

the apro bulletin

VOL. 31

TUCSON, ARIZONA

NO. 8

REPEATING PHENOMENON INVESTIGATION

PHOTOANALYSIS DISPUTED

By Coral and Jim Lorenzen

When APRO was incorporated in 1967, the latin words, Ad Veritatem Petendam (literally translated: Towards Truth) were adopted as our slogan. With this in mind, the following quotations are germane to the article you are about to read:

"It is more from carelessness about truth than from intentional lying, that there is so much falsehood in the world."----Samuel Johnson to James Boswell.

"It often requires more bravery to tell the simple truth than it does to win a battle."----Josh Billings (Henry Wheeler Shaw).

Conflict In Brazil

On May 21, 1983, APRO received a letter from Irene Granchi, our Brazilian Representative, who had just returned from the second International UFO Congress held at Brazilia. In the letter, she outlined the conflict taking shape in Brazilian UFOlogical circles concerning the authenticity of certain photos based on GSW's (Ground Saucer Watch) "Sophisticated computer enhancement analysis."

Mr. Bill Spaulding, Director of GSW, was one of Walt Andrus's first recruits after MUFON was started in 1970, and was named to the Arizona State Director slot. He was also on J. Allen Hynek's "insiders" list when Hynek made his initial mail-out at the start of CUFOs in 1973.

When the Travis Walton case broke in 1975, Spaulding was on the scene in Snowflake, Arizona as a representative of CUFOS and MUFON. Ultimately, the Waltons turned their backs on Spaulding's "scientific, objective" investigation when he brought a diploma mill "doctor" into the case to examine Travis. Then, after the Waltons walked out on him, Spaulding and his "drug expert" set about a public attack on Walton, accusing Travis of drug abuse and they attempted to discredit Walton in the eyes of the press and the world.

At about the same time (1975) Bill Spaulding began to make public presentations dealing with a computerized approach to photo analysis which he claimed "removed all subjectivity from photo analysis". His approach, for the most part, was based

(See Dispute - Page Two)

A routine inquiry about reporting a UFO which was called in to Davis Monthan Air Force Base and referred to APRO is resulting in an in-depth investigation of repeat phenomenon in Southern Arizona. The available facts so far are interesting and it is hoped that field investigation will yield considerably more.

All witnesses interviewed to date have requested anonymity; however, the following information is as good as that gathered after a thorough investigation of many first-class cases:

A 17-year-old boy confided to his mother that he heard about a sighting of UFOs made by a friend. After questioning him and getting the details, the mother called the Air Force Base and was given APRO's number. On Friday, July 15th, she contacted APRO. After talking to the son's friend, who had witnessed the presence of UFOs while visiting his uncle's ranch, Mr. Lorenzen began planning what may be an extended "stake-out" of the ranch area. Some of the details gathered from the uncle and his wife are:

The objects have been seen from time to time, always in the summer, and always between the hours of 8 and 10 p.m. The most recent sighting was witnessed by the man and wife and their nephew during July, but no definite date has yet been established. The man and wife think they probably see them in the summer when they are out of doors quite a bit at night (the weather being warm).

The sizes of the objects are not known at this time, but the witnesses compare them to a train's headlight approaching. They are a blue-white in color, seem to appear in the sky (elevation 40° plus) and go out of sight well above the horizon. The duration of the past sightings (the couple have not yet estimated the number of times the objects have been seen and have kept no diary) is five minutes at the outside in each case.

Probably the most outstanding thing about this series of sightings is the fact that the witnesses volunteered the information that the animals, their dogs in particular, act strange during the presence of the objects. They press close against their masters and appear to be afraid of the lights.

Instead of being random in their grouping, the lights appear sometimes in a wedge formation, a diamond formation and a straight line. They tend to split and re-form their grouping.

