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AN ADVANCE CRITIQUE ON THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO UFO STUDY

By Philip J. Klass

NOTE: This memo has been prepared for a handful of my "UFO Correspondents" and is not intended for public distribution. Nothing shall be quoted from this memo without written permission.

Within a few weeks, the University of Colorado UFO Study report is expected to be made public. Any definitive critique on this study, its modus operandi and its findings, must await publication. However, a number of persons have asked me for my views on the project, based on my contacts and observations during the past two years. I have therefore decided to put my current thoughts into writing, if only for later perspective.

I have talked by phone and corresponded with Robert Low, the Project Coordinator on a number of occasions and met with him on one occasion in Washington, nearly a year after the project began. But I have never once asked Low for his views on the Plasma-UFO hypothesis, or the extraterrestrial hypothesis. I therefore have no direct knowledge at this time as to what the final report will say about either.

Judging from the bitter criticism voiced by John Fuller in his LOOK magazine article in the spring of 1968, and the sharp denunciation by NICAP, Maj. Donald Keyhoe, Dr. James E. McDonald and other "believers," it seems safe to conclude that the Colorado report will not support the extraterrestrial hypothesis.

REFERRING
TO ME [This has prompted some "non-believers" to automatically conclude that the Colorado study must have been a good one and that criticisms directed at Low and Dr. Edward U. Condon, the principal scientist, are entirely without justification. However, I think that this is not the case.

However, it is important to stress that the assignment undertaken by Colorado was fraught with many potential pitfalls. Some of the errors in judgement, in my opinion, resulted from the fact that neither Low nor Condon had had any previous experience in the field of UFOlogy. I suspect that they, like many others in such a position, assumed that only "kooks and crackpots" believed that UFOs were extraterrestrial, which simply is not the case. If this was indeed the basic attitude of Low and Condon when they began, and I am speculating, then the project was headed for trouble from the start.

Yet it was this complete lack of previous knowledge and interest in UFOlogy which the Air Force had sought, with good reason, and which qualified Condon and Low for the job. Anyone who had been active in UFOlogy would already have formed a strong opinion.

Under the terms of the University of Colorado proposal to the USAF, which was made part of the subsequent contract, "The work will be conducted under conditions of the strictest objectivity- by investigators who, as carefully as can be determined, have no predilections or preconceived positions on the UFO question."

Yet soon after the project began, Dr. David Saunders, a psychologist at the University of Colorado, was hired for the study. (Saunders was one of two scientists from the project who were fired in Feb. 1968, for secretly taking material from the files and giving it to NICAP and to Dr. McDonald.)

I have learned on good authority that Saunders made no attempt to hide the fact that he had for some time been a member of NICAP, which should clearly have shown a prior interest in the subject, if not a "predilection" for the extraterrestrial hypothesis. I also have been told on good authority that Saunders admitted that he leaned toward the extraterrestrial hypothesis.

On this basis, Saunders should never have been hired for the project. Yet he was. Further, Saunders was given a key role in shaping the project's modus operandi.

Dr. Norman Levine, the second scientist fired in Feb. 1968, was hired in the early summer of 1967. Levine had been recommended by Dr. McDonald who, Levine subsequently noted in a newspaper interview, had first interested Levine in UFOs.

Despite the fact that McDonald was an outspoken proponent of the extraterrestrial hypothesis, which should have made his recommendation of Levine suspect, Levine was hired. His responsibilities, I'm told, included investigation of radar-UFO sightings and the Plasma-UFO hypothesis--because of his background in electrical engineering and physics. If Levine was assigned to investigate the Plasma-UFO theory, it had two strikes against it.

In late June of 1967, I talked with Levine by telephone, in Low's absence. I was startled to hear this new staff member expressing views which McDonald employs against the plasma theory. But I charitably tried to assume that Levine was merely playing the role of "devil's advocate." But Levine and I corresponded for the next several months and I became increasingly disturbed over what seemed to me to be his predilection for the extraterrestrial explanation.

In early September, after learning of Levine's close relations with McDonald, when he was getting his Ph.D. at the University of Arizona, I decided to privately express my concern to Dr. Tom Ratchford, the Colorado project contract monitor at the Air Force Office of Scientific Research. Ratchford told me that he himself had just returned from Boulder and that he, Low and Condon had been equally shocked to hear Levine express some of his views on UFOs-- only a couple months after he had joined the project with presumably an open mind on the subject.

