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## ONE DAY IN MENDOZA

See Page 2



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## WHILE WE WAIT

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FOR most of us waiting is at best an aggravating business, and waiting to learn what Dr. E. U. Condon has up his sleeve—with the knowledge that past official pronouncements have invariably attempted to brush the subject aside—is doubly hard. Especially is this so for the editor of a small journal on a two-monthly schedule, who, knowing that the Report is probably complete at the time of writing his leader, still has to have his "copy" ready some six weeks before it is due to be published.

While the waiting continues, we hear the same gloomy predictions from friends and acquaintances who have visited Colorado University, summed up Dr. Condon's apparent attitude to the subject, and observed that those members of the committee who were supposedly convinced that UFOs present a problem demanding a wider investigation, have long since departed.

To offset this there have been guarded whispers from friends in the newspaper world which suggest that the Report is expected to be "slightly favourable".

We discussed these whispers with Aimé Michel who, as always, had a pertinent observation to make. The gist of this was that if he were paid a large sum of money to debunk flying saucers, and so underline the 1953 Robertson Report recommendations—all *four* of them—while appearing to take a cool new look at the subject, he would produce a *long, thick, tedious* and *very technical* report. This report would be "slightly favourable" in one aspect only, namely the *psychological* one—as Mr. Robert Low suggested it could be in his "trick" memorandum of August 9, 1966. The "saucerians", or ufologists, would discover this favourable aspect because they would read the report accurately, and would announce their discovery in their journals. The sceptical newspaper and television reviewers, on finding the report long, tedious and very technical, would only thumb through the pages. Then, seeing that the problem is a psychological one, they would be confirmed in their beliefs that the answer probably lies in fear of war, or infantile regression, or sexual frustration, or a combination of all of these and more besides. And they would add that proof of the accuracy of the report is there for all to see, for despite its cold and rational findings, the ufologists are so fanatic that they even interpret such a report as "favourable".

Perhaps M. Michel had tongue in cheek when he penned his thoughts, but they are well worth bearing in mind; indeed their accuracy can be judged if the Condon Report is made public before these lines reach our readers.

Meanwhile, waiting is made less tedious for us by the continuing news of the great South American wave. They're having a whale of a time down there, yet barely a word of it reaches news media outside that continent. We and our readers are lucky FSR has so many good and helpful friends overseas who keep us in touch with developments by sending sheafs of newspaper reports together with the results of their own investigations, and much highly relevant comment.

We may console ourselves with the thought that whatever Dr. Condon might have in store for us, it seems there'll be no shortage of UFOs.

# ONE DAY IN MENDOZA

By Charles Bowen

*This article was already prepared when news came to me from an Argentinian friend, in a letter dated October 4th, that in this case "... the two cashiers of the casino have now publicly admitted that it (their alleged encounter) was a fraud. However, there are two versions (of this retraction): one is that the hoax was performed on them; the other that they, the cashiers, were responsible. Other people say they recanted because otherwise they would have lost their jobs."*

*This little about-turn takes much of the value from this extraordinary account, and yet ... I still feel it should be studied carefully, and especially with the contents in mind of the grim little notice (see opposite) which shows that it could now be a criminal offence to report UFO incidents in the Mendoza Province. So, with the exception of this introduction, I have left the article in its original form.*

MENDOZA lies among rugged foothills heaped high against the lofty Andean wall, the natural frontier between the Republics of Argentina and Chile. Like most towns in Argentina, it has featured sporadic bursts of UFO reports, and Rodolfo Braceli, writing in *Gente y la Actualidad* for September 5, 1968, tells how nineteenth-century records reveal that glowing objects passed through Mendoza skies for several days before a disastrous earthquake destroyed the place. Reports of similar objects in July this year were followed, fortunately, by nothing more than a strong tremor. FSR too has had its accounts of strange affairs in the district, particularly the "much ado about very little" that happened nearly four years ago.<sup>1</sup>

Now, even the recent case of the nurse at the Mendozan Neuropsychiatric Hospital of El Sauce<sup>2</sup> pales beside the alleged events of September 1, 1968.