The first thought concerning the possible identity of the lights was that they might be something connected with the Fort Huachuca testing facility, which is south

THE A.P.R.O. BULLETIN
 Copyright © 1983 by the
 AERIAL PHENOMENA
 RESEARCH ORGANIZATION, INC.
 3910 E. Kleindale Road
 Tucson, Arizona 85712
 Phones: 602-323-1825 and 602-323-7363
 Coral E. Lorenzen, Editor
 Richard Heiden, Ass't Editor
 Brian James, Lance P. Johnson,
 Robert Gonzales, Artists

A.P.R.O. STAFF

International Director	L.J. Lorenzen
Deputy Director	Robert Marsland
Secretary-Treasurer	Coral E. Lorenzen
Membership Secretary	Maxine McCoy

THE A.P.R.O. BULLETIN is the official copyrighted publication of the Aerial Phenomena Research Organization, Inc., (A.P.R.O.), 3910 E. Kleindale Rd., Tucson, Arizona 85712, and is issued every month to members and subscribers. The Aerial Phenomena Research Organization, Inc., a non-profit corporation established under the laws of the State of Arizona and a federally recognized scientific and educational tax-exempt organization is dedicated to the eventual solution of the phenomenon of unidentified flying objects. Inquiries pertaining to membership and subscription may be made to the above address.

A.P.R.O. MEMBERSHIP including BULLETIN:

United States	\$15.00/yr.
Canada & Mexico	\$16.00/yr.
(Canadian Currency will be accepted)	
All other Countries	\$18.00/yr.
Air Mail Overseas	\$21.00/yr.

SUBSCRIPTION to BULLETIN only; SAME AS ABOVE.

Newswires, newspapers, radio and television stations may quote up to 250 words from this publication provided that the Aerial Phenomena Research Organization, Inc. (or A.P.R.O.), Tucson, Arizona, is given as the source. Written permission of the Editor must be obtained for quotes in excess of 250 words.

Published August, 1983

* * * * *

Investigation

(Continued from Page One)

of the sighting location. However, Mr. X., owner of the ranch, has been employed at the Fort and has friends still attached there, and no one can rationalize the lights as Huachuca-connected.

Another possibility under consideration is that they may be natural phenomena related to local geomagnetic activity. However, their apparent altitude, duration of the sightings and reported geometric formations would tend to nullify that explanation. ("Earthquake lights" have been photographed on rare occasions but all photos show lighted areas or light forms on or near the ground).

At any rate, a close watch is being kept on this area and we hope to be able to report results in the near future.

* * * * *

Send Renewals Now!

Dispute

(Continued from Page One)

on a misrepresentation of several different aspects of computer hardware and software capabilities. To begin with, the program which he utilized at Spacial Data Systems at Goleta, California (his analysis was not done by GSW "scientists" — it was paid for at SDS) was not designed to analyze photographs. Any such ability of said program was entirely subjective with Bill. It existed only in his imagination. For example:

(1) His claims concerning Pixel (picture cell) characteristics disclose that he either did not understand the nature of pixels or was deliberately misleading his audience.

(2) He claimed that a density slice would confirm the density of the object photographed. Not true. The density slice only shows the brightness of the object relative to the rest of the picture under the cursor.

(3) He also made several unsupportable claims with regard to edge enhancement as a means of determining atmospheric scatter and thus, distance from camera. If this technique has any value in this respect, that value ends with first generation photographs. Bill seldom (if ever) had first generation photos to work with.

Anyone questioning Spaulding would be met with a barrage of computereze mixed with fractured English. The result initially was a sort of "Emperor's New Clothes" syndrome where many had the feeling that something was wrong but were afraid to expose themselves to the point of saying so. The magic word "computer" and the prevalent computer illiteracy of the time helped preserve the illusion. Even so, the game would have been short-lived had it not been for the active support of Walt Andrus who called Spaulding's work "superb" and for the tacit support of Dr. Hynek who continued to appear on programs with Bill and to lecture under GSW sponsorship, even though his own photo analyst, Fred Beckman, had told him early on that Bill's "system" was "all wet". Anyway, Bill got "good press."

New Approach

More recently, Bill has found another way to make headlines. He claims that the "saucer belief system" is being fostered by government intelligence agencies. He calls this The Federal Hypothesis and says it is based on documents obtained through a "freedom of information suit against the C.I.A." No one else who has seen the documents in question (including the writers) agrees with Bill but that is of no consequence to him for he was outlining the new concept before he had seen the documents on which it is purportedly based.