I asked Ratchford what would be done about the situation now that Levine's "predilection" had been discovered. He replied that the Air Force was maintaining a "hands-off" policy. It was Colorado's problem and it was up to Condon and Low to solve it, he said. Condon had said that he would write the final conclusions and that Levine's views would be only one of many inputs. By this means, presumably, Levine would be retained and "contained." I told Ratchford that this seemed a risky plan and that Levine might well write a dissenting report. (At that point I did not know about Saunders.)

Ratchford said that the Air Force would not interfere and the USAF has scrupulously maintained this hands-off policy throughout the study. Although the USAF has been NICAP's favorite "whipping boy," when NICAP held a press conference on April 30, 1968, to denounce the Colorado study (following the LOOK article), it did not charge any USAF interference. I specifically raised this question at the press conference and NICAP's Keyhoe absolved the USAF of any responsibility for the problems at Colorado.

The fact that Saunders and Levine were hired in the first place, that Condon and Low were apparently so slow to discover their "predilections" for the extraterrestrial hypothesis and that the men were retained so long after these facts became known, raises serious questions about the judgement and supervision of those running the project.

The first warning signals could have been spotted early in 1967, only a couple months after the project began, if Low or Condon had read the Jan.-Feb. 1967 issue of NICAP's "The U.F.O. Investigator." It said, in discussing the Colorado project:

"It probably is fair to say that the scientists on the (Colorado) project range from open-minded skeptics to moderately convinced 'believers,' which is as it should be..." [Emphasis added.]

Perhaps that is the way that NICAP thought it ought to be, but if NICAP was correct, this was a clear violation of the Colorado proposal and contract to select scientists without previous "predilections" on the subject. (In a jury trial, a statement by the prosecuting attorney while the trial was underway that half of the members of the jury were convinced that the defendant was guilty would be cause for a mistrial!)

The more important issue raised by the NICAP statement is HOW DID NICAP KNOW THAT SOME MEMBERS OF THE COLORADO TEAM WERE "MODERATELY CONVINCED BELIEVERS" ONLY A COUPLE MONTHS AFTER THE INVESTIGATION BEGAN?

This indicates that some of the scientists were revealing their "predilections" either openly (where they should have been spotted by Low or Condon) or secretly to NICAP, which was one of the protagonists in the controversy. If members of the Colorado project were secretly talking or communicating their views to NICAP at this stage, it should have been cause for instant dismissal.

Yet these warning signals went unnoticed, until the following year when the more overt acts of disloyalty to the project were discovered and resulted in staff dismissals.

I had first written to Dr. Condon on Oct. 13, 1966, shortly after Colorado had been selected to conduct the study. I sent Condon copies of my two plasma-UFO articles from Aviation Week magazine. I said that I was "available for discussions with your investigators, if their interest warrants." Low replied on Dec. 5. He said the articles "are must reading for anyone who considers he knows anything about UFOs."

He added that "Your theory is an intriguing one, and we will give it close attention in our investigation." It would be eight months later until Low and I talked in person. Unlike others who journeyed to Colorado to press their ideas, I limited myself to occasional letters which reported new findings turned up by my continuing research. Occasionally Low would reply with a request for more details. I therefore assumed that the plasma hypothesis was being given equal consideration to that accorded the extraterrestrial hypothesis.

The first indication that this might not be the case came on Sept. 4, 1967, when Dr. Saunders spoke in Washington during a UFO symposium sponsored by the American Psychological Assn. Saunders began his talk by citing the inherent difficulties of conducting a UFO study. But he added that: "If you specify a working hypothesis, it can help you to limit the range of data in which you have an immediate interest." [Emphasis supplied.]

Saunders then went on to say: "We have taken as our experimental hypothesis the notion that UFOs represent something real and something that has an extraterrestrial origin. Now there is always the 'null' hypothesis -- that is, that the other hypothesis 'ain't' so--and you now have two alternatives to consider."

During the subsequent question and answer period, I asked Saunders if Colorado had not really taken two hypotheses and rigidly linked them together. Wasn't it possible, I asked, that UFOs might be "real" in the sense of being freak atmospheric electrical phenomena, and not extraterrestrial. In other words, it seemed to me that the dual hypothesis which Colorado had selected almost precluded a finding, or an interest in finding, that UFOs were in some cases real, but not extraterrestrial.