Around about 4.00 a.m. that morning, the soldiers on duty in the guardroom at the General Espejo Military College were surprised by the sudden appearance of two young men, casino workers, obviously in a state of shock, and babbling that their car had suddenly stopped, and that when they got out to investigate the cause they had seen a flying saucer close to the ground and five small beings who communicated with them in a strange manner, took blood samples from their fingers, left

inscriptions all over the car, and disappeared up a beam of light into the object which accelerated away vertically.

The startled guardsmen, no doubt feeling singularly unqualified to deal with people who saw things like that, suggested that the men should go at once to the Lago-maggiore Hospital. This, according to the *Gente y la Actualidad* investigator, they did, and we learn that the police came into the picture soon afterwards. An earlier report carried in *Los Principios* of Córdoba (September 2) stated that the two men went from the College to the police, and then on to the hospital.

Whatever the correct sequence of their visits, possible corroborating events—unknown at the time to the witnesses, to the Military College guards and to the hospital staff—had taken place. One was that the staff at the Mendoza station of the Belgrano Railway Line had reported a sudden and total blackout of the lighting system at the precise time that the witnesses stated that their car had stopped. Another was that at 3.45 a.m., three minutes after the reported "auto-stop", a Senora Maria Spinelli telephoned the police from her home on the calle Luzuriaga in the Dorrego suburb some 6 km. from the scene of the encounter, and reported that a strange luminous object was flying around very low overhead.

## To believe or not to believe ?

Before I proceed with details of

## Flying saucers 'banned'

From the English-language *Buenos Aires Herald* for September 7, 1968—  
"Police in the province of Mendoza have stepped in to halt increasing concern about the presence of flying saucers. Unable to actually outlaw the saucers themselves, the authorities have issued a communique that the spreading of saucer rumours is an offence penalised by law."

The communique adds that "the penal code contemplates prison terms for people indulging in spreading unwarranted fear and legal action will be taken against those who break this rule."

the case, I feel it is necessary for me to re-state my position with regard to UFO/Humanoid reports of this kind. I take the line that it is essential that researchers should not overlook *anything* that is claimed or reported, however ludicrous it may seem. Furthermore, it is incumbent upon the editor of a serious journal to ensure that everything possible is examined objectively and put into the record. This is a very different kettle of fish from "believing", about which I have already expressed my views quite clearly,<sup>3</sup> and I never hesitate to recommend Aimé Michel's advice that we should see and hear everything, but believe nothing.

So let us return to the events that were supposed to have taken place at Mendoza in the early hours of September 1.

## The alleged encounter

The witnesses who claimed the remarkable experience were Juan Carlos Peccinetti (married, aged 26) and Fernando José Villegas (married, aged 29). They are employed at a Mendoza casino and, when they finished work at 3.30 a.m., they set off for home in Villegas' vintage 1929 Chevrolet, number plate 2999.

When they reached a dark part of the calle Nequén, near the calle Laprida, the car stopped and the lights went out. Villegas got out to look under the bonnet.

Later, in an interview at the *La Crónica* offices in Buenos Aires—

reported in the edition for September 9—Peccinetti confirmed that his watch stopped at 3.42 a.m., and added that despite earlier reports to the contrary, only *he* had a watch. As he was getting out of the car he heard Villegas shout: "Look, Skinny", and thereupon they found themselves unable to move (the word "paralysed" was used) and face to face with three "humanoid" beings. Two more of the creatures, so we are told, were standing near an "enormous" circular or oval-shaped "machine", some 4 metres across and 1.50 m. high. This object was "floating" in the air 1.20 m. above a piece of waste land at 2333 calle Nequén. A powerful beam of light was directed from the object towards the ground at an angle of about 45°.

