



Where Have You Gone, Commander Quasgaa?

UFOlogist Karl Pflock has done what is seemingly impossible these days—he has come up with a pro-UFO theory that is actually new. More than a few veteran UFOlogists are unhappy with the sensationalism and low quality of UFO cases in recent years (although the majority seem not to notice or to care). They long for the Good Old Days back in the 1950s and 1960s, when UFOs and their occupants behaved like nuts-and-bolts spacecraft and living spacemen were supposed to behave (instead of today's typical report of aliens floating in through bedroom walls and "beaming" a sleeping victim up to a distant craft for dreamlike sexual activities). Why have the type and kind of reports changed? Skeptics of various stripes have tended to put forth socio-psychological explanations: the reports do not describe real events, and the reports have changed because society has changed. But Pflock sees it a different way: He suggests that the aliens *were* here during UFOlogy's Golden Age, but they've since left.

Pflock is the author of *Roswell: Inconvenient Facts and the Will To Believe* (Prometheus Books, 2001—see www.prometheusbooks.com/site/catalog/book_962.html), a skeptical look at the

Robert Sheaffer's World Wide Web page for UFOs and other skeptical subjects is at www.debunker.com.

alleged Roswell saucer crash. Pflock would say that the aliens probably were indeed here at the time of the supposed crash in 1947, but based on the evidence he lets them off the hook for this incident. He also writes a "fifth column" for James Moseley's UFO gossip sheet, *Saucer Smear* (see www.martiansgohome.com/smear/).

Pflock isn't willing to commit himself to a hard and fast date for the last authentic UFO case, but he suggests the following scenario as a "working hypothesis":



Karl Pflock. Credit: Gildas Bourdais & Karl Pflock

Based on the data, I'm subjectively certain that we have been visited by nonhuman intelligent beings—to my 1950s-conditioned mind, most likely from an extra-solar planet of our galaxy. However, we do not yet have proof of this—as opposed to very strong evidence pointing to it—though such proof very well may be in the data already in hand, as yet unrecognized as such.

I use the past tense advisedly. If I am correct that some sightings were observations

of such visitors and their vehicles, I suspect that they were here and left some time ago—arriving in the early to mid-1940s, departing in the late 1960s or early 1970s. . . . They studied our entire system and us quite closely. Once in a while a couple of grad students got out of hand and buzzed the natives. On occasion some ambitious scientists overstepped a bit and interfered with the locals. . . .

Pflock suggests that the strongest

evidence of alien visitation are cases like the "classic" Trent photos of 1950 (see www.debunker.com/trent.html) and the Nash-Fortenberry airline pilot sighting of 1952. He also is big on "the famous, and in my considered opinion, real 1961 abduction of Barney and Betty Hill," although the psychiatrist to whom the Hills first told this story didn't believe it, and Betty Hill has since gone on to report—among other things—seeing entire squadrons of UFOs in the skies over New Hampshire, babysitting a ghost, and watching a truck levitate. Pflock's own experience as a youth seeing a "strangely-behaving light in the sky," along with four other people, has also contributed to his belief that at least some UFO sightings *were* real, even if none of them seem to be today.

Pflock suggests 1973 as a tentative date for the alien departure, which happens to coincide with the last great wave of UFO sightings, at least in the U.S. The implications of his theory for UFOlogy are enormous: Every UFO sighting and abduction claim occurring from about 1974 onward is totally, 100 percent bogus. This would invalidate such UFOlogical classics as the Travis Walton "abduction" (Pflock has elsewhere noted that Walton's account seems to have "borrowed" from Heinlein's science fiction—see this column, July/August 2001); all of the "bedroom abduction" accounts put forth by Budd Hopkins and "the threat" to Earth as discerned by David Jacobs; the Mexico City sightings and videos; and all of the Space Shuttle "UFO videos," to mention just a few.

One possibility to consider is that

the aliens did not leave Earth, but simply migrated to the South American country of Chile. Because the locals have reported so many UFO sightings during the past two decades, Miguel Marquez, the mayor of the Maipo River region near Santiago, has declared his region an official "UFO tourism zone" (see www.siliconvalley.com/ml/siliconvalley/3463607.htm). He plans to have two observation centers erected, mark the sites of local sightings, and even offer workshops on important subjects such as how to photograph alien visitors. One Chilean astronomer suggested that people were confused by seeing the bright center of the southern Milky Way, or else the Southern Lights owing to Chile's southern latitude. A better suggestion comes from UFO skeptic James Oberg, who notes that Chile "is on the ground track of satellite launchings from Russia's Plesetsk space center, and rocket reboost firings and fuel dumps have been regularly occurring over that part of the world for about thirty years."