Saunders gave a curious and confusing reply: "You're quite right in observing that this is a composite hypothesis consisting of two parts. There is some difficulty in deciding what the term 'real' really means in this context. If you interpret 'real' to mean a solid object or a material object, a physical thing, then the condition that you state would be correct that these are two different things like an apple and an orange wrapped up together."

"On the other hand, if you interpret 'real' to mean what many people interpret it to mean, as being synonymous with extraterrestrial intelligence, then this particular problem disappears--there's really a semantic problem here and that's about all it really is."

It seemed to me that it was a good deal more than merely a "semantic problem" as Saunders seemed to think. After the session concluded at around 4:30 p.m., I went up to Saunders, introduced myself and asked if he could spare a few minutes to chat. (At the risk of sounding immodest, I had thought he might welcome the opportunity to discuss the plasma theory and perhaps to challenge me on some points, since this was the first time that he and I had had any contact.)

But instead, Saunders said he had plans for dinner and that he expected that some old friends in the audience would want to talk with him. But he said that if I would wait, and if no old friends came up, then he could chat with me. This turned out to be the case and in a few minutes we went to the bar for about 10 minutes of discussion.

When I pressed Saunders for a clearer explanation of his answer to my original question, he explained that if he had known who was asking the question he would have given a slightly different response. He added that Colorado was focusing its major attention on the extraterrestrial hypothesis because this was the one that interested most people. He had no questions for me on the plasma theory and so our discussion ended.

Thus, in early September of 1967, I was becoming a bit disillusioned with the Colorado project. Saunders, one of the principal scientists, had little if any interest in the plasma hypothesis and the project apparently was devoting most of its efforts to proving, or disproving, the extraterrestrial hypothesis. By this same time I had begun to have grave doubts over the objectivity of Dr. Levine.

A month earlier, I had had my first meeting with Low (Aug. 3) during one of his trips to Washington. We had gotten together for dinner and spent a couple hours in discussion. (As earlier stated, in all discussions with Colorado, I had intentionally avoided asking them about their activities and views on the plasma hypothesis.) Low had been especially interested to hear the results of my investigation of the Socorro UFO case and to see slides taken at the site. The only mention of the plasma theory during our visit came when Low mentioned that Dr. Condon was considering convening a group of plasma physicists during the fall, to consider this hypothesis. Low said nothing about my being invited to attend and so I did not ask about this possibility.

After I had taken Low to the airport that night, I had come back and written a long memorandum which summarized our conversations and my own personal reactions. In this memo, for instance, I noted that Low had shown no interest in the Ted Kiepura plasma-UFO report ("Tom" in Chapter 6 of my book.) This was a multiple witness case which I consider to be of highest credibility, yet Low seemed disinterested in it. (I had tape recordings of my interview with Kiepura which I could have let him hear.)

I had gotten a curious reaction when I showed Low the Childerhose UFO photo (which appears on the jacket of my book.) When I

first showed the picture to Low, and mentioned that Childerhose had told me that the incident occurred while he was flying through the biggest thunderstorm he had ever seen in North America, Low replied that it was not really a very big thunderstorm and that he himself had seen bigger ones in the American Rockies. I was disappointed that Low would waste precious minutes arguing over this irrelevant point instead of focusing his attention on the contents of the picture.

Low did, however, ask that I send a copy of the colored print to Colorado, which I did before the end of August, 1967.

But in January of 1968, some five months later, Low called to ask me to supply him with the address and phone number of Childerhose so that their photo analyst could get further details from him. I was shocked that this potentially important picture had apparently been ignored for some five months. By January, 1968, the project was in its closing phases and only now was the Childerhose photo coming under scrutiny, despite the fact that it seemed to show a phenomenon uncatalogued by scientists.

In early May, 1968, during a telephone conversation with Low, he told me that William Viezee of Stanford Research Institute, a subcontractor to the Colorado project, had decided that the UFO in the Childerhose picture was not a plasma but a "sub-sun." Viezee was a meteorologist, I was told.

