes- and it was all downhill from there. I can, by myself, make crop circles matching anything yet found in less than 1 hour- and entirely silently. The technique can even be done in broad daylight

without arousing suspicion. As a final test of the "technology", I even signed my name across 2 acres of wheat belonging to an uncle of mine- and out of sight of most air routes. I stood in one spot the whole time; it took 23 minutes. Nobody else was needed.

My question: If someone is seriously researching this stuff, I think they should be aware of this technique so as to know when it has been used. Admittedly, we're no dummies- but if we could think of it, so could someone else- and I think it casts enough of a doubt on the studies done thus far to be worthy of thought/consideration. Don't you think so? I AM NOT a professional debunker, nor am I one who doesn't believe that alien visitors are possible- on the contrary, I have a lot of evidence in the other direction, as well as a wife who swears she has SEEN "greys" force me to drink something. This before we had even heard of any of the current abduction theories. I just don't think crop circles are valid evidence of an intelligence higher than ours (mine, anyway)- and I have PROOF. Actual investigators of this can contact me; I won't publish the technique here or anywhere for obvious reasons- THAT really WOULD invalidate the studies.

Of course, he wouldn't tell me, even after I contacted him privately.

Throw all this in with Jim Schnabel's tell-all book on cerealogy, and we have a complete olio of gragantuan proportions. It is very plain that what data we have about crop circles is hopelessly contaminated with hoaxes. Furthermore, it is likely that the proponents of various crop circle theories have been reading far too much into the reports and case information.

Unnatural History

I would be facing the wrath of my publisher if I failed to plug my own book. It came out in June 1993, published by Chameleon Book Publishers of Winnipeg. It carries a foreword by John Robert Colombo that is embarrassingly flattering, and the book has more than 200 pages chock full of cases of UFOs, ghosts, abductions, sasquatch and lake monsters, all in Manitoba. Its ISBN is 0-9696946-0-1 and you can get it from Arcturus Books at 1443 S.E. Port St. Lucie Blvd., Port St. Lucie, Florida 34952. It's number 72 in their 1993-8 September catalogue and is listed for \$16.95.

The book is semi-autobiographical, and presents my thoughts on the cases I investigated and my view of the world scene. It includes about 20 photos and drawings, many of which have never been published before.

A Poem by Pam

In one of her letters to me, Pam Thompson sent along her thoughts on the circle scene, and some additional thoughts. With her permission:

THE CROP CIRCLES

Round and round like a circle,
but not a circle: a cipher--
blank, and yet potent with meaning,
a meaning both universal
and profoundly personal.

Each eye that falls on the corn
sees their own life rippling
through the wind in the fields:
their deceit, the circles deceit;
their pain, the circles pain;
their joy, their sorrow,
their wonder, their fear
all caught in the circles' round
and etched in the corn.
And what is the true meaning
of the patterns in the corn?
Only the same meaning
that each day brings:
I know that I do not know.

"So true of so many things: I know that I do not know. And also so true of this kind of phenomenon: people bring their own baggage with them every time. Is it any wonder we see the same patterns of function and dysfunction repeated in every new phenomena? I'm not saying there *isn't* a grand conspiracy (I know that I do not know), but the sheer magnitude of the manhours involved in keeping all these conspiracies afloat would employ *all* of the unemployed in every country on the planet!"

Well said, m'dear! xo!

Abductees

Since the publication of my book, several people have approached me privately for assistance in interpreting or unlocking hidden memories of what appear to be alien encounters. As some readers may know, Roy Bauer and I have worked with abductees since the late 1980's. One particularly interesting recent case involves two siblings who have a shared gap in their memories after a shared UFO encounter. After hearing all the brouhaha about "mass abductions" and joint abductions by aliens, satanic cultists and the CIA, it will be interesting to see if the whole mess can be sorted out, and if the field can be tamed. With some of the major figures in this area under attack by debunkers and the False Memory Syndrome Foundation raising concerns about abduction memories, it was interesting to see the following in the a.a.v newsgroup:

=====
From: David.Jacobs@p0.f21.n1010.z9.FIDONET.ORG (David Jacobs)
Date: 28 May 93 05:55:42 GMT

This is just a note to follow up on your remarks about John Mack. You are quite right to question the expertise of anyone and everyone in the abduction area. Everybody and his sister is a self-proclaimed expert and the possibility of harm for abductees is ever-present.

John has steeped himself in abduction research and has done many regressions with abductees. Therefore he has engaged himself in primary rather than secondary research. This is extremely important for any in-depth understanding of the field. UFO research is still in its formative stages and as such we are not completely clear about its parameters. There is still plenty of room for scholarly disagreement and debate. John and I differ in interpretations of the material. John tends to see its effects more in

spiritual terms and I tend to see them more in scientific and empirical terms. Budd Hopkins and I also disagree about a variety of abduction phenomena. Budd tends to view aliens as more deceptive than I do, for example. I think that this will eventually all shake down as more information is developed and we are forced to think along the lines that the data leads to.

