

11 November 1966

Mr. Andy Florio
1634 N. Westerly Terrace
Los Angeles, California 90026

Dear Mr. Florio:

I hope you don't have the idea that we're trying to explain everything away about UFO's. Nothing would be farther from the truth. What I want to get rid of are all the sightings that don't tell us a damned thing, like (I repeat) Mr. Mannor's sighting. Now maybe Dr. Hynek missed talking to the right people and overlooked something really interesting - it's possible, it's happened before and will continue to happen until somebody puts enough money into the kitty to permit a good long look at the problem. From what we know about Mannor's sighting, he couldn't tell us enough to be interesting. He got scared too soon and didn't go close enough to get a good look - what he did report still makes "swamp gas" as good a guess as any, and a lot better than "flying saucer".

We know that policemen in the area saw something much more interesting - but only a couple of them - the rest didn't know a star from a car headlight. Last weekend I stood in the middle of a group of five policemen on Long Island while they pointed out the UFO that started that whole flap. It was the star Sirius, which I have been familiar with since I was seven years old. No possible doubt about it. The only way out of that is to call me a liar, and you'd better bring the other three men in your combo if you do!

Back to Mannor: the cops who shined their flashlights on the area saw the flames before and after. They saw nothing land or take off. The lights were just too dim to see when a flashlight was on. It's not ridiculous, it's what they told us, face to face. What more can we ask?

Now to the Air Force. The Air Force doesn't believe there is anything at all of interest in UFO's - it's strictly a public relations problem to them. If you understand that you understand all there is to know about the official actions taken (or lack thereof). Hynek doesn't, and I don't, make any "secret reports" to anybody.

The reason that nobody mentioned marks on the ground in the swamp is that the area was examined carefully for any traces and nothing at all was found. I don't know where you got your information, but we know for a fact that anybody who says marks were found is just plain wrong, or worse. The only investigated case in which marks were found was the Socorro, New Mexico case, and that's still an unknown.

You can refuse to believe me if you want to, although I don't know why you would think I'm not telling the truth: the Air Force spends more on wastebaskets than it does on Project Blue Book. They gave the Condon committee \$300,000 to study UFO's at our insistence, and they want to wash their hands of the whole business. The people in the Pentagon look on UFO's as they look on ESP, ghosts and fortune tellers.

I can understand your suspicions - it must seem outrageous to you to hear things like stars, satellites, balloons, swamp gas and so on offered as explanations when you know for certain that at least one UFO wasn't anything like that. What you have to understand is that most UFO reports are lousy. The people involved have no experience, apparently, with anything above eye level. They don't know that stars can twinkle red and green near the horizon, they don't know that stars rise and set, they don't know a satellite when they're looking at it. A person will see a point of light moving slowly across the sky; if you ask him what ordinary objects might give the same appearance, he's at a loss. He can't name a single thing. It's appalling. Worse than that, it fouls up all attempts to get at the real UFO phenomenon; it's like trying to find the fire when every alarm has been pulled in the whole city. I can't blame the Pentagon for brushing the whole thing aside, when most of the reports they get are no more than indicators of public ignorance.

Of course, when you say "the" Air Force you're talking about half a million people. I met a real True Believer at headquarters at Suffolk County Air Force Base, Long Island - and a complete scoffer, who was the official UFO officer but who wasn't allowed to handle any UFO reports because he kept insulting the witnesses. There are all kinds at all levels - they're just people. No smarter, no dumber than the rest of us. In the pentagon they may be a little smarter (I hope), but all they know about UFO's is what Blue Book tells them, when some congressman makes a fuss and demands information. And Blue Book consists of four people, in one tiny room: Major Quintanilla, Lt. Marley, a secretary, and an airman. That's what people are referring to as "the Air Force".

You're right, we do have a tough job, but it's not the job you're thinking of. We're fighting apathy from the Air Force on one hand, and wild rumor-mongering on the other. We've been trying for three years to get a valid scientific investigation started, without acting as if we are relaying the Word from Xathru of the planet Grx. I think we've succeeded pretty well

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so far - we'll see what Condon's bunch has to say a year from now. It looks now as if they will do a good job.

So, how about your sighting? Are you afraid we'll call it swamp gas? We won't, if it isn't.

Yours truly,

William T. Powers

WTP:lp

17 January 1967

Dr. Philip J. Klass
560 N St. SW
Washington D.C. 20024

Dear Dr. Klass:

I'm delighted to reply to your conjectures about my conjectures! It has been my contention for some time (and of course Hynek's for longer) that if we could only get some scientists to get interested in UFO's, the "progress" of the last twenty years could be condensed into a few months. The fact that you have taken the trouble to analyze the Socorro incident is heartening.

My sketch, I'm afraid, was misleading if it seemed to indicate that I believe the object to have been 12 feet in diameter: that circle on the drawing was the circle that intersects the midpoints of the sides of the figure. The object itself, of course, could have been either larger or smaller and of a different shape, oriented in any direction at all - the marks on the ground do not give any information about that. The only significant thing about the circle (besides its demonstrating that the theorem is nearly satisfied) is that its center lies directly over a straight-down burn, and that if the center of gravity were over this point, as a straight-down burn would suggest, then in fact each "pad" would have supported the same amount of weight while the object was on the ground, no matter how they were attached to the body of the vehicle. I had attempted to guess how the legs might be attached in a simple way, but none of the schemes I hit upon would satisfy the conditions of the Figure, and I didn't know the slope of the ground.

I do agree that there is no evidence for the alleged vehicle's having rested on any large area of ground, as your reasoning would seem to predict: after all what are legs for but to keep something from resting on the ground? However, your conclusion is not a unique

solution: all one has to do is to take the four legs, extend them to a common meeting point, and then mount the body on them so that it does not touch the ground. There is nothing that constrains us to mount the legs at the extreme periphery of the object as in your first sketch; also there is no reason to assume that the object was a 12-foot disc, especially when that is not what Zamorra described.

Since I am not agreeing that your premise concerning the mounting of the legs is necessary, obviously there is no need to explain why the object should assume a Praying Mantis attitude, especially since, as you note, Zamorra did not report such an attitude.

I have saved discussion of the telescoping and swiveling until last, since this point is covered in both letters. I should re-iterate first, that the "magic" of the calculations does not suggest any configuration of legs or any shape, size, or orientation of a vehicle body - all we have to go on are the very hasty, uninformative sketches made by Zamorra. Everything that is said about these points is imagination: all we can say for sure is that the figure does have certain properties; that one interpretation of one of the burn-marks necessitates the conclusion that the "pads" would have supported equal weight, a conclusion that is independent of legs or body details. I don't say that I believe all this: I simply recognize that these are conclusions that can be drawn rigorously from the information we have.