A "sub-sun" is a reflection of the sun from a thin layer of ice crystals ~~and~~ ^{and} is visible only from above the layer. The phenomenon requires that the object (image), and the sun itself, and the viewer (or camera) must all be in a straight line. If the sun is not directly ahead and in line with the image and the viewer, the object simply can not be a sub-sun!

Another important characteristic of a sub-sun is that the object (image), when seen from an aircraft, appears to move at the same speed as the airborne observer until the aircraft changes heading or moves beyond the layer of ice crystals, at which time the object suddenly disappears.

I had earlier considered this sub-sun possibility, but had rejected it for two reasons. The most basic one is that the sun is NOT in line with the camera and the object-image. Even a casual examination of the sunlight on the thunderstorm clouds shows that the setting sun must be somewhere to the left (say between 8 o'clock and 10 o'clock position.) [I urge you to examine the jacket picture yourself to confirm this.]

Secondly, Childerhose had originally told me that the UFO appeared to be suspended (fixed) between some thunderclouds and that it did not appear to move. This also would rule out a sub-sun. If there is anything that attracts a pilot's attention in flight, it is to see an unknown object which appears to be flying near his own altitude, because it poses a potential collision threat.

In 1968, I wrote again to Childerhose to ask him to try to re-check his memory and tell me whether the object had seemed to

be flying ahead of his aircraft (i.e. sub-sun) or had seemed to remain fixed in one spot over the ground. Childerhose has never taken any position as to what the object he photographed might be and so he has no "vested interest" in either the plasma or sub-sun explanation. I emphasized that I sought only his best recollections.

In his reply of June 4, 1968, Childerhose said: "To the best of my recollection, the object remained stationary. I feel far more certain about that aspect of the sighting than I do about other aspects."

On June 29, I sent a copy of Childerhose's letter to Low and pointed out that the crucial test of Viezee's sub-sun explanation was really whether the sun was in the required position. I said that while Viezee might be an experienced meteorologist, he was accustomed to looking at clouds from the ground and it seemed to me that it would be more productive to get the views of experienced pilots who are accustomed to looking at clouds from above.

Before Colorado irrevocably labelled the Childerhose photo a sub-sun, I urged Low to take the picture to the Denver airport and show it to a number of experienced pilots. I told him that if a majority of the pilots interviewed agreed that the sun was really in a direct line (12 o'clock), then I would withdraw my objections to calling it a sub-sun.

But I sensed that Low was anxious to wind up the study and get on with the long final report, and feared that he would not take the time to conduct the pilot experiment I had proposed. This despite the fact that the Childerhose photo might show the very plasma phenomenon at the root of the UFO mystery!

And so, on July 2, I decided to conduct the experiment myself at Washington's National Airport, with senior United Air Lines and American Airlines pilots having an average of 15,000 hours in the cockpit.

I started with Capt. Howard Mayes, the UAL chief pilot in Washington. First I explained that this was not a trick and that there was no "right" or "wrong" answer. I simply wanted him to carefully study the Childerhose photo, the sunlight on the clouds, and tell me where he thought the sun was located. (I made a small black overlay to cover up the UFO image itself so the pilots could focus their attention on the surrounding thunderclouds.)

After carefully studying -the picture, Mayes said that the sun was somewhere to the left (in the non-sub-sun position.) I then told him that I was not disagreeing with his appraisal, but supposing that someone claimed the sun was really dead ahead (12 o'clock), was that possible? Mayes again studied the picture and said that he did not think so; the sun was somewhere to the left.

Mayes then called in three other experienced pilots, one-by-one, and the experiment was repeated. All agreed, the sun was to the left.

Next I repeated the experiment with the American Airlines superintendent of flying, Capt. W.F. Bettwy. His appraisal was identical to that of the four United captains. Five out of five agreed that the sun was somewhere to the left--which ruled out the sub-sun possibility. (When each test was complete, the overlay covering the UFO was removed so each pilot could study it and each was asked if he had ever seen anything like it before. Not one of them had--in over 75,000 hours of cockpit time, much of it flown over the Rockies.)

I tape recorded all of these interviews so that Colorado would know that I had not coached the pilots in any way or influenced their appraisals. I sent a copy of this tape to Low. When next we talked by phone, Low said that as a result of the tape recording and pilot experiment, Colorado would not firmly label the Childerhose UFO a sub-sun, as they had earlier planned. Instead, the report would say that the object looked like a sub-sun, but that the sun did not appear to be in the required location.