Again his opinions fly in the face of evidence. To give one example, he explains the Lonnie Zamora sighting at Socorro, New Mexico (April 24, 1964) as being of the LEM (Lunar Expeditionary Module) being

tested. There are so many things wrong with this explanation that we don't know where to start. Most of us who watched the lunar landing on TV know what the LEM looks like. Lonnie Zamorra described a smooth, egg-shaped object. Need we say more?

Documentation

There have recently come into APRO's possession copies of several letters and papers which were passed among various high-ranking MUFON and CUFOS people. They indicate that various individuals have been aware of the Spaulding "computer enhancement" mess for quite some time....as early as 1976, in fact.

But what has been done about it?

Three photographs in particular (among the 600 plus or minus which Spaulding claims he has "examined") concern APRO at this particular period in time:

(1) The Barra da Tijuca photos, taken by photographer Ed Keffel in the company of reporter Joao Martins on May 7, 1952, at Barra da Tijuca, Brazil. These photos were carefully researched by the late Dr. Olavo T. Fontes, APRO's representative for Brazil at the time. They were never called into question by anyone other than Donald Menzel until Spaulding did so. Spaulding found nothing new — the same dead leaf Menzel had harped about for years before. In order to do any kind of competent computer study of a photograph, a first generation print is the first and absolute requirement. APRO has always been the holder of the only set of negatives outside of Brazil. Spaulding's prints had to be third generation at best — so where does that leave his "sophisticated computer enhancement"?

(2) The Rex Heflin photos, taken by Rex Heflin an employee (then) of the Santa Ana, California Road Department, on August 3, 1965. These photos had been exhaustively researched by the (then) NICAP Los Angeles Subcommittee, headed by Mrs. Idabel Epperson. Mrs. Epperson is known for her meticulous, scientific research methodology and any researcher with a thorough knowledge of the field would stake his or her own reputation on Idabel's ability and scruples. Yet, Spaulding "analyzed" the Heflin photos and found them wanting. Wholly ridiculous.

(3) The Sedona, Arizona photo, originally published in the APRO Bulletin for March—April 1973, was taken by C.D. Ghormley on September 23, 1967, with a Kodak Holiday 127 camera. It shows several light images extending from the ground up into the clouds. Ghormley stated the object looked like a water tank on the side of the mountain, he took the photograph and when he took the camera away from his eyes, the object was gone. The developed film with one frame of the object, showed the striated image.

Bill Spaulding, in the lead article of the August 1976 MUFON Journal, pronounced the image on the Sedona

print to be "a lens reflection and a typical example of a misidentification of a common anomaly."

A rebuttal of Spaulding's findings, written by Jan E. Herr, and privately circulated in 1977, points out that the optics of the Holiday 127 rule out a lens reflection, for that camera simply does not have the complex lens system needed to produce the many "reflections" which comprise the image in the Sedona photograph. Mr. Herr was, at the time, a computer programmer and was (probably still is) Director of Precision Monitoring Systems, which is made up of more than 30 engineers and scientists, and Mr. Herr is eminently qualified to critique Spaulding's pronouncement.

APRO has learned, through the years, that Mr. Spaulding's method of "computer enhancement" consisted simply of submitting photographs along with the proper amount of money, to Spacial Data Systems, in Goleta, California, and then putting his own interpretation on the results.

If that were not enough, it appears that Spaulding has, for some time, been misrepresenting his educational qualifications! To wit:

The biographical sketch included in the 1976 MUFON Proceedings, reads: "Bill's specialized technical education has been received in schools from New York to California, including Bowling Green University in Ohio."

Friedman Speaks Out

Now, let's hear from a *real* scientist with *real* qualifications. In a letter to Bill Spaulding dated September 10, 1979, Stanton T. Friedman, nuclear physicist and author and frequent MUFON speaker, wrote:

"...I have had several concerns, however, about your activities that led me to question whether or not you do indeed have a scientific background.

- a. Your reasoning and activities in the Heflin picture evaluation and the Walton case struck me as not being like those of any of the many engineers with whom I have worked over the years.
- b. There seems to be exaggeration in your public commentary — I don't believe that there are 500 professional people associated with your group, for example.