Meanwhile, here in the U.S. the entire UFO field is presently *very* quiet, compared to just a few years ago. Veteran UFOlogist James W. Moseley writes, "Let's face it, folks: Things are slow in UFOlogy these days. Most of Farish's December 2001 issue [a UFO newsclipping service] is devoted to crop circles and other overseas matters, as there just isn't enough going on, here on this side of the pond." John Velez, the

Web master of the Abduction Information Center (www.virtuallystrange.net/aic/) writes that "the number of reports that I receive directly has gone from a whopping five to fifteen reports a *day* to maybe one or two a week," and this is in spite of a steady increase in visits to his Web site. Mark Rodeghier of CUFOS has also recently noted that the number of abduction reports they receive has been steadily declining over the past few years. Velez speculates, tongue-in-cheek, "Have the 'Bugs' finally collected enough human DNA? Are the 'aliens' through with us? Has 'Phase Two' of whatever the hell it is 'They' are up to been completed/accomplished?" Perhaps the recent decline in abductions is further evidence that the aliens have departed, although Pflock would place their departure much farther back than about the year 2000. The recent cancellation of *The X-Files* is probably a reflection of the public's satiation with UFO abduction and conspiracy tales, which can only titillate for so long until the fickle public taste clamors for some novel entertainment. UFOs will almost certainly be back—they've gone into hibernation several times before—although it will probably require some new angle or new "blockbuster" conspiracy claim to revive them. It's also possible that UFOs might be supplanted by some entirely new and unexpected form of conspiracy-related fantasy entertainment that gives the public

the same vicarious thrill of imaginary but exciting unknown powers.

* * *

Mr. Philip H. Krapf has sometimes described himself as the retired Metro Desk Editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, having shared in a team Pulitzer Prize, although his position there has at other times been more accurately described as "copy editor." But no matter: he soon went to work writing a bizarre tale of UFO contact and abduction. This should hardly be news—hardly a day goes by, it seems, that we don't hear a tale along these lines. What is remarkable, however, is not his tale, but rather his success in getting it believed. Krapf says that on June 11, 1997, the aliens whisked him aboard their spacecraft, subjected him not to medical examinations but instead to three days of drawn-out meetings with various members of the interstellar bureaucracy, and commanded him to begin writing a book. The finished product became *The Contact Has Begun* (Hay House, 1998). It reportedly sold 20,000 copies, and was soon followed up by *The Challenge of Contact* (Origin Press, 2001).

Krapf writes of his contact with The Verdants, who are an enlightened, peace-loving race coming from a planet that is 14 million light-years away. They have somehow managed to park a spacecraft directly behind the Moon, where we can't see it. These superior beings, who represent an Intergalactic Federation, are strict vegetarians. They promise

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a wonderful future for Earth in which all our needs will be met and everyone lives in peace and harmony. But there's a catch: approximately 20 percent of Earth's population is too greedy and self-centered to accept an egalitarian utopia. So these un-peace-loving people must be peacefully rounded up and peacefully transported to remote places of exile, whether they like it or not. They must also not be allowed to reproduce any more of their miserable lot, so that means they'll have to be sterilized as well. Peacefully, of course, as the Verdants carry no weapons.

While Krapf was aboard the spacecraft, he recognized many other prominent people who were undergoing the same process of education that he was. Eight hundred fifty of these "ambassadors" were scheduled to begin speaking out in early 2002, and meeting with Earth's leaders to prepare

them for humanity's forthcoming rebirth, in a city appropriately named Genesis, that will be built overnight by the aliens.

The Challenge of Contact carries endorsements from UFO promoters Art Bell, Daniel Sheehan, Leo Sprinkle, and Robert O. Dean, which should come as no surprise. Perhaps more surprising is its foreword from Silicon Valley's millionaire UFO promoter Joe Firmage, who one hopes would have enough sense to stay away from such blatant balderdash, but obviously doesn't. While many mainstream UFOlogists have expressed serious doubts about Krapf's claims, he is nonetheless quickly becoming a major attraction at UFO and New Age conferences.

The first public announcements from our new alien overlords were supposed to have already occurred. Skeptics like myself would obviously be

among those that Krapf's peaceful Space Overlords would have to lock away. However, Krapf told his audience at the 2001 Bay Area UFO Expo that he had been whisked back to the Verdants' ship, "The Goodwill," last September 11. He was informed that the events of that day had convinced the aliens that humanity was still too barbaric to join the Galactic Federation, and so the plans for immediate contact were being indefinitely postponed—which thereby conveniently gets him off the hook for his dramatic prediction for the following year. So for better or worse, the Intergalactic Utopia will not immediately be upon us. At least Mr. Krapf was wise enough to provide an excuse for his failed prediction *before* its failure was obvious—prophets typically wait until afterward, yet few disciples seem to care. □

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