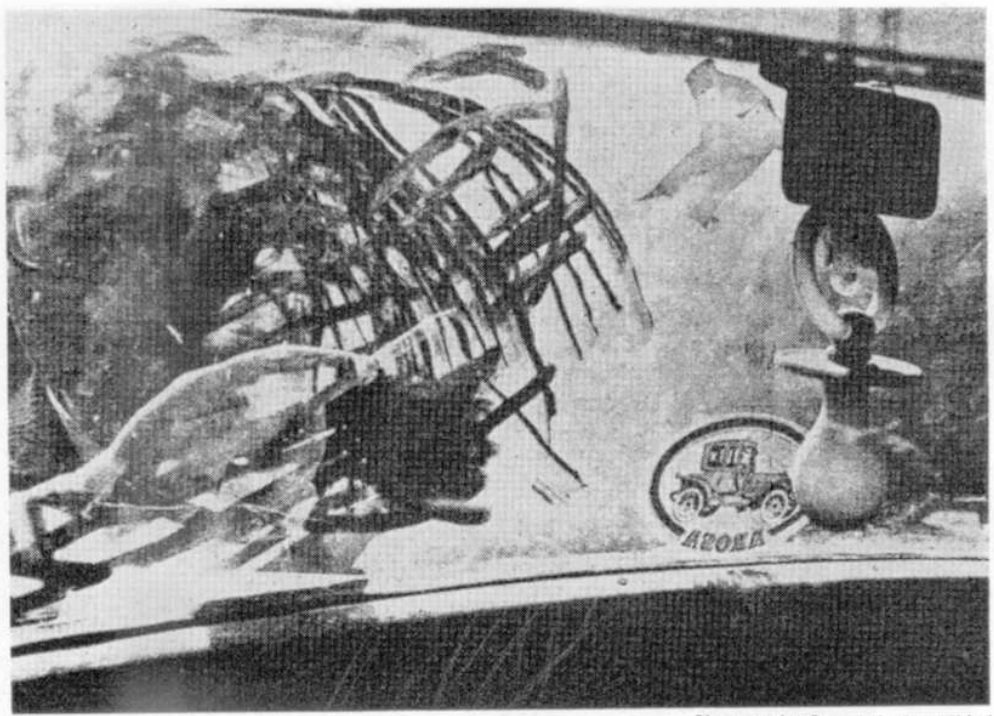
The beings, about 1.50 m. in height, appeared to be of human shape except that their heads were "strikingly" larger than normal. The heads were also hairless. The creatures wore overalls like those of attendants at a petrol filling station. Their movements were "gentle and quiet", and as they approached the two witnesses they crossed a ditch. Peccinetti observed that they crossed "as though by a bridge".

Both Peccinetti and Villegas said that when the entities had come close they could hear a foreign-sounding voice saying repeatedly: "Do not fear, do not fear." Said Peccinetti: "It was as though they had put into our ears the tiny ear-plug 'speakers' used with transistor radios."

Villegas gave details of a message that was passed to them in this way, with, all the time, the persuasive backing of "Do not fear. . . ." The gist of the message was: "we have just made three journeys around the Sun, studying customs and languages of the inhabitants of the system. The Sun benignly nurtures the system; were it not so then the Solar system would not exist."

The alleged message then ended with the statement: "Mathematics is the universal language."

While this lecture was going on, another of the little humanoids was busily tracing inscriptions on the doors, windscreen and running-boards of the vintage car. He used



Investigator examines inscriptions on windscreen

Photograph: Gente y la Actualidad

a small device which, we are told, was not unlike a soldering-iron, and which gave off dazzling sparks. (When during subsequent investigations a blow-lamp was used on a panel of a door, the paintwork was badly burned, as would be expected, but there were no burn marks whatsoever in the vicinity of the inscriptions.)

There next appeared, close to the hovering object, a circular screen, not unlike that of a television set. On this there appeared a series of images. The first was a scene of a waterfall in lush country; the second a mushroom-shaped cloud; the third the waterfall scene again, but no water. (The moral of the story is . . .?)