"...for the above reasons and others....I decided to do some checking to evaluate my suspicions.

"....Here are my findings:

- a. According to your employer your job title is that of a high level technician and in no way implies an engineering degree or background.
- b. According to your employer the only post high school education you have is a one year certificate in electronics from Griswold Technical Institute in Cleveland.
- c. According to Griswold you attended a 12 hour

per week electronics course from March to May, 1961, for 7 weeks but did not complete the course and did not receive a grade or certificate.

d. According to Bowling Green University you have not received any degrees from them and have not completed any courses at any of their campuses.

Please correct any of the above findings if they are in error. Please also understand that I do not believe it is necessary to have a college degree to be a competent UFO researcher...The point is that apparently you have seriously misrepresented your background. I don't believe that fraud should have any place in dealing with the public, the media, or colleagues. I think you should seriously consider setting the record straight and should henceforth cease and desist from making any claims that are not totally accurate. I have no present plans to make my findings public but will consider doing so should you continue the misrepresentation." Unquote.

Mr. Friedman did not receive an answer, and Spaulding appeared on the much-lamented NOVA show tagged on the video screen as an "engineer". (see the APRO Bulletin, Vol. 30, No. 11)

Mr. Friedman has given his permission to APRO to "publish, all or part of the letter and to reproduce copies for whomever you please."

Strangely, both CUFOS and MUFON lamented the content and negative nature of the NOVA show, but said nothing about Bill Spaulding, their colleague, who was falsely billed as an engineer and "photographic expert."

Why?

A copy of Friedman's letter was sent to Walt Andrus of MUFON and J. Allen Hynek of CUFOS, so they have been aware of this problem for at least *four long years!*

Explanations Overdue!

Yet, in the April issue of the MUFON Journal, Walt Andrus states that one of the contributors to the photo-analysis section of the new MUFON Field Investigator's Manual is William H. Spaulding!

And — at the 2nd International UFO Congress at Brazilia, in April, 1983, Dr. Hynek named one Mr. Gevaerd to the post of CUFOS Representative for Brazil. Mr. Gevaerd is a disciple of the Spaulding pronouncements on "computer enhancement" photo-analysis and is busily passing judgement on the Barra da Tijuca photos as well as others, as hoaxes.

APRO has been quiet about these problems, hoping that CUFOS or MUFON, or both, would take seriously Hynek's admonitions (voiced years before to Hynek by Mr. Lorenzen) at the 1981 MUFON Symposium concerning "policing" the field of UFology, and accreditation.

This whole mess is another one of the reasons that APRO has stayed clear of the North American UFO

Federation. We just simply don't want to get involved.

If we tended toward paranoia, we *could* interpret this whole situation as a deliberately orchestrated plan to discredit the better UFO photo cases.

It is to the everlasting credit of Stanton T. Friedman that he took it upon himself to bring this situation to the attention of responsible members of the UFological community.

* * * * *

FIREBALL STREAKS ACROSS SOUTH

EAST TENNESSEE, January 28, 1983 - A huge ball of bright white light with a long tail of fire zipped through the skies of East Tennessee and was seen as far away as Savannah, Georgia, and North Carolina. Local authorities began receiving reports about the ball around 4 a.m., and many callers reported hearing loud explosions at the same time the light was seen. Several pilots also radioed in to Tyson Airport's control tower about the object.

Speculation that the ball of fire was a meteorite flying at high altitude was refuted by at least one witness. Steve Gilliam, who witnessed the object with fellow employees at the Ashland Chemical Co. in East Knoxville, said the ball wasn't more than 400 feet above the ground. It made an "ungodly sound" as it passed over and Gilliam saw a red glow as the object disappeared over a hill. He described the ball as "bigger than a 747 (airplane) in diameter", with a 50-60 foot flame "stretching from it", and said there were three explosions as it passed over.

Both the Knoxville Police and Knoxville Sheriff's Dept. received calls from citizens and officers who reported seeing the ball and hearing the explosions. Neither police nor deputies could find any evidence of the object.

