

## UFOs in the 1980s

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### STAR BEACON

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*Star Beacon* is an eight-page monthly newsletter for New Age-oriented flying-saucer enthusiasts who are also interested in spiritual awareness, healing, psychic phenomena, crystals and channeling. It is as likely to report on its readers' dreams of UFO contacts as on their fully-conscious UFO sightings. Its editor, Ann Ulrich, is the author of what may be the only romance novel about the UFO abduction phenomenon.

*Intimate Abduction* is described as the saga of "beautiful, sensitive Johanna" who "suddenly finds her life turned upside down by a conspiracy in the form of a bizarre abduction. Her struggle with her own sanity strengthens her for what is to come . . . a journey aboard a mother ship to a planet colony where advanced beings breed with humans in order to acquire their talent and artistic abilities. Amidst the stir of rebellion, Johanna has fallen in love with her abductor, Serassan, and must choose between her allegiance to Earth of [sic] spending the rest of her life with a man whose true appearance frightens her."

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Ulrich, Ann. *Intimate Abduction*. Delta, CO: Earth Star Publications, 1988.

### STEIGER, BRAD (1936- )

Brad Steiger, a prominent figure in the New Age movement, emerged as the major chronicler of the extraterrestrial contactee movement in the 1970s and then in the 1980s as a significant advocate of it. In a series of books, he developed the concept of "Star People," a category of contactee embraced by many who felt that they, too, were descendants of extraterrestrials and agents of an interstellar plan to bring a New Age upon the earth.

➔ Born Eugene Olson on February 19, 1936, Steiger grew up on an Iowa farm, where at the age of five he was to encounter a humanoid being which in later books he would describe variously as a smiling elf and as an emotionless, hairless figure with "vertical, reptilian pupils." A near-death experience when he was 11 contributed to a youthful interest in the paranormal. In the early 1960s he began selling stories and articles to various magazines and in 1965 produced his first book, *Ghosts, Ghouls and Other Peculiar People*. A number of paperbacks followed, all in the style virtually invented by the late Frank Edwards, author of such best-sellers as *Stranger Than Science* (1961) and *Strange World* (1964), in which

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### STEIGER, BRAD (continued)

short chapters based on newspaper clippings, articles in paranormal magazines, and other books uncritically recount "true mysteries." Steiger's books were immensely popular and by 1967 the income he was receiving from them allowed him to leave his teaching job at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, and to embark on a full-time career as author and lecturer. By interesting a large Middle American audience in psychic phenomena and other anomalies, such as UFOs (about which he wrote several books, beginning with *Strangers from the Skies* [1966]), he helped spawn the psychic boom of the early 1970s in which the concept of the "New Age" came into prominence.

Possibly more significantly, for the UFO community, his early UFO books, such as *Strangers from the Skies* (1966) and *Flying Saucers Are Hostile*, written with Joan Whritenour (1967), have played an important role in shaping popular conceptions of the UFO phenomenon while building popular support for belief in the existence of UFOs, their extraterrestrial character, and their possible hostile intent. There is probably no one who has written so many books on the subject of UFOs or has been so widely read as Steiger.

Their popular appeal notwithstanding, Steiger's early books were dismissed by critics as potboilers. His first undeniably important book was the hardcover *Revelation: The Divine Fire* (1973). A cover blurb describes it as "An Investigation of Men and Women Who Claim to be in Spiritual Communication with a Higher Intelligence." In the book Steiger interviewed dozens of persons who believed they had encountered extraterrestrials and through psychic and visionary means believed themselves to be recipients (via what has traditionally been termed mediumship but which they renamed "channeling") of regular philosophical and theological messages from benevolent beings from other planets and dimensions. *Revelation*, along with its earlier companion volume, *Aquarian Revelations* (1971), is an invaluable survey of an emerging movement

which introduced the concept of channeling as a major element to the New Age Movement in the 1980s.

A sequel, *Gods of Aquarius: UFOs and the Transformation of Man* (1976), would narrow its focus to flying-saucer contactees. Steiger introduces the concept of "Star People," human beings tied by physiology, past lives or both to extraterrestrials who long ago came to earth. These persons have had encounters all their lives with otherworldly companions who are preparing them for the "approaching time of transition, the great cleansing, which the entire species must endure and survive in order to attain a higher state of consciousness and to effect personal and societal transformation."

Steiger left his first wife to marry one of the Star People, Francie Paschal of Schenectady, New York, and the two moved to Scottsdale, Arizona, to begin an active metaphysical and business partnership. Steiger wrote that the two were karmically tied (they had been copassengers on a starship that crashed on earth thousands of years ago) and had a mission to "activate" the Star People. An article about them in the *National Enquirer* brought hundreds of letters and phone calls from persons claiming to be Star People. Between 1981 and 1983 Berkley published five paperbacks in the "Star People" series, two of them reprints of *Revelation* and *Gods* and three of them originals by Brad and Francie writing alone or in collaboration with one another.

In the mid-1980s the couple, by this time superstars of the New Age, broke up, and Brad married Sherry Hansen, a Phoenix-based contactee. In 1988 he wrote *The Fellowship*, something of a follow-up to *Gods*.

Steiger says, "I have come to the conclusion that, throughout history, some external intelligence has interacted with *Homo sapiens* in an effort to learn more about us—or in an effort to communicate to our species certain basic truths. I am also convinced that some kind of subtle symbiotic relationship exists between mankind and the UFO intelligences."