Peccinetti and Villegas assert that after this the entities took hold of their left hands—the creatures' hands felt no different from human hands, we are told—and pricked their fingers three times. Then they turned towards the hovering "machine" and ascended to it along the light beam. Swiftly there followed an explosive effect, and the object is said to have risen into the sky surrounded by a vast radiance, and then to have disappeared into "Space".

#### Investigation

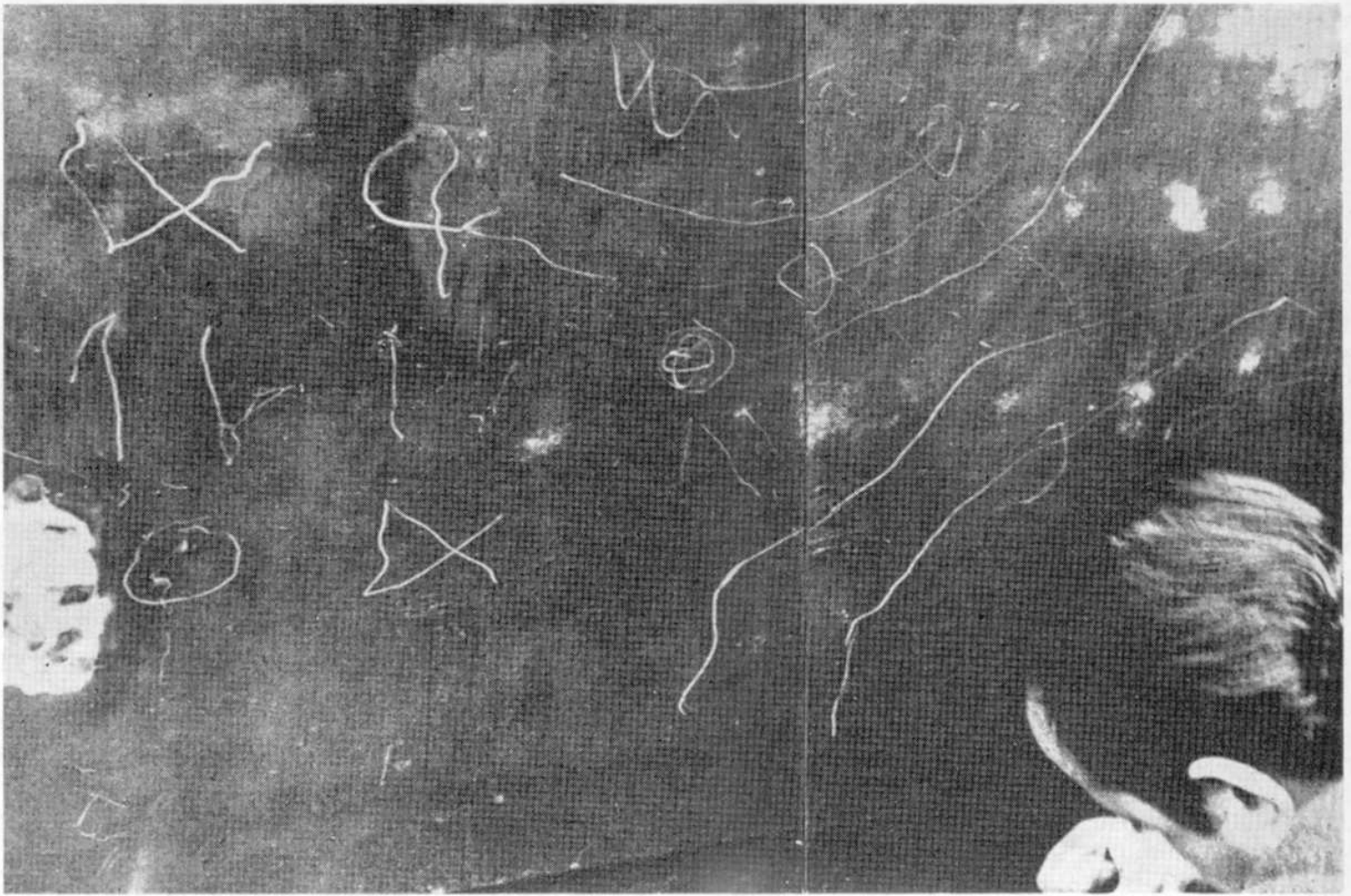
An earlier report (*Los Principios*) stated that "when the UFO crew