* * * * *

COMPUTER PROJECT UPDATE

By Coral E. Lorenzen

Since the announcement of APRO's plans to purchase a computer, we have received both contributions of funds and words of encouragement. There have also been several very good recommendations for the type and make of computer and software. Some

have asked why APRO decided to invest in a computer at this time.

The fact of the matter is that we had a couple of choices. I would frankly have liked to move APRO back into public offices. When we established a public office in 1969, we had accomodated APRO in our home for 18 years, and since it was moved back to our home in 1981, it has been a total of 20 years, which is some kind of a record. In the past, we have devoted at least one room (early on in APRO's history), remodeled an entire garage to accomodate APRO, and at present it is lodged in one bedroom and a large sunporch, plus rented storage for non-sensitive files off-premises.

However, the only justification for a public office would be for purposes of public relations. I maintain a reasonably clean, neat and attractive home, which is adequate for accomodating members of the press, etc., when the need arises. If we had invested in office rent, our initial fund would have been depleted in a few months with nothing to show for it. Therefore, the computer project was our decision.

Many of the reports on file with APRO have been published in the Bulletin or in books. In the 1960s, when the Condon Committee asked for APRO's case input, 125 of the best (not necessarily *the* best, as many were confidential) cases in our files were copied and forwarded to the Colorado Project. However, a residue of thousands of unpublished reports remained.

It is to this residue and the thousands (possibly hundreds of thousands) of reports in our foreign periodical file dating back "to the beginning" as well as the many (we have no accurate estimate) hundreds of reports acquired when APRO took over the reading, sorting and investigation of the National Enquirer "One Million Dollar UFO Proof Contest" entries in the 1970s, that the computer project addresses. Granted, the project is an ambitious one estimated to require years of work, but it is an historically significant one.

Response from our members has been heartening, but even with the initial donation by Mr. James Wonders and the contributions received so far, we are still short of our goal.

When you renew your membership, why not include an extra dollar or two (or more) for this important endeavor?

Remember, your contributions are tax deductible, and APRO's tax determination number is: EO - 69-149.

Thank you for your support!

* * * * *

RUSSIA ADMITS UFOS MAY EXIST

RUSSIA, January 7, 1983 - Moscow (AAP) - A

weekly Soviet newspaper, *Sovietskaya Kultura*, said today that UFOs could exist. Many senior Soviet scientists "do not deny that such phenomena could be connected with extraterrestrial civilization," the paper said, adding that among them was a corresponding member of the elite Academy of Science.

In an example of recent strange happenings in the Soviet Union itself, the report said a fighter plane encountered a "fiery ball" 5 meters in diameter in 1981. The ball travelled in front of the aircraft for some distance "as if measuring its speed" and then passed through it, exploding as it reached the tail. Scientists said the resulting structural damage to the aircraft could not have been made by ball lightning and added that lightning would not be able to move in the same direction as the fighter.

The newspaper also revealed that the Soviet Union was working on plans for a long-distance unmanned space mission designed to track down signs of civilization on distant planets.

* * * * *

ASTRONOMICAL DATA

By Lee Emery

The purpose of this column is to give observers a general idea of the location of significant stars and planets in the night sky. It is applicable in most areas of the USA, Canada, Europe, Central Asia and Japan. All times given are approximate and may vary up to 30 minutes either way, depending on the observer's location in relation to his local time meridian. In addition, add one hour for the beginning of the month, and subtract one hour for the end of the month (for stars only). All times are given in standard time. Add one hour for daylight savings time.

SEPTEMBER 1983

PROMINENT PLANETS: *Venus*, is now a morning star, rising in the east about half an hour before sunrise.

Mars also appears in the morning sky, rising about an hour before sunrise in the east.

Jupiter can be found in the SW sky after sunset approximately 20° above the horizon. It sets in the west about an hour later.

Saturn can be seen about 15° above the WSW horizon after sunset and sets a short time later in the west.

BRIGHTEST STARS: At 7 p.m.: *Vega* can be found directly overhead. *Antares* is found about 20° above the SSW horizon. *Arcturus* is found 30° above the western horizon.

At 9 p.m.: *Vega* is 60° above the western horizon.

Antares is just above the WSW horizon. *Arcturus* is

just above the western horizon. *Capella* is 15° above the NNE horizon.