And so I expect that the Childerhose UFO photo will be labelled as simply "unexplained."

Colorado did convene a conference of plasma physicists in mid-October of 1967. This was approximately a year after the project began and six months before the investigation was completed. I was not invited to attend.

Thus I do not know whether the plasma physicists were shown the Childerhose photo to open their eyes to the possibility that nature may be producing plasmas which are uncatalogued by science. Nor do I know whether the scientists were shown the two Lucci photos (Chapters 2, 8 and 14 of my book.) showing plasma-like objects.

I doubt whether they saw the Lucci photos, because these already had been labelled a hoax by one of Colorado's subcontractors, a photo analyst named William Hartmann at the University of Arizona.

This I learned in mid-September, 1967, during a telephone conversation with Low, although Levine had hinted as much in one of our conversations in mid-summer. The Lucci photos were one of a handful that NICAP believes to be authentic, and their appraisal was based on a detailed investigation by Prof. William Weitzel, the chairman of their Pittsburgh subcommittee. Weitzel had a reputation for thoroughness.

I told Low that I had planned to use the Lucci photos in my upcoming book. I could still pull them out if I were convinced that there was even a 50/50 chance of their being hoaxes. I asked if I might call Hartmann directly to discuss the Lucci photos and he gave me permission. I called later that afternoon and Hartmann and I talked for an hour.

Hartmann told me that as soon as he had looked at the second of the two Lucci photos, he had suspected that it was nothing more than a white saucer being held in the palm of a human hand.

Hartmann said he had tried to recreate the second Lucci photo by this means. It was not completely successful, he said, but good enough to convince him that the photos were hoaxes.

Hartmann failed to convince me but he did cast a sufficient cloud over the photos that I decided to make my own investigation and made plans to visit Beaver, Pa., where the Luccis live and where the photos were taken. In preparation for my trip, I made a number of telephone calls during the next several days.

In nearly every instance, I discovered that others had suspected a hoax when they first saw the Lucci photos, but after making a more thorough investigation it had changed their minds.

One of these was the reporter for the Beaver newspaper who had written the article on the Lucci photos and UFO report. Another was William Weitzel of NICAP who described his own intensive effort to spot a hoax--without success.

When I visited Beaver, I talked with the two newspaper photographers who had first analyzed the photos. They told me of their own initial suspicions and how they made up a number of prints with different contrast levels in an effort to spot a hand or something supporting the "UFO". After several days of investigation, they had recommended that the paper publish the pictures.

They told me that Jim Lucci had brought to the newspaper the complete roll of #120 film and that only the first two frames, showing the UFO, were exposed. The remaining 10 frames were unexposed. If the boys had gone to the trouble to set up in their front yard to make hoax UFO photos, it seemed most unlikely that they would only shoot two pictures and then be so confident that they had made detection-proof UFO photos, that they would waste the last 10 frames of the roll of film. As the two men reminded me, experienced professional photographers always shoot at least two pictures of simple scenes to be sure of getting one good picture.

The photographers pointed out that besides Jim Lucci and his brother John, two other teen-age friends had been present when the pictures were made. In the intervening two years, there had been the usual "falling-out" in these friendships, offering the other boys the chance to "tattle" and expose a hoax. But there had been no such cloud of suspicion in the intervening years.

When I interviewed Jim Lucci, his brother John and later their father, the father told me that he had been out of the city when the pictures were taken and when he first saw them, he himself had suspected they might be a hoax. The father told me that he had tried repeatedly to recreate them, using soup plates illuminated internally with a flashbulb--but had failed to do so.

When I visited the Lucci home and examined the topography, I found that the trees visible in the UFO photos are sitting on a very high cliff just behind their house. This meant that the camera was elevated at an angle of approximately 30 degrees which would make it

even more difficult to hold a white saucer in a hand and tilt it downward for the head-on view required to recreate the Lucci photos.

On the spur of the moment, I asked Jim Lucci if I could use his camera and one of his mother's white saucers to try to make a hoax-duplicate of his pictures. Young Lucci could have told me that he couldn't find the camera--since it belongs to his brother who now lives next door--or that he had no film. But he didn't. So we went outside and shot a dozen pictures from roughly the same spot in his front yard. When they were developed, they showed only a crude approximation of the originals and were technically deficient in several important respects. Later, in Washington, I made repeated attempts to recreate the UFO photos with my own camera, but always there were important discrepancies.