I am intrigued by your comments on landing gear in general. Actually, I was horrified at the Surveyor landing gear. There were great difficulties, that almost wrecked the program, due to the fact that this simple symmetrical design could not be relied on to leave the spacecraft standing on its feet if the slope of the ground were more than (if I remember correctly) some 20 degrees. The landing gear was not designed, as you imply, to hold the spacecraft upright: it would assume whatever tilt the ground had. The same goes for helicopter landing gear, and despite what you indicate about the advanced capabilities of such gear, helicopters cannot land on ground with very much slope either.

There is a difference between a simple, elegant design that works, and a design that is too simple to work. In my own years of technical experience, I have found that engineers tend to be unimaginative and to rely on precedent to a degree that often appears compulsive: they make problems for themselves by doing things the "natural" way, meaning the way it has always been done. The idea of asymmetrical landing gear intrigued me, because it suddenly occurred to me that the goal of landing gear design, to spread the load and keep the vehicle stabilized and off the ground, does not require symmetry; indeed, use of the theorem concerning the diagonals introduces another degree

of freedom into the design; one may displace a landing pad so as to make the placement of a door serve the vehicle design better.

I was amused at your image of the crewmen manually swinging the legs in and out, wildly struggling to get the legs placed right before the final instant of impact. That certainly does sound primitive! I would rather imagine, however, that anyone with enough ingenuity to apply an elegant theorem to landing-gear design would have also the ability to build servomechanisms or even (and I think this is possible, although I have not worked it out yet) a simple mechanical linkage inside the craft, which would adjust the landing gear as they touched down one by one, maintaining the diagonals at right angles and the c.g. over the mean center of the figure. That certainly does not seem like an insuperable problem.

Your report of Chavez' report is somewhat surprising to me. My rough estimate of the size of the landing pads was taken from Dr. Hynak's observations and photographs; he told me that the marks were rectangular, roughly square, and that within the square the sides sloped like a flat trough to an inverted ridge down the center. The police report indicates that the ground was not removed from this depression, but was pushed aside, away from the mean center of the arrangement of marks; all but one mark were well-defined. There were some sandy patches, the "footprints" having been found in one, but the marks were in the kind of dry, semi-compacted desert soil with which you are no doubt familiar. I would expect some, but certainly not very much "packing" of the soil by a heavy weight. There is no moisture in it to cause adhesion of the particles. The whole question could be settled, of course, by an experiment: if I ever get back up to Socorro with a few hours on my hands, I plan to rent a jeep and find some scrap lumber, and see how much of a job it would be to duplicate the marks (as I imagine them to be, anyway - I understand that the sightseers have just about obliterated the remains of anything).

Concerning your challenge, all I can say is to repeat that while I have given a little attention to possible arrangements of legs, there are so many possibilities that yield the same result that it didn't seem profitable to me simply to guess, without some idea of how the coupling of the legs could be accomplished. Your figure represents one possibility; I confess that I don't see why you drew the figure as you did, or why you chose to put any, or all, of the legs either at the extreme rim of the 12-foot disc (where there would be no room for mounting structures), or at a 60-degree angle to the assumed axis of the vehicle body. Presumably it is partly my fault for not having made clearer the meaning of the dashed circle on my sketch.

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One last thought - it occurs to me that the Surveyor landing-gear struts were not fixed: they were pivoted at the body of the spacecraft, and the pads were swivel-mounted and used crushable material to absorb some of the landing jolt. Am I right about that, or misremembering? At any rate, your views of present landing gear design seem a little discouraging: do you really think that no matter how much we progress, we will go on using the same designs for landing gear forever?

Yours truly,

William T. Powers

WTP:lh

10 January 1967

Mr. Phil Klass
Aviation Week
National Press Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Mr. Klass

This is a very belated answer to your note of October 25. My "correspondence ticker" is running very far behind.

In your note you asked about any further impressions I might have on the Socorro case. I have visited there three times now, more for the purpose of checking peripheral things than to talk with Lonnie Zamoro, who is not the most articulate person in the world. I believe very little else can be obtained from him, but I have attempted to look into the idea that the whole thing might be a hoax, or that it was a dust devil, (as Mendel maintains), or that it was something truly unusual. At this stage of the UFO investigation I think we can no longer assume a priori that the unusual is completely impossible. We simply cannot allow ourselves to be in the frame of mind that physicists were in in 1890, in a very comfortable, pat universe in which the luminiferous ether was paramount and classical physics was king. It seems very clear to me that there are no answers yet, and, of course, that's the primary reason for the existence of the Condon Committee. I am particularly impressed with the number of communications I have been getting from persons of good standing who are reporting events which they have kept quiet about for years. Right now, sightings from 1951 and 1955 are being told for the first time.

But coming back to Socorro, my feeling about the hoax hypothesis is simply that a hoax generally leaks, and a successful hoax is just too good a thing to be kept quiet for many years. Somebody, sooner or later, talks. That is why during my last visit there I gave the deliberate impression to many that I would welcome any behind the scenes confidences, but none came. I am perhaps most impressed with Cha ez" statement made early in the game when he

first came upon Lonnie to the effect that he had never seen anyone quite as scared as Lonnie and asked him, "What's the matter, Lonnie, you look as though you've seen the devil?" And Mrs. Zamoro's statement later on, that "Lonnie had given himself up to God". Of course, a very cleverly perpetrated hoax could have had this same effect on Zamora, but if you have seen that countryside there, with its openness, I think you will agree that perpetrating a major hoax would be quite some problem.

Now as to Mendel's idea that it was all a dust devil, I don't quite see Zamora, who is used to that country and has certainly seen thousands of dust devils being carried away by one somewhat larger than usual. And if it was a plasma phenomenon, then by all means the AEC should be interested since this goes a long way to solving the magnetic bottle problem!

I would appreciate any comments you have and any thoughts on this particular case.

Sincerely yours,

J. Allen Hynek

JAH:lh

23 January 1967

Mr. Philip J. Klass
560 N. St. N, W.
Washington D. C. 20024

Dear Mr. Klass:

Thank you for your letter of January 12. I had hoped to see you at my talk at Goddard recently (which, by the way, surprised me in that nearly 1000 showed up for a talk to be held in a 200-person auditorium)) Closed circuit T.V. certainly helped out.) It is a constant surprise to me how many scientifically trained persons are taking an interest in this perplexing phenomenon.

As to the Socorro case: my third visit was made in connection with a conference at the New Mexico Institute of Technology and I made no official report on it.

I have never found Zamora communicative, and if were able to get him to talk on a man-to-man basis, so much more power to you. I am not at all surprised that after this passage of time, Zamora does not repeat his story in broken record fashion. In fact, if he did, then I would certainly suspect a carefully memorized hoax.

I think we must really go back to the main point of whether Zamora saw anything at all. We have Chavez' testimony that Zamora was a fairly frightened man. What caused the fright? It is unusual for a lethargic cop who is chasing a speeder in the line of duty to become diverted in the reported manner.