At 11 p.m.: *Vega* is 45° above the western horizon. *Capella* is 30° above the ENE horizon. *Aldebaran* has just risen above the eastern horizon.

At 1 a.m.: *Vega* is 30° above the WNW horizon. *Capella* is 40° above the ENE horizon. *Aldebaran* is 30° above the east. The *Orion Constellation*, including *Rigel* and *Betelgeuse* has just risen in the east.

At 3 a.m.: *Vega* is just above the NW horizon. *Capella* is 60° above the eastern horizon. *Aldebaran* is 60° above the SE horizon. The *Orion Constellation* is 35° above the SE horizon. *Sirius* has just risen in the ESE.

At 5 a.m.: *Capella* is almost directly overhead. *Aldebaran* is 60° above the south. The *Orion Constellation* is 50° above the south. *Sirius* is 35° above the SE horizon. *Procyon* is 40° above the ESE horizon.

METEOR SHOWERS: There are no major showers this month.

MOON PHASES: New moon - Sept. 7
First quarter - Sept. 14
Full moon - Sept. 22
Last quarter - Sept. 29

OCTOBER 1983

PROMINENT PLANETS: *Venus* rises in the east about 4:30 a.m. and is about 35° above the horizon just before sunrise.

Mars can be seen very close to *Venus*.

Jupiter is found 25° above the SW horizon after sunset and sets an hour later.

Saturn is found just above the western horizon after sunset and sets shortly after.

BRIGHTEST STARS: Star positions remain basically unchanged this month except times are one hour earlier in the first part of the month and two hours earlier towards the end of the month.

METEOR SHOWERS: The *Draconids* appear on October 10 but will only be visible in Asia as they peak around noon EDT. The *Orionids* arrive on October 21, but the full moon will hinder viewing to a large extent.

MOON PHASES: New moon - Oct. 6
First quarter - Oct. 13
Full moon - Oct. 21
Last quarter - Oct. 29

* * * * *

— Please —
Send Address Changes!

Read Cover Notices and Renew Now!

* * * * *

Cattle Mutilations and the Imagined "Culprits" — A Psychological Perspective

© Peter A. Jordan

(Continued from Vol. 31, No. 7)

Gomez told me that it had been suggested that the animal had perhaps been killed by coyotes, though he did not find this an acceptable explanation.

Through my interviews with others who had either directly or indirectly been involved in the researching of the Gomez cases, I encountered a dazzling array of additional claims. I learned of unusual radiation readings observed near the carcasses, cows livers that may have been exposed to microwave radiation, hair samples taken from the Gomez herd which "flouresced" when placed under ultraviolet light, chaff-like material found scattered on the Gomez ranch, the use of "laser surgery" in the removal of the reproductive organs from the cows, wiretapping of investigators, forecasts of human mutilations in the area, the presence of certain "drugs in the blood stream of the mutilated carcasses, radio "interference" by UFOs (seen near the Gomez ranch by police), and strange "pod marks" found in the ground near some of the dead animals.

I must confess that at the time I was introduced to these astonishing claims not even the slightest suspicion of their validity crept into my thinking. From everything I had been told, in fact, there seemed little reason *not* to believe that all of the interpretations made with regard to the phenomenon were sound, after all, who was I? An experienced rancher? A well-seasoned police officer? On what grounds could I presume to question the perceptions of these individuals? I had neither the inclination nor the "expertise" to doubt. In truth — though I lacked the ability to realize it at the time — the infection had taken a pernicious hold on me and it would not let go.

Cognitive Illusions

It may appear to you at this point that I am prepared to admit to not even a *hint* of mystery surrounding the entire mutilation affair. This is clearly not so. I *am* inclined, however, to regard the vast per-

centage of mutilation claims as largely spurious, with only a provisional subset worthy of serious interest. The Dulce mutilations — from what I can tell — seem deserving of such a preferential status. Some of the Canadian events may, likewise, fall into this category, though the scarcity of data made available by Canadian researchers does little to provide us with real faith in this regard.