I wrote to Hartmann to tell him that my own on-the-spot investigation prompted me to believe the photos were authentic. I sent him a duplicate of my tape recording of my interviews with the Luccis, with the newspaper photographers and others. I also sent him a long report showing my own repeated attempts to re-create the Lucci photo geometry and pointed out why I did not think the originals had been or could have been created with a saucer and a human hand.

Hartmann replied early in October of 1967 and told me that he had been much too busy analyzing other, more important UFO photos to even listen to the Lucci tape recording or to study my report. (The latter would have taken no more than 15 minutes to read.)

What were these more important UFO photos that were occupying Hartmann? One was the series of six photos taken at Fort Belvoir in the mid-1950s, which show a UFO shaped like a "hoola hoop" which seems to be enveloping itself in a strange cloud. But NICAP itself had refused to authenticate these photos and the story told by the man who had taken the pictures was filled with inconsistencies.

The other series of UFO photos which Hartmann found exciting was the one taken by Heflin at Santa Ana, Calif. USAF photo analysts had labelled the pictures a hoax, and Heflin's story contained major discrepancies, although these did not seem to bother Hartmann. In fact, I gathered that Hartmann was inclined to believe the Santa Ana photos were authentic and did indeed show a spaceship shaped like a straw-hat! Hartmann would later change his mind.

How could I motivate Hartmann to give some time to the Lucci photos--if only to listen to my taped interviews and read my report? I decided against seeking Low's intervention because of my long-standing policy of not attempting to tell or suggest to Colorado how it should run its investigation.

Perhaps I could motivate Hartmann to tackle the Lucci photos on his own time--on weekends--with a wager, so that I could reach a "go, no-go" decision on the Lucci photos before my book went to press.

So, I wrote Hartmann to say that I was prepared to pay him \$500 if he could recreate both of the Lucci photos by trick photography, using a hand and a white saucer, operating under the same constraints that applied to the Lucci pictures (such as the 30 deg. inclined camera angle), providing he produced the two recreations within the next 60 days (my book deadline.) I further offered him \$25.00 if he attempted and failed to succeed--to reimburse him for the cost of his film and flash bulbs. In other words, Hartmann could not possibly lose anything more than his time.

Furthermore, I said that any photos coming out of these experiments would be the property of the University of Colorado and that they would have first publication rights to them. I merely wanted to see them to convince myself that the Lucci photos could indeed be recreated as Hartmann believed. It seemed to me that this protected Colorado's interests adequately.

A copy of this correspondence was sent to Low, so that he would be fully informed. But on Oct. 12, Low wrote me a harsh letter saying that this would be a conflict of interest situation if Hartmann were to accept. Low's letter said, in part:

"It is thus not appropriate for you to offer payments to Hartmann or Levine (I had made a similar offer to him) to attempt to simulate the Lucci photographs, but of course you can ask us to do it free. We will do it if we think that it will contribute something important to our knowledge and understanding of the UFO problem, but if we consider we have already learned as much as we can on the authenticity and informational content of the Lucci photographs, then we will not do anything further. It is primarily Hartmann's decision whether we do or don't." [Emphasis added.]

"...contribute something important to our knowledge and understanding of the UFO problem..."; if the Lucci photos are authentic, they reveal a plasma or other phenomenon which is uncatalogued by science. In other words, their potential payoff is great. On the other hand, the other UFO photos occupying Hartmann's attention at that time would merely show that it is relatively easy to hoax such photos--which even NICAP itself readily admits.

But the most shocking statement was the remark that "It is primarily Hartmann's decision whether we do or don't (analyze the Lucci photos.)" It seemed to me that the photos that Hartmann analyzed should be ones carefully selected by Low or Condon to promote overall study objectives and should not be left to Hartmann himself.

On the strength of my extensive on-the-spot investigation and my subsequent unsuccessful efforts to create the same "geometry" of the Lucci photos using a saucer and a hand, I decided to leave the photos in my book (and to add a few words about my efforts to authenticate them.)

I expect that the Colorado report will say that the Lucci photos could be hoaxes. I must wait to examine Hartmann's re-created Lucci photos to see whether he has indeed duplicated them closely or only crudely, which I understand will be in the report.