Likewise with the insignia. It is the gross event that interests me, and not whether some markings run horizontally or vertically. Even trained observers describing much more mundane affairs like auto accidents cannot agree as to whether skid marks went one way or the other. They do agree, however, that there was an accident.

I did not obtain his eyeglass prescription and many other details because I did not feel privileged to invade his privacy. I concentrated more on his general character, questioning people who knew him for many years. He came away with a reasonably clean bill of health. However, I believe that a policeman who regularly and successfully discharges his duties of routine

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police work, checking license plates and the various other things a policeman does when apprehending speeders, etc., makes it logical to suppose that he could not perform these duties if his eyesight were so bad that he could mistake a dust devil for a solid craft and become traumatically frightened at it. However, let me ask you the same question: now that you have been down there, did you check Zamora's eyeglass prescription?

No matter what we say about the Zamora case, it is still, because of its one-witness character, a low order case. It is a $\Sigma 5 C_4$ case in my classification system: taken at face value the report has a high strangeness index, but a low credibility rating primarily because I do not go above 5 in my scale of 1 to 9 if there is only one witness. It is a great pity that Chavez took the wrong turn and arrived on the spot just minutes too late. It is also a pity that Zamora did not have a camera in his squad car as standard equipment, what a different situation we would have if we had a photograph or two to examine. Even so, this would still not satisfy my credibility requirements for photographs, since I feel that for a photograph to be considered authentic, we should have two independent witnesses who can testify, by affidavit, that they saw the picture being taken and that they saw the object also. And, if we have the technical characteristics of the camera, we are in a position to begin to regard the photograph as authentic. No, the Zamora case is strange, but does not rank in my book as an outstanding case for detailed study simply because of the lack of witnesses. We have too many unknowns and not enough equations.

Are you writing a detailed report on your own Socorro trip? If so, I would much appreciate a copy of it and I am sure that Major Quintanilla at Project Blue Book would also, as would, very probably, the Condon Committee. If you can establish that the Socorro case was indeed a hoax, or without reasonable doubt a hallucination, you will have done a real service. I hope that you will keep in mind that during all my investigations I have steadfastly called for only one thing, the necessity for thorough follow-ups and investigation. I am not trying to build a case in the manner of either a prosecuting or defense attorney. In the meantime, let's hope that we will meet one of these days and discuss these matters more fully.

Sincerely yours,

J. Allen Hynek

JAH:lp

cc: Mr. Robert J. Low
Dr. D. H. Menzel
Major H. Quintanilla

560 N Street SW.
Washington D.C. 20024
January 28, 1967

Dr. J. Allen Hynek
Dearborn Observatory
Evanston, Ill.

Dear Dr. Hynek:

After reading your letter of Jan. 23, I find your attitude on the Socorro case as mysterious as the case itself. Let me explain.

Your own trip report for April 28, 1964, calls Socorro "one of the major UFO sightings in the history of the Air Force's consideration of this subject..." And you note that NICAP and APRO "would consider this the best authenticated landing sighting on record."

You said that "Any question of hallucination seems clearly out." And you also concluded that Zamora "would not be capable of contriving a complex hoax" and that he was "basically sincere, honest and reliable."

Now in the intervening 2½ years, the only thing that has happened, to my knowledge, that might cause you to change your appraisal is the fact that Zamora now is adding fresh new details—that his radio was incapacitated by the UFO, that there was a burned rock in the Gully (which Sgt. Chavez flatly denies), that the UFO made a "beep...beep...beep" sound instead of the changing pitch he previously reported.

And your letter of Jan. 23 indicates that you feel these new changes really add to the credibility of Zamora, rather than detract.

Yet now you say that the Socorro case has a "low credibility"...because there was only one witness and no photos. Did you not know that there were no photos and only one witness at the time you made your original appraisal 2½ years ago?

One should expect that the Socorro case would be one of the most consistent UFO reports, since it was made by a police officer, the first man to join him was a N.M. state trooper (Chavez), and the next two men to arrive were Deputy Sheriff Lucky and FBI Agent D. Arthur Byrnes, Jr. Byrnes, you'll recall, was the first man to interview and record Zamora's description of what took place within several hours after the event (usually referred to as Capt. Holder's report.) Here we have an experienced FBI agent getting the facts from a police officer; I should expect a rather accurate statement of what transpired.

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In this first interview, Zamora said he "went down to where the object had been and I noted the brush was burning in several places..." This happened while Zamora was waiting for Sgt. Chavez to arrive in response to Zamora's radio call, according to the Capt. Holder/Byrnes report.

Yet in your own April 28 trip report you say: "Chavez indicated that Zamora was reluctant to go down into the small ravine, and asked that Chavez proceed him." (In my interview with Chavez recently, he confirmed this point several times.)

Does this indicate that Zamora was not telling the truth, or Chavez? One might ignore this discrepancy, but I am curious to know if in at least this one point Zamora strayed from the facts.

Chavez told me that he was the first man into the ravine and that he found no human footprints or other signs of human presence. Yet if Zamora had gone down while waiting for Chavez, there should have been some footprints, if Chavez is being factual.

Zamora originally told FBI Agent Byrnes that his attention was attracted away from the speeding car he was chasing along Park St. by a "flame" and a "blast", and he described the flame as "bluish and sort of orange too...sort of motionless flame, slowly descending." But in your own interview with Zamora, he played down the presence of a flame. And when I talked with Zamora, he flatly denied there was any flame. He said he saw only "swirling dust."

So we must conclude that it was primarily the sound that attracted his attention. At the time he would have heard the sound, he was approximately 4,000 ft. from the UFO site, traveling at fairly high speed (to catch a speeding car), with car windows down, so that there would have been considerable background noise from the wind, the road and his engine. Yet at 4,000 ft. the sound attracted his attention.

But Felix Phillips, whose house is only 1,000 ft. away from the UFO site, and who either was in his backyard or in the house (depending on the precise time of the event), with house windows and French doors open, heard nothing. Nor did his wife hear anything.

Your trip report notes that the wind was reported to be blowing from the south, which would carry the sound toward Zamora and away from Phillips. Even if this be true, I find it difficult to believe that Zamora would have heard the sound over his high background noise at 4,000 ft. distance where Phillips would not at 1,000 ft.

But I admit this is a matter for speculation...unless one conducts a rather simple test. The N.M. Institute of Mining at Socorro has many experts in explosives, and often conducts blasting tests in the nearby mountains. Why not get them to conduct a small-scale experiment in the vicinity of the UFO sight. Then put Phillips and his wife inside their house, with windows open, and Zamora in his car along Park St. (or use other independent observers if you wish), and set off various size dynamite charges to see what one can or can not hear in the two respective locations.