=====

My own interpretation of the abduction phenomenon leads me into some other territory. Roy Bauer recently suggested that UFO abductions, ritual abuse and past-life regressions may all be cases where memory is a poor diagnostic tool. There is no physical evidence for any of the three in most cases that are uncovered through hypnotic regression. Furthermore, there can be conflicting evidence found which seems to rule against the reality of the recalled event. And all three situations can involve screen memories which can block the original traumatic event.

Are they, then, delusions or fantasies? If so, what is the trigger which produces the trauma? How can such complicated fantasies be woven by otherwise normal human beings? I would tend to think that even if UFO abductions do not represent alien intervention, there is plenty of fuel for psychological and sociological studies, well beyond the labeling of such cases as "dangerous".

This and That

I've just realized that there's no way to include some of the information I had intended to publish in this issue, since I'm running out of room. I had hoped to give an annotated list of not only the large number of zines I have received over the past six months, but also comment on some of the books which have found their way to my shelves. Because of this, I will only note a few items at the top of the pile, and I will devote the next issue of SGJ to reviews and letters.

Among the zines I've received (in no order whatsoever): BILL KNELL'S U.F.O. NEWSLETTER, 164-22 77th Road, Flushing, NY 11365 [can't say that I agree with him on everything, but he stirs it up, doesn't he?]; MUFON UFO JOURNAL, #304, August 1993 [this issue features the Project Argus Report]; THE CROP WATCHER, #16,17, 3 Selbourne Court, Tavistock Close, ROMSEY, Hampshire SO51 7TY [as usual, Paul Fuller has lots of good stuff, exposing hoaxes, silly cerealogists and the like]; DELVE REPORT, July 1993, 17 Shetland Street, Willowdale, Ontario, Canada M2M 1X5 [Gene Duplantier is the "grand elder" of Canadian Forteanism, and continues to put out interesting collections of strange phenomena]; COLORADO MUFON NEWS, #21, May/June 1993, 1550 Violet, Boulder, Colorado 80304 [this issue has a feature story about the mass abduction of December 1992 and updates on mutants]; THE CEREALOGIST, #9, Summer 1993, 11 Powis Gardens, London W11 1JG [they're still not accepting the hoaxes and are relying a lot on Hawkins, Greer, etc., but the zine is still interesting to read (thanks, Pam!)]; and who could forget SAUCER SMEAR?!

WAHF and Misc...

Paul Fuller writes that he and his colleagues are looking closely at my UGM lists, searching for good examples of pre-Bower

circles; Dennis Stacy (MUFON) is getting some heat for criticizing some "mainstream" UFO and circle experts ... I know how he feels; Lindy Tucker sent along some articles from the CPR NEWSLETTER about her research into beeping sounds and their relationship with UFOs and crop circles; Paul Ferrughelli clarified his method for collecting American UFO data and suggested we share data and work as a team in our analyses. This would be most interesting, since we could then do an analysis of ALL North American cases (well, okay, not including Mexico). Sounds good, Paul! Now will somebody explain to me why you and I are doing all the work and are never invited to present our stuff at UFO conferences?; Gale Research Inc. sent me a press release announcing the publication of the Encyclopedia of Hoaxes by Dr. Gordon Stein. According to their blurb, Elvis is not alive, there is no King Tut's curse, articles in the Washington Post have been fabricated, and all crop circles are fakes. Sure, and I suppose there's no Tooth Fairy, either, huh?; Brian Savage of AUFOSG wrote to tell me of his thoughts on the supersecret CSE, memories of Winnipeg and his discovery of a tape from an Alberta TV show about UFOs, circa 1975. Sounds like a gem, Brian! (I promise to answer your letter soon!); the Long Island UFO Network sent me a copy of their press release in advance of their public protest at Suffolk County Police Headquarters in Yaphank, New York. The protest is spurred by their investigation of a crash/retrieval (or two) in late 1992. Accompanying the release was a completely indecipherable photo from a video monitor which was: "A computer scan of an area on a video tape which was smuggled out of federal government custody by a defense dept systems analyst showing the bodies of two dead extraterrestrial beings recovered from an area east of William Floyd Parkway where their craft crashed close to Brookhaven Laboratories on November 24, 1992." The note describes the "massive coverup by federal, state and local authorities" and asks for anyone who can shed light on the event to come forward and notify: LIUFON, P.O. Box 1692, Riverhead, NY 11901.

=====

The Swamp Gas Journal is copyright (c) 1993 by Chris A. Rutkowski.
Mail correspondence to: Box 1918, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3C 3R2
Email correspondence to: rutkows@ccu.umanitoba.ca
The Swamp Gas Journal, UFOROM and NAICCR are not affiliated with the University of Manitoba, and don't represent its ideas, opinions, etc.
(Standard disclaimer)