Despite the foregoing, I believe that my relations with Low and the Colorado project generally have been quite amicable and the difficulties cited are the exception rather than the rule. After the manuscript of my book was completed, I investigated the Monroe County, Mich. UFO sightings and the South Hill, Va., case and sent detailed analyses of the cases to Colorado, as well as to the USAF's Project Blue Book. Low praised both highly. (All reports, data, tape recordings, etc. have been supplied to the project without charge.)

I tried to be tolerant of what appeared to be shortcomings in project direction because I recognized the inherent difficulties of the assignment and the fact that Low faced hostile critics in many quarters. (McDonald began to criticize the Colorado project publicly as early as April 1968.)

Having "held my tongue" for the past two years, I feel less compunction now in putting my thoughts in writing.

Some critics of the Colorado project have suggested that the University undertook the program to curry favor with the USAF in the hope of being "rewarded" with lucrative research grants. I think this is quite untrue. Military research funds go where the scientific capability exists and are not handed out as political plums, generally speaking. The handful of universities which do get large military contracts, such as M.I.T. and the University of Michigan, have specialized and extensive competence on campus in areas of special significance to military technology.

If, as I suspect, Low was the sparkplug responsible for getting Colorado officials to bid on the project, I think his only motivation was the hope of focusing favorable public attention on the university and perhaps, in the process, enhancing his own career. But I do not think the motivations were any more "nefarious" than these.

If Condon and Low were "dis-believers" at the start, neither made any effort to hide this fact. Condon repeatedly referred to himself as an "agnostic" on the UFO question and no one--including NICAP and McDonald--cried "foul" at the time.

I think it is especially unfortunate that the project selected a working hypothesis that put major emphasis on the extraterrestrial hypothesis (assuming Saunders statement was accurate) instead of giving equal attention to the plasma, or terrestrial, hypothesis.

Benefitting from hindsight, the project suffered from lack of supervision, it seems to me. The USAF could not provide it without being charged with "interference." Perhaps the National Academy of Sciences should have been asked to form a panel to monitor the Colorado project at its inception.

In the spring of 1967, long before I knew of the problems that were beginning to plague the Colorado project, I wrote in the last chapter of my book, on p. 287:

"No matter what the University of Colorado findings are, I'm sure that the mystery will not be ended and that further studies will be needed."

But the question at this point is who would be willing to conduct follow-on studies, even assuming the Government were willing to fund them, and I'm not sure that this is the case.

The harsh criticism directed at the University of Colorado, at Condon and Low, in the John Fuller article in LOOK magazine is but a small sample of the bitter charges that will be made after the report becomes public. Added to this will be the charges in a book by Dr. Saunders, soon to be published.

I wonder if any respected scientific group or university will be willing to undertake another UFO study--seeing what they can expect unless they bring in a verdict favorable to the extra-terrestrial hypothesis.

Jim McDonald, Dr. Allan Hynek and perhaps a few other scientists who are either ardent "believers" or lean in that direction, are not only willing but anxious to undertake a follow-on study. But I would hardly expect it to be an objective or an effective investigation.

These, then, are my observations on the Colorado Project. Some of them may be subject to revision after the report becomes public. Others are not likely to be.

Philip J. Klass
Washington D.C.
November 30, 1968

Feb. 4, 1969

Mr. David Ashkin
Plasmarian #0.00003

Dear David,

I wanted to get a few words into the Condon Report controversy. Many of the points the three of you have raised are very valid, but I would like to differ a bit in interpretation.

Phil has often made the point that the study's main objective was to act as a jury to decide the question of ETI: yes or no? While this may be how many people have interpreted the report, and this is certainly Saunders' view of it, I have the distinct impression that Dr. Condon and the Air Force regard it otherwise.

On the very first page Dr. Condon writes, "As indicated by its title, the emphasis of this study has been to learn from UFO reports anything that could be considered as adding to scientific knowledge. Our general conclusion is that nothing has come from the study of UFO'S in the past 21 years that has added to scientific knowledge." Careful consideration of the record as it is available to us leads us to conclude that further extensive study of UFO'S probably cannot be justified in the expectation that science will be advanced thereby." Certainly Saunders accepted the ETI quest as his own interpretation of the proper direction of the study, but Condon's interest and purpose is clear. He wanted to see if the study of UFO'S is likely to advance science. He concluded that it is not, as would I, with the implication that time and money spent trying to advance science through UFO'S would be more profitably elsewhere.