Dr. J. Allen Hynek

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If such tests were to show that a blast of sufficient size to be detected by Zamora in his speeding car was loud enough to be heard by Felix Phillips and his wife, or even to jolt them, we might have a valuable clue in unraveling this puzzling case.

Finally, I'm disappointed that you failed to respond to my question inre the photographic model of the Socorro UFO that I sent you with my letter of Jan. 12, asking what would be the minimum number of legs that Zamora would have to see if an object with four legs landed in the ravine and made the "pad-prints". You'll recall that the sketch made by Zamora immediately after the incident, while waiting for Chavez, showed only TWO.

I'm sorry that I didn't know you were going to Speak at Goddard Space Flight Center, else I can assure you that I would have been a member of the audience.

In that regard, Electronics News, reporting on your talk, said that "Hynek put his money on the fourth possibility" (for explaining UFOs) that "UFOs are a unique natural phenomenon."

Is that a correct statement of your views as your expressed them during that talk?

Cordially,



Philip J. Klass

cc: Mr. Robert J. Low

16 February 1967

Mr. Philip J. Klass
Aviation Week & Space Technology
McGraw-Hill, Inc.
425 Natl. Press Bldg.
Washington, D. C. 20004

Dear Philip:

Informality is my way of life, so fine. I am afraid that whether one sees "elegant simplicity" in the Surveyor boils down to a matter of taste; for my taste, Surveyor is a complex engineering monstrosity - but it worked. I shouldn't say nasty things about anything that works on the first try, especially when I didn't have to face the problems those engineers were struggling with. I still wonder what would have happened if the thing had set down with one pad on one of those 2-foot rocks that were lying around, and then "rebounded clear of the surface".

Our argument, if you can call it that, centers around the question of what the best possible engineering practices are. I submit that as human beings, ourselves involved in engineering pursuits, we may tend to be biased. It is easy to say, "I can see a reason for everything we do", forgetting that it is human logic, and human criteria, that we are constrained to use. If we use the best technical developments of which we are capable at any given time by which to judge what is "elegant, then of course we can't lose - but then ten years later, if we want to do that again, we will have to conveniently forget what we were saying before. What is advanced today will seem crude in ten years. I throw away transistors today that are no better than the best were ten years ago.

I don't know if UFO's have anything of substance behind them or not. Right now, however, I think that the subject is useful in another way. It reminds us that our best today is probably going to be laughed

at tomorrow; that there is less known than there is unknown; that all the rationalizations in the world cannot hide the fact that we have a short past and a long future.

Incidentally, if one takes material of the same thickness and makes two landing pads having the same thickness and weight, one square and one circular, the circular one will have the least area. For a given support area, any shape other than circular will weigh less.

I probably ought to make some comment concerning the "plasma" theory that you have been publishing - I thought I detected a somewhat plaintive note in the S.A.P. letter, to the effect that Hynek didn't even mention this theory.

The reason he didn't mention it, quite probably, is that like me he doesn't think it applies to what we think of as the interesting cases. There are a few cases in which what was reported could be made to sound like a glowing ball of plasma, but these are all what we call "light-in-the-sky" types of reports, which don't give much information no matter what they really concern. Anyhow, when an explanation such as "plasma" is offered, the burden is on the person offering the hypothesis to show that in fact such a manifestation can occur, and that the conditions were proper for its occurrence at the time of the sighting. If one doesn't demand that, then all one gets are Menzel-type explanations - nothing more than guesses, unsupported by any kind of scientific evidence. Any explanation of UFO's, in my book, must meet normal requirements of proof

I have some serious doubts as to whether the conditions have ever been right, in any of these sightings including the power-line sightings, to generate a ball of plasma. For one thing, any effect dependent on high-voltage corona ought to occur in the area of maximum field-strength, surrounding or between the wires, but that has never been reported: the object has always been reported as being above, sometimes far above, the power line. More often (the power-line bit is largely a recent fad, started primarily by John Fuller and some excited reports during the Great Blackout), the balls of light are reported as appearing far from power lines, travelling at high speeds at times, and sometimes travelling across or against the wind. They have been reported on several occasions as rising out of the ocean, near enough that they definitely didn't rise over the horizon. They have been observed to turn on and off, to change size in both directions, and even to change color; they have been reported bright enough to cause the witnesses to think they were seeing a fire because of the illumination of the ground, before they spotted the object itself.

If one offers an explanation, I think he is committed to accepting all of the testimony. After all, if one is permitted to select which parts of a report he is going to accept as true and which parts he is going to ignore, then the "explanation" can be made to come out any way one chooses: it is one's bias that determines the outcome, not the evidence. Also, I think that when an explanation is offered, it should be more than "possible" - it ought to be demonstrable. Starting with a conclusion, anyone with a fertile imagination can come up with premises from which he can reach that conclusion - the problem is showing why those premises, rather than some other, ought to be accepted, for reasons other than that they lead logically to the "right" answer. After all, if one decides in advance that UFO's extraterrestrial in origin, he can find lots of premises which, if true, would lead to that conclusion. The logic is no problem: it's deciding on the truth or falsity of the premises, independently of the conclusion, that gives difficulties.

Anyhow, as I said before, there aren't very many UFO reports to which the "plasma" theory could be applied even if one accepted on faith that such plasma configurations can in fact occur out of doors at normal temperatures and pressures. All reports involving a dark object against a bright sky, for instance, are exempt; all reports in which stable shapes such as rectangular or conical are involved rub out the plasma explanation; reports of landings in which an object is seen clearly and at close range, by multiple witnesses, cannot be so explained; reports of glowing objects carrying small lights colored red, green, and blue, which maintain a constant configuration, could hardly fit a plasma explanation; no object which remains stationary, far from any power line, despite a known wind, for twenty minutes or more, can be a ball of plasma; certainly none of the reports traced to airplanes, satellites, meteor showers, or rockets can also be explained as plasma. In fact, I know of only a handful of cases to which I would be happy to apply the plasma explanation, even if I were convinced of the reality of the phenomenon of outdoor plasmas, which I am not, excepting effects of lightning which are too transient to be of interest.

I hope you don't think I am picking on you: I put up similar arguments against all explanation I have heard so far, including the E.T. hypothesis. We're not going to know what the more puzzling UFO's are until somebody finally decides that a scientific approach is required, and gets the funds to carry it out. Then, I think, we will find out. One way or the other. So far, nobody at all knows what if anything is behind the reports. That situation isn't going to be cured by guessing.

Perhaps I failed to communicate my intentions clearly enough in the Review article. In that article, I noted a few facts about the distribution of the marks on the ground, facts which could be obtained from the evidence itself without guessing. I gave error-estimates from which anyone could decide for himself whether the arrangement seemed chance or not; I drew conclusions which were stated as syllogisms: if the marks were as stated, then an object with its center of gravity over burn #1 would in fact have its weight distributed equally on all four marks, despite their seeming random placement. Those statements are true; they are not hypotheses. Whether or not such an object existed, I did not state, nor would I now. I merely pointed out one or two conclusions at which one would arrive if he believed that there was an object, that behaved as Zamorra said it did. Neither the marks nor their placement are sufficient to show whether or not an object landed there and took off again.