One should not, however, interpret these remarks as meaning that I wish to advocate some sort of mindless tolerance in deciding whether a mystery of profound scientific dimension is posed by any or all of the *potentially* genuine mutilations documented thusfar. Disappointing as it sounds — at least from the perspective of the natural sciences — the study of cattle mutilations seems worth not even a yawn. The fact of the matter is, once stripped of its heavy psychological underpinnings, the entire mystery loses its allure, becoming impotent and dull.

But how, we must ask, could such a colorful masquerade have been conceived? To what might we possibly attribute the efficacy of this magnificent illusion?

While I do not pretend to have anything but an imperfect understanding of what *motivational* forces may have prompted ranchers, police officers, veterinarians, and independent researchers to perpetuate such large numbers of bogus claims, I believe it is possible to uncover those peculiar mental *properties* to which such claims may, in large part, owe their existence.

It was, really, the Gestalt psychologists who first observed that human perception, at its most fundamental level, is a function of distinct *laws of organization*. One such law is that of *simplicity*, according to which a stimulus pattern is seen in such a way that the resulting structure is as simple as possible. A triangle overlapping a rectangle, for example, is commonly perceived as just that and not as a complicated eleven-sided figure. The perception of *similar things being grouped together* is yet another Gestalt principle, as is that of finding things being *near* to each other appearing as though they are *grouped together*. In my study of mutilation data, I have found these principles expressing themselves time and again. As many of us know, for example, there is *wide* variability among cases with regard to missing organs. Yet, it is frequently stated by many of the so-called “experts” that this is *not* so, and that the target organs are often the same. From an “economic” viewpoint, the perception of the experts make cognitive sense, thus it becomes dominant. Likewise, a rancher suffering a cattle death on his land, and in *close proximity* to another ranch on which a similar death has occurred (whether human-induced or not) will, no doubt, perceive these two independent events as part of a larger conceptual grouping. This tendency arises from the Gestalt notion that similar things will get perceived as somehow *belonging together*; finding

the events to be spatially contiguous further magnifies the effect.

In no way should we take this as justification for finding fault, of course, with those who have reported (and reported on) the mutilations. These patterns of mental processing are, I assure you, shared by human-kind in general, and ought not to be confused with conscious forms of human deception. *Ignorance* of these principles, though, can certainly lead to the most severe forms of *self-deception*, as a study of human credulity throughout history will show.

In order to understand the relevance of Gestalt psychology to mutilation phenomenon it is necessary that one learn to appreciate the extent to which the perceptual system defends itself against what is commonly known as “cognitive overload.” I will not bother dragging you through the experimental literature on this issue, but I will tell you that there is overwhelming evidence for some sort of “selective attention” to those details of experience we come to regard as most salient. The perils of this process are, naturally, quite obvious, though the adaptive function of this selective filter in keeping “both oars in the water,” so to speak, is something we ought always to keep in mind. Because of the limits then — forced upon us by our own biological evolution — of perceptual awareness, stimulus generalizations are inevitable, since one will seek out the most convenient way of sorting out incoming data from the external environment. Stereotypes — of which so-called “classic” (i.e. human-induced) mutilations may be an example — thus become categories for sorting events according to their membership in particular groups and therefore have functional utility for simplifying and organizing complex information. That stereotypes are *notoriously* inaccurate I am certain everyone here in this audience would agree. But, as we also know, this knowledge in no way inhibits their use.

Extending this argument a bit further, then, we should not be surprised to learn that *comprehending* an event (anomalous or otherwise) is synonymous with integrating features of that event into a stereotyped “schema”, a constructive process which, from all indications, occurs at time of encoding.⁴ In 1973, two psychologists, J.D. Bransford and M.K. Johnson, conducted a study in which a group of subjects were told to read a story entitled “Watching a peace march from the fortieth floor,” which described a view seen from far above. Embedded in the story, however, was this rather odd sentence: “The landing was gentle and luckily the atmosphere was such that no special suits had to be worn.” Few subjects reported this sentence when asked to recall as much of the story as they could. On the other hand, when the same story was given to another group of subjects but this time with a new title, “A space trip to an inhabited planet,” over half were able to recall an idea from the key sentence. Whether the critical material was recalled, therefore,

depended on its being appropriate to given title. The title, it can reasonably be inferred, induced the subjects to activate a given knowledge schema; if the sentence did not fit the schema, there was difficulty experienced in encoding it.