Scientists have been looking over UFO reports for over 21 years now, and what has been learned from them? Only that popular fancy and widespread publicity can give rise to an astounding number of erroneous, though apparently reliable reports. Yet even this is not new knowledge- doing research on witchcraft or superstition will show that apparently reliable people can report very inaccurately. Many writers have pointed this out long before the current UFO craze: Charles Mackay (1841), Andrew Jackson White (1896), Joseph Jastrow (1936), Bergen Evans (1946). The only interest the Air Force has in UFO'S is to see whether they pose a threat to national security. Since the UFO evidence that has been presented so far is so sketchy and unreliable, and physical evidence is entirely lacking, is it any wonder that both the Air Force and the physicists have decided that merely studying UFO reports is a waste of time?

It is unquestionably true that we may get some new information on atmospheric plasmas and rare meteorological phenomenon by studying UFO reports, but even here we are not likely to make a great breakthrough. The reason for this is that when an UFO report is turned in, we have NO INFORMATION EXCEPT WHAT THE WITNESS(ES) THOUGHT HE/THEY SAW. We can give them a lie detector test to see if they're lying, but how can we ever tell if their report is accurate in the first place? The UFO investigator is faced with so many instances of apparently reliable witnesses seeing "spots" rotating on the surface of Venus (naked eye, yet!), windows on re-entering satellites, flashing lights on plasmas, contradictory distance-size-speed correlations that only the most naive would today assert that we should believe that a huge UFO hovered directly over a road just because one or more witnesses thought it did. The Condon report had one adult describe a 2 x 3 ft. plastic bag as 75 feet long and brighter than car headlights. If it were not for some more accurate observers who also saw it, would this

not be a truly spectacular "classic" UFO, to be exploited by NICAP, APRO, and the whole bunch? Thus the UFO investigator is faced with a terrible dilemma: when investigating a truly spectacular report, do we say science is wrong and believe the witnesses, or do we say the witnesses are mistaken and believe science? I would lean toward the latter. My studies into the "history of nonsense" have convinced me that far more reliable reports of witchcraft, ghosts, alchemy, miracles, ESP, dowsing, magic, and the like exist than the evidence commonly invoked to demonstrate a fantastic UFO mystery, and that to accept one is to accept them all, throwing rationality and scientific method out the window.

Getting back to you, David, your comments on witnesses reporting automobile failure seem to overlook important points--that these phenomenon have been reported for many occasions that we know to be just plain ordinary. Did you read on page 63 of the Condon report about the fellow who reported that a hot-air balloon knocked out his telephone, or page 98 where witnesses reported that animals and telephones were affected by birds and plastic balloons? Can any of these reports be believed? If so, which ones?

Q If a witness says that an UFO came down to 500 feet, does it mean he made an error in judgement, or does it mean we have extraterrestrial visitors?

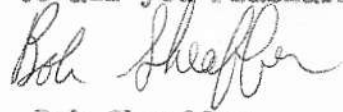
The analysis of the Magnesium is solely to demonstrate that Lorenzen's claim that this metal is of extraterrestrial purity is merely another crazy tale that breaks down under scientific analysis.

As for the reported engine failures, are we to believe that a few witnesses are wrong, or that all scientists are wrong? Which is more probable? Are we to postulate a new force to explain this? Shall the force be conservative, following the inverse square law? What conclusion is the least unlikely?

On the question of sonic booms, the story is: present knowledge indicates that ALL MACROSCOPIC OBJECTS travelling through the atmosphere produce a sonic boom. When a rocket travels straight up away from an observer, he is inside the cone of the boom and not in a position to hear it. Scientists will continue to believe this law until evidence is presented to show it incorrect (and so far, none has).

And so, fellow Plasmarians, I just wanted to express my view that for all its shortcomings, the Condon report still contains a vast wealth of scientific analysis of the UFO situation. Why don't we just ignore the conclusion and concentrate upon the great quantity of useful information contained therein? All facts considered, it still represents the largest scientific study of UFO'S ever undertaken, and as such contains a lot of valuable information for the scientifically inclined UFO investigator.

Best wishes to all you Plasmarians,


Bob Sheaffer