The running discussion we have been having has not been on that plane at all - we seem to be talking about what would have been a "reasonable" or an "elegant" or an "advanced" kind of landing gear, and how it might have been attached to the body of a vehicle, and how or whether it would swivel or telescope, and whether the existing landing gears are the "best" in some respect. I don't see how we got off into such a tangent, so far from the evidence. Certainly the Surveyor engineering has nothing to do with the explanation of the marks at Socorro - what caused them, caused them, and we will probably never know what it was. By now that case has been milked of every bit of information in it, and there are others much more recent that we must deal with, if we can. The most pressing problem now, as I see it, is to get the data on hand into some kind of shape for analysis, and even more pressing to see to it that the quality of investigations is drastically improved in the future - but that takes money.

The Condon committee is still an unknown quantity; they don't seem to be interested at the moment in the reports on file, and I don't know even if they intend to investigate more than a token number of cases. They've given up the idea of getting teams out from other universities, and they couldn't possibly handle current cases with the few people they have. To top it off, one of the full-time scientists has left for six months, for Hawaii, and the psychological attack is under direction of a Gestalt psychologist. Well - we'll see next year.

So, I still have a job to do - the latest was installed a TV system on our 24-inch telescope in the Southwest, and now it's a breadboard for a photometer we hope to set up on the moon, plus half-a-dozen other

Mr. Philip J. Klass

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Feb. 16, 1967

side-issues besides UFO's that cry for attention. How do you suppose one could induce mitosis in an entire organism? It sure would be handy.

Regards,

William T. Powers

WTP:lh

21 March 1967

Mr. Philip Klass
Aviation Week and Space Technology
1174 National Press Building
Washington, D. C. 20004

Dear Philip:

First let me get my red face back to normal: the circular shape has the minimum perimeter, of course, not the minimum area. My goof. However, and I had better be very tentative lest I do the same thing again, I think I recall that friction is independent of shape and area (absolute friction, meaning force required to maintain a sliding motion), so my argument about which shape gave the largest area was spurious to begin with. I'm not sure we are really arguing about something important anyhow, for I'm sure that both round and other shapes are used for supporting pads. The big crane that was used to put our 40-inch telescope in place had rectangular pads on its stabilizing jacks.

Plasma theory: OK, to be fair we will mention it. But as I pointed out in the last letter, I really hate to offer an explanation which is as hard to believe in as little green men. I just don't see how a plasma can maintain a stable configuration under the conditions in which UFO's are seen - any of them. If the UFO's were seen wrapped around high-tension wires, or lingering after a lightning stroke, I'd be happier with the idea. As it is, I have to believe that under standard temperature and pressure (or close to it) a plasma can exist without presence of high electric fields and a continuous supply of energy - and that a spherical or spheroidal configuration would be stable. At least as far as I know, such suppositions go directly against experimental evidence.

Socorro: if you have additional evidence, I would really like to hear about it. Of course all my own remarks are based just on what facts I happen to know, and new evidence will call for re-evaluation.

21 March 1967

The minimum number of legs which would have been visible to Zamorra if EHE model you made is like what he saw, is three. The minimum number he could have noticed is zero. The number he remembers could be from none to perhaps five. If the object had been set very low to the ground, rather than being elevated as in your model, the minimum number would be two (body hiding or mostly obscuring two struts). As I said, I make no assumptions about what the body, if any, looked like. Zamorra is a lousy artist.

Airplane in flight: the answer you want is "the color of a pot", but that is right only under certain circumstances. Most of the time airplanes look merely dark against the sky. Occasionally there is a high-light from reflected sunlight, and then the object looks sunlight-colored; it looks like sunlight reflecting off an aluminum pot.

I should warn you, however: I'm not terribly interested in sightings involving objects subtending such a small visual angle that there is doubt about whether the object could have been an airplane or not. In such cases, I simply say, "It could have been an airplane, so what's the mystery?" If cases like that were all we had to go on, I never would have wasted my time on UFO's. What interests me are the cases which, after giving them careful thought, I cannot think of an explanation for, and which involve elements that appear beyond current technology. Lights in the sky do not normally fall into that class; Socorro does not. I can think of explanations for the Socorro sighting (unprovable but possible), so I haven't given it much attention - except for the interesting geometry of the marks.

The philosophy which I have come to, as have Vallee and Hynek and about everyone else who has done much in this area, is that there is little point in trying to evaluate sightings, no matter how good they seem, one at a time. Reports are always incomplete and in error to some extent. The only way to get meaningful information out of the UFO sightings is to treat the whole body of information, looking for repetitive patterns. I'd say in general that the only useful information about UFO's comes from independent multiple witnesses, whether all at once or over time. Types which remain unique, which never repeat, are best treated as noise.

Furthermore, of the multiple-witness cases, the only ones that I find interesting are those in which triangulations are possible, in which times and positions and lines of sight can be determined accurately, and which involve objects large enough that details can be seen on their surfaces, such that more than one witness reports the same details. I am particularly interested in cases like this in which we later found out what the witnesses were seeing - we need a lot more like that, because what they seem to show about the observational ability of people who think they are seeing a flying saucer is very educational. They don't do too badly at all.

Mr. Philip Klass

Page 3

21 March 1967

Gotta go. Sorry about the pad-area business; I commend you for your restraint in pointing out the error.

Regards,

Bill Powers

WTP:lh

22 March 1967

Mr. Philip Klass
Aviation Week and Space Technology
1174 National Press Bldg.
Washington, D. C. 20004

Dear Philip:

No, I'm not suggesting that Fuller misreported: he reported everything almost verbatim, and anyway I read the original tape transcripts. The people did indeed associate the UFO's with power lines: they went to where the powerlines turned, on Red Brick Road, and carloads of them stayed all night, seeing UFO's at frequent intervals. The descriptions did not sound like anything different from the reports one gets away from power lines, being indistinguishable from descriptions of stars and airplanes for the most part. People have just begun to notice power lines, which one can hardly get very far from except out West. UFO's have always appeared "near" power lines: they could hardly help it.

There were, of course, some reports from the Exeter flap that were about pretty good UFO's. Most of the reports, however, were junk. I do suggest that we disregard reports of featureless lights in the sky, for the simple and practical reason that we don't even have time to investigate all the interesting sightings, involving clearly unusual objects.

Concerning possibilities, I guess we just have different approaches. I don't "concede" anything - I recognize a certain list of possibilities as having been stated. Knowing nothing about their truth or falsity, I just let them sit there. I can wait until we get some proof that one or another needs to be believed. Perhaps it would be a good idea to put some time and money into exploring some of those possibilities further - but which ones? I'd rather sift the reports thoroughly first and see just what characteristics we can get out of this phenomenon as reported, before committing myself to one possibility.