Support for these experimental findings is easily obtained with respect to the semantic structuring of mutilation theories. Those for whom the extraterrestrial theory is the most appropriate, for example, show what I consistently have found to be a tendency towards assimilating the mutilation data to this particular category of understanding, betraying serious omissions, however, in their account of historical events. In reviewing the literature on the mutilation topic, for instance, the purported presence of tranquilizing drugs in the blood stream of some mutilated carcasses is seldom acknowledged, particularly if the writer is decidedly in favor of the extraterrestrial view. No such omission, however, is evidenced by those interpretations provided by supporters of cult or conspiracy theories, though individuals in these later two categories prove to be no less vulnerable to cognitive distortions, choosing to ignore other aspects of the phenomenon that are markedly incongruent with the structure of their own belief system.

(To be continued in the next issue)

PRESS REPORTS

By Doris and Joe Graziano

CONNECTICUT, October 21, 1982 - Enfield - A Manchester, CT, newspaper, *The Journal Inquirer*, reported that a man had a bizarre experience that may be related to a UFO sighting the previous day. The man, a former Air Force security policeman, asked that his name be withheld.

The man was walking his small dog on a path through a nearby woods at around 7:30 p.m. when he heard a faint vibrating buzz. As the sound grew louder, he decided to follow it, but realized it was all around him. Finally the noise grew so loud that he and his dog stopped in their tracks and waited. The buzzing continued at that level for about 2 minutes.

"You could feel the vibrations go through your bones," he said. His dog started barking but "I could hardly hear him" because the noise was so loud.

The dog slipped its collar and bolted back down the path toward their home. Suddenly, the man saw three intense flashes of white light—each for only a split second—then there was silence.

CALIFORNIA, November, 1982 - Davey's Valley - A man and his wife were camping when they were awakened after midnight with their bodies "responding

to static electricity—every hair stood on end." A huge object hovered above them.

The object was "shaped like a manta ray" and was at least 200 feet across. It made a humming sound and slowly passed over the couple, heading to the east. "We were scared. We packed up and drove straight home," said the couple.

LOUISIANA, December 30, 1982 - Coushatta - A number of residents called officials at around dusk reporting strange objects in the sky. Some said it looked like an airplane, while others reported a fiery ball hovering in the sky, or crashing to earth.

One man said he saw a "circle of lights with a smaller circle of lights within the bigger circle. It was just hovering over the treetops and it sounded like a fan motor, nothing else, then all of a sudden it left."

A separate witness reported seeing the same lights in about the same spot. "It was hovering over the treetops, but it made no sound like a helicopter or an airplane, just a silent rushing sound, then it took off real fast and disappeared," said the witness.

In the days following the reports, searchers combed the surrounding area and found fresh broken trees, sheared off at the top, with the green branches laying on the ground. They also reported a strange, unexplainable "acid-like" odor in a certain area.

ENGLAND, January 17, 1983 - Torquary, Devon - Bruce Cowling and Andrew Jarvis were riding on a motorcycle between Shaldon and Maidencombe beach when Bruce glanced towards the sky and saw "a large, blue light heading towards the ground. It was white-tipped and extremely bright."

The object was further described as "about 30 feet long and shaped like the body of a rocket firework. It was heading at 45 degrees and left a vapor trail behind it just like a jet. It was just like a blue flame." The boys lost sight of the object when it "seemed to land in a field on the landward side of us."

ALABAMA - February 9, 1983 - Stapleton - Vivian White and her family were standing on a sidewalk in front of a school between 7 and 7:30 p.m. when they heard some boys screaming, "look at the UFO." Mrs. White looked up and saw what "looked like a cloud or a star with a big bright light and lots of little blue lights on it."

The object hovered over the treetops in front of the school, moved slowly toward the school with a sound like a motor humming, then it disappeared. The witnesses said it was the size of a television.

Vivian's father, I.B. Byrd, lives about a mile in back of the school with pine trees in between. He and his family saw the object come from over the trees, stop and hover for a few seconds, turn out the big bright light, then move off in a northeasterly direction and disappear.