Concerning the ball-lightning surveys, I think their greatest weakness was they they (if I remember them correctly) limited themselves to the one subject - there was no opportunity for the respondent to report something else unusual. There is no way of knowing how many of those reportings were describing UFO's or stars and planets, using the term "ball lightning" because it had been offered as the only alternative. I'd treat ball-lightning reports much the same way I treat UFO reports - we don't know what they were really about, and we won't until a good deal more work is done. I see no more likelihood that ball lightning may lead to UFO reports than that UFO's may lead to ball-lightning reports.

When I spoke of "demonstrating" an explanation, I included in my own mind a legitimate theoretical demonstration: calculations, as are used in stellar models, based on known properties of matter extrapolated in acceptable ways to extreme conditions, giving correct numerical results. Anything short of that I do not accept as a demonstration, whether the author calls himself Dr. or not. It is certainly true that there are problems in atmospheric physics that are terribly complex and which are not amenable at present to such detailed treatments. That is why we remain ignorant in that field. The difficulty of the problem is no excuse for accepting invalid approaches to it.

I not only grant that there is no one explanation for the UFO problem, but I was trying to get that point across in an earlier letter, in which I pointed out the great variety of appearances involved. I do agree that the signs point to something of substance behind the reports, although my attitudes undergo great swings, especially after having dealt with twenty sightings in a row that turn out to be Venus. GOD people are ignorant. But then a good solid citizen turns up with an intelligent coherent report, and I'm back to normal again.

I guess I just don't agree that the way to solve the problem is to pick out some hypothesis and then defend hell out of it. It would strike me as more scientific to get very well acquainted with the reports first, and let hypotheses grow naturally rather than trying to guess at the answer and beat everyone to the punch. I hope you're not too committed to the plasma hypothesis - what are you going to do if a couple of plasma physicists get up and say it's just not possible? Find a couple more who say it is too possible?

I was amused at your comments on reliability: true, flying saucers seem very reliable, if one takes "no incontrovertible evidence" to mean the same thing as "no evidence". I'm reminded of the NORAD spokesman saying that nothing had ever showed up on a radar screen that was definitely known to be something unusual. Of course it hasn't - we'll only know definitely when the problem is solved. There are, of course, thousands of unidentified targets on radars, NORAD and others, every day - if it moves

22 March 1967

like a Piper Cub, it is a Piper Cub, because what else could it be? There are lots of reports involving marks left on the ground and other places, and other physical effects and even fragments as well, but they aren't incontrovertible. They won't be, either, until we know definitely what caused them (if they really happened).

On the other hand, maybe they really do have a remarkable civilization! What do you suppose the reliability of our spacecraft will be, even 400 years from now? I'm buying a computer this spring having a MTBF of 3000 hours - that's quite a stride from the 4 hours we were getting just 7 years ago with the IBM 650. If I use the computer an hour every working day, it might well last 15 years, and even then it's repairable (if worth the trouble by then).

Once again, I repeat: it's a mistake to judge what is possible to achieve and how best to achieve it by the yardstick of what we now can do or can imagine doing.

Regards,

William T. Powers

WTP:lh

5 April 1967

Mr. Andy Florio
1634 N. Westerly Terrace
Los Angeles, California 90026

Dear Mr. Florio:

I still say the Mannon sighting was lousy, compared with the good ones - yours, for example. You didn't talk to Mannon; we did. Also the Hillsdale sightings were poor - Hynes just re-visited there to check on rumors that pictures had been taken; he got essentially the same story from the girls this time, and found that the rumors were false. There were a couple of good sightings involved in that Michigan affair, but there was also a lot of junk. The swamp-gas explanation was not, repeat NOT applied to any but those two cases. And Hynes said to the press that it was merely the best he could come up with, on the basis of a pair of poorly-observed and poorly-reported incidents.

When I said there isn't enough money in the kitty to support a proper UFO investigation, I meant it. Neither Hynes nor I "work for the Air Force and the Pentagon", and we never have: Hynes is a consultant to the Air Force and so am I, meaning that a few times a year they ask us to investigate some particular sighting. The rest of the time Hynes is director of the department of astronomy at Northwestern University, and I'm an electronics engineer at the same place. Most of the correspondence we carry on with witnesses is on our own time and because of personal interest.

You're right - I do and I don't believe in flying saucers. How could any person "believe in" them when he hasn't seen one himself? I've had too much experience interviewing witnesses to think that I understand what a person saw just through reading his words; I've had things described to me as "flashing and darting all over the sky," only to have the witness stand right next to me and point out his UFO, which was Sirius or Capella (bright stars). After a dozen cases in a row like that, you get pretty disgusted. I think I know enough about UFO's now to believe that something unusual is going on, and to know that I don't know what it is. Beyond that I won't be pushed without good reason.

The Socorro sighting is still one of the most puzzling on the books. I can't explain it; Dr. Hynek can't explain it, and the Air Force can't explain it. That doesn't mean we believe it was a flying saucer from outer space - if we had a way of knowing that, then we could explain it. Right now it's just a big blank. Was Zamorra lying? Maybe. Was he having an hallucination? Maybe. Did he really see something out of this world? Maybe to that, too. I'm out of ideas; I don't know how to make a decision from this point.

There aren't "hundreds" of other cases like the Socorro case: there are about six, and no two of them are exactly the same. There are about three or four hundred reports of landings from all over the world, but most of them are completely unchecked, and they could all be rumors as far as I know. Out of these, only half a dozen involve anything in the way of marks left behind on the ground, and of these only the Socorro case was thoroughly investigated.

Barney and Betty Hill waited three years before their story came out: you can't treat them as independent witnesses any more. Furthermore the information came out under hypnosis, which is notoriously bad as a way of getting factual information. I don't think the Hills are pulling anything, but I also don't think that they themselves know how much truth is in the story recounted under hypnosis.

As to Frank Edwards, I don't think he ever checks out a story. Some of the stuff in his book is true, some is just plain false, and most of it is unknown as to quality. I wouldn't trust one word in that book unless I checked it myself.

I'm not kidding about the Air Force: the people in it who make policy just don't believe it is possible for anything unusual to be flying around in the sky without their knowing about it. They never have believed it is possible. If you can only understand that one point, you understand everything that has gone on in the last 20 years. A couple of times some individuals got excited about UFO's and almost made some progress, but they were squelched by the majority opinion before very long, and nothing ever came of it. If it hadn't been for steady pressure put on the Secretary of the Air Force by Hynek for the last three years, there wouldn't even be any Condon Committee. I'm sure that the Air Force is hoping for an opinion that UFO's should be taken out of the hands of the Air Force entirely, and turned over to some civilian group. It's a big public-relations headache to them, and not much more. Of course there are individuals in the Air Force who are very interested in UFO's - the Air Force consists of a million or so people, and they represent all shades of thought. But Quintanilla, who is the one to whom the pentagon people go when they have to answer some Congressman's questions, doesn't believe in UFO's, and he is absolutely miserable in his job. Like a good officer he does his best, but he sure would rather be somewhere else. I don't blame him; he takes an awful lot of guff from people. And you know, of course, that Blue

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Book consists of just four people in one tiny office at Wright Field. That's it: you could hardly find Blue Book on an organizational chart; it would be down in one corner as a sort of afterthought. Especially now that the Condon Committee is at work, Blue Book is hardly more than a public-relations office: they spend most of their time answering letters.

So, enough of that. I appreciate your long and excellent reports, especially the one concerning the sighting of March 30, 1955. That's really a classic case, with electromagnetic effects on top of everything else. Naturally, I can't explain it. And of course I have no doubt at all that you are telling the truth - I don't go around doubting things just for exercise, but only when there is some reasonable doubt. In this case either you are an awful liar, or you saw something of the greatest interest: there's no other choice, and that's what I call a good case. I don't see any reason to think you are lying. If it's all right with you, I'll send the report on to the Condon Committee: they're really getting an education this year. By this time it seems almost certain that their report will not dismiss the problem: they've seen too many good reports.

One thing I want to warn you about: it very often happens that a witness to a truly unusual event, such as the one of March, 1965, becomes understandably fascinated by UFO's, and pays much more attention to the sky than he had before. The result is that he sees many things he cannot explain. However, unless the object is seen at close range and in detail, as was the case for your first sighting, one just has to be cautious. There are too many things in the sky that can give strange appearances, and unless you are very well acquainted with astronomical, meteorological, and aeronautical phenomena, it is dangerous to assume that just because you don't recognize something, an expert would also be puzzled. For instance, the 4 AM sighting of April 1, 1966 is very probably Venus, which was in fact in the eastern sky at that time. Venus is white, extremely bright, and because it is so bright often appears to have appreciable size, although its disc is actually too small to see with the naked eye. It is often reported as being very low - actually, however, any unknown object more than about 100 feet away and without background or foreground reference marks behind it or partially obscuring it cannot be judged correctly as to distance: binocular depth perception just doesn't work behind even thirty or forty feet. Venus, by the way, is now in the evening sky, and will be for several months.

Just last night we had a report right here on campus of a bright orange luminous object that came in from over Lake Michigan, hovered over the campus, and then left to the northwest. It turned out to be a plastic-bag balloon lit with birthday candles inside (we know who did it and when and where it went). We know that there were students at UCLA sending those things up in March of 1966; there is one report from March 30, that I kept a clipping of, and many others I saw in the papers.

So forgive me if I don't get very excited about things which are primarily lights in the sky at night. Maybe some of them are flying saucers, but

April 5, 1967

I doubt very much whether anyone could decide on the basis of what is seen whether its a conventional object giving an unusual appearance, or something strange.

If we are ever going to find out what the more puzzling UFO's are, we will have to concentrate on reports in which the witness sees the object close up and in great detail. There are enough of those to keep us busy. If we can collect enough of that kind of reports, we may be able to put together all the different descriptions (and they are different from each other, believe me.) and try to pick out the common elements. That's a job that doesn't get much publicity and takes a long time to do, plus lots of patience. I hope that after the Condon Committee makes its report, funds will become available so that we can devote a lot more of our time to the task.

So thanks much for your reports, and remember what I said: a UFO is anything you don't recognize, but an interesting UFO is something you see in such great detail that you know positively, without any room for doubt, that it was nothing conventional. A white or orange light in the sky, or a cluster of lights, doesn't qualify. An object that affects your car motor and lights, which is seen at close range, and which was seen well enough to serve as a basis for a drawing, does.

Yours truly,

William T. Powers

WTP:lh

12 April 1967

Mr. Philip Klass
560 N Street SW
Washington, D. C. 20024

Dear Philip:

Just a shortie; I'm pretty busy working on our lunar photometer design these days. I'm sorry, but I can't remember the details you asked me about the crane pads. I seem to recall that they had a ratio of about 3:4 (not square) and that the long axis was aligned parallel with the bed of the crane. They looked as if they could be turned, however, wince they were on screw jacks. The crane operated over about a 300 degree arc at the time it was in use, but not with heavy loads. I think that with the heaviest loads they are restricted to the direction in which the bed of the crane serves as an additional counter-weight.

Zamorra saw the object from two different angles. How different I don't know, but if the object was not a figure of revolution, about a vertical axis, it could have different shapes when seen from different angles. Anyway, don't forget the distinction I made among what was in fact visible, what Zamorra noticed, and what he remembers.

When a witness to what I call a good UFO sighting reports sunlight reflecting on the object, he does not mean that all he saw was a highlight caused by the reflection. If that is all he means, it is not a good UFO report. A report I consider interesting is one in which, for example, the witness sketches an object with details on it, and indicates a small highlight on the correct part of the body where the sun was reflecting. A specular reflection from a convex surface will be small. See, also, the three pictures of a UFO taken by the Belgian postman, in Vallee's second book: these are pretty well authenticated as far as reliability of the witness is concerned, and you will notice that there are both bright and dark areas on the object. This is almost always the case in a report that is significant, meaning a report involving an object large enough to allow detail to be seen.

In the case of Frank Courson, of Galesburg (a deputy sheriff), on March 6 (not the one reported in papers later): the object was shaped like an inverted bowl: the top was white and looked like "salt crystals on a

road in a car's headlights"; around the bottom part was a thick rim which pulsed red at intervals from one to three seconds. When the object passed directly over Courson's head, it made a steady hissing sound, and he could see that the circular bottom part had close parallel stripes running across it, and was spinning fairly fast. The top part was stationary. When the object had passed over him and had gone about a mile, it shot a brilliant beam of light straight down toward the ground, the sides of the beam appearing parallel and the diameter of the beam being $3/4$ that of the object. The entire object was surrounded by a bluish-white haze. At the closest (overhead) approach, the object subtended about 30 degrees.

In this case, which was at night, we have a glowing object which has three different colors of light involved at the same time on different parts of the object, as well as the ability to generate a beam of light. I can't imagine a plasma which would segregate, say, the neon from the argon. I also can't imagine a hemispherical plasma: Courson saw the hemisphere shape very distinctly through binoculars while the object was still approaching.

Of course, maybe Courson is a liar, but that's what I mean by a good case: one in which the only choices are that the observer is a liar or crazy, or that he is reporting something that is totally beyond my ability to even guess about.

For a daytime case, take the sighting by Douglas White, in 1954. I enclose his sketches (photographed) without comment. The cloud in 5 and 6 formed ahead of the object; it went into the cloud and then the cloud sped away. There were no other clouds; time of day was afternoon.

By no stretch of the imagination could cases like these be associated with plasma. We have others that are equally impressive. Now I don't know any way to tell whether the witnesses are telling the truth or not, except by continuing to collect information from all over the world, and looking for patterns. I think we are rarely safe in ruling out the "feedback" hypothesis, simply because the newspapers usually get the story wrong and they always leave out details that the witness reported. I have, however, recommended several times that a study of the influence of newspaper reports be made, since their influence should be known. Our best reports, however, cannot be influenced by newspaper or other stories, because they are made to separate agencies at the same time (as in Levelland, Texas, the sightings involving the huge glowing egg that stopped car engines) and the witnesses are acting independently, without prior stories to motivate their nearly simultaneous reports.

I am not about to take you up on your offer, but I might point out that it would be more impressive if you offered to pay an amount into a kitty equal to that of those you challenge. The way you have it set up, all you have to do is put your 10,000 into a savings account for twenty or forty years, and it won't cost you a thing. Would you make the same offer if it were going to cost you \$500 or \$250 per year out of pocket until the issue was settled? Anyway it's not an attractive offer to me,

Mr Philip Klass

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April 12, 1967

because I'm not at all convinced that a "crashed space ship" is ever going to be found. The explanation for UFO's might turn out to be several of a dozen things. A few UFO's may even turn out to be plasmas.

I don't see this as a battle between the UFO believers and the believers in anything else, although you apparently do. There certainly are believers in extraterrestrials, but they have very little on their side at the moment. I prefer to stay out of such battles, and stick to a scientific approach. We need more information about what is going on, and that is where the money should go until we get some definite lead to answers.

Regards,

Bill Powers

WTP:lh

19 May 1967

Mr. Andy Florio
1634 N. Westerly Terrace
Los Angeles, California 90026

Dear Andy:

Sorry about goofing on the information to the Condon Committee. They received it before your postcard got to me, and then all I could do was call them up and ask that it be returned. But they had already opened it. Anyhow, you haven't got a prayer of getting a dime out of them. Scientists just don't buy information from people. If you press the matter, they'll just get mad and ignore you. Don't forget that there are so many UFO sightings available free, some just as striking as yours, that there really isn't any market for one more report.

As to Mannor - you must know something I don't know about that sighting. Why do you believe his story wholeheartedly? Sure he's mad - but I don't have to agree with everyone who gets mad at me! On the basis of what I know about his sighting, I think he is mistaken about what he saw. Not lying - there's no reason to doubt his honesty - just wrong. I wouldn't even put his report in the same ballpark with yours. Zamorra's a different matter. He's not only honest, but I think he saw exactly what he said he saw. He was twenty times closer to his than Mannor was to the lights in the swamp; it was daylight instead of dark; he saw a definite object at close range instead of lights 500 yards away. What did he see? A spaceship? I sure don't know.

Barney and Betty Hill: I go along with their psychiatrist on that one. I think they did see a UFO, perhaps even at close range. What came out under hypnosis, however, I wouldn't trust at all, especially since it is so loaded with obvious and trite sexual symbolism. They themselves don't know if the hypnosis material represents fact or fantasy. Hypnosis is a lousy way to recover information about anything, that is if you want to use it as fact.

Mr. Andy Florio
Page 2

19 May 1967

OK, we disagree about the Air Force. I just wish you could get down to Wright Field and meet Quintanilla, and see the tiny office the four people who make up Blue Book occupy. And listen to Quintanilla "reason" about UFO's. Quintanilla thinks that the idea of flying saucers is absolutely ridiculous, and anyone who thinks they even might exist is some kind of nut. And he's the guy who gets the buck when a congressman calls up the Pentagon and asks what's up with UFO's. Quintanilla comes back to the higher-ups in the Pentagon, who know from zero about UFO's, with a snappy, efficient salute, and says "No sweat sir, all under control, we're keeping the unknowns down to 5% and you and I know that the 5% come from nuts, but don't say that for publication". The general replies to the congressman who replies to the little old lady (with 500,000 shares of ATT) to the effect that her investments are still sound and the Air Force is doing its job.

I don't know where you get your rumors, but the one about the 21 Mars photos is all hot air. Rumors like that, and a dozen others I have heard along the same line, originate with people who believe what they read in the newspapers, and think that newspapers are the only possible source of information. If any of them ever read Scientific American, or Science, or Sky and Telescope, or any of a half-dozen other publications, they would know how silly that story is. We have all 21 pictures hanging on a bulletin board in the front hall of Dearborn Observatory for anyone to see who wants to. You can get copies from the National Space Science Data Center, Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, Maryland just be writing in and asking for them. I really get bugged by rumors that arise just because people are too lazy to dig in and get the facts. This UFO business has really been an education for me; I know more about the general level of education in this country than I wanted to. People get all excited about things that even a high-school kid ought to know are nonsense. I don't mean UFO's, of course, but even a lot of those are products of ignorance.

If you ever get to Chicago, be sure to look me up. Come up to Northwestern University (in Evanston) and ask for the Dearborn Observatory; just tell the secretary you want to see me. I'll give you the grand tour of our new observatory out on the lake front. And sorry again about the Condon Committee - forwarding information to them has become a habit, I guess.

Regards,

Bill Powers
Observatory phone:
312/492-7654

WTP:lh

24 May 1967

Mr. Philip Klass
Aviation Week
1174 National Press Building
Washington, D. C. 20004

Dear Mr. Klass:

This is in reply to your letter of May 18. The reported height was indeed 100,000 feet. However, as I learned shortly thereafter, this was someone's garbled visual estimate of the height and not a radar estimate at all. I learned this too late to get it into the article, but even so, since UFO's are reports, it was the 100,000 feet that was reported. I think we are justified in making all sorts of corrections and interpretations to a report, but no one can gainsay that that is what the original report stated.

Your information as to the radar is, of course, entirely correct. We run here into a thing which occurs most commonly, and I am only too well aware of it after 18 years of reading reports. Every single statement mentioned in a report must be open to question. A person can say, "an object approached from the north." We ask ourselves immediately, "are we sure he didn't mean west, south, or east? It is a frustrating thing frequently.

I have given considerably more weight to the report by the officer who stated he saw the object in daylight coming down the hill, resting over the reservoir, and then proceeding, than I do to the report of the observers at the missile site, who were subject to a certain amount of mass excitement.

I am glad to know that plasmas make ideal radar targets. We will now have to explain why so many sightings fail to have radar returns; (I must be correct; why so many reports contain the statement that there were no radar returns.) Keep up the good work.

Sincerely yours,

J. Allen Hynek

JAH:lp

P.S. Have you discussed with Menzel your theory of the Socorro sighting? The collision of your two hypotheses is bound to produce some plasma right then and there!

cc. J. Vallee