were returning to their machine, one of them fell down, but was quickly picked up by his companions." A few days later, during a reconstruction of the case by a judge in Mendoza, there was talk of discrepancies in the various accounts, to which Peccinetti replied in *La Crónica*: ". . . the celebrated bit about them falling over . . . that's all wrong. When the dwarfs seemed to be climbing up the light beam . . . and we heard the explosion, I heard Villegas shout: 'Run, Skinny!' and we bolted for the Military College. It was Villegas who fell over . . . and I picked him up."

It also transpired that the soldier on duty at the College said he heard an explosion and saw a glow in the distance, but afterwards denied what he had said. However, the two witnesses told *La Crónica* that several other people in the district had testified as to what they had seen and heard.

From the College guardroom Peccinetti and Villegas went to Lagomaggiore Hospital. There they received attention, and the report on them indicated: "Picture of psychomotor excitation, and three small punctures on the fleshy parts of the index and middle fingers of the left hand. Identical in both of them."

The examination then continued



The marks on the side of the car

Photograph from two pages of *Gente y la Actualidad*

at the Central Hospital with blood tests, the results being negative. It was also revealed that for two days the witnesses were kept apart, and it is understood that during that time their stories tallied one with the other.

It was at this stage that the police intervened. Police Commissioner Miguel Montoza of the Sixth Police Section impounded the car that had been abandoned by the witnesses. Radioactivity tests on the vehicle, at the site, and at the Neuropsychical Hospital revealed nothing abnormal.

Peccinetti and Villegas assert that they are Catholics, not belonging to any spiritualistic organisation, or having any links with societies or sects.

Attempts have been made to interpret the inscriptions on the car—Gordon Creighton with his vast knowledge of languages and scripts tells me they seem to be childishly unsystematic—and we read that the Mendoza Centre for Space Research proposed this hypothesis to the *Gente y la Actualidad* reporters:

“The sketch done by the humanoids represents two solar systems, the Earth’s system, consisting of Mercury, Venus and Earth, and the Jupiter system, containing the planets Io, Europa and Ganymede. Between Ganymede and Earth there are two parallel lines, as though to indicate a two-way trip, and establishing that the source of these beings is Ganymede, a sphere that is 776 million kilometres from Earth.”

It surprises me to learn that they could deduce all that from the squiggles shown in the sketch, but I’m no expert in these matters. I did read in *Gente*, however, that the hypothesis was based on concepts contained in a book by Manuel Sáenz and Wylly Wolf. I think I’ll side with Mr. Creighton—it’s safer!

#### Comment

That, for the time being, is the best I can do with the material available. There was obviously an initial scramble by newspapers to

get this sensational case into print—and if it *is* true then it is indeed sensational. Later investigations like those by *Gente* and *La Crónica*, seem to have been carried out reasonably carefully. A correspondent of mine in Buenos Aires tells me that when she saw Peccinetti and Villegas on television: “They did not appear to be the ‘mythomaniacs’ or ‘publicity seekers’ that the Mendoza authorities say they are. The two men looked very ordinary, and I doubt if they are publicity-seeking, for they would lose their jobs. I doubt if a casino would entrust the job of cashier to anyone about whom they were not sure. In my opinion,” concludes my correspondent, “theirs is a down-to-earth job which leaves little time for ‘fancies’.”

#### Speculation

If true, this is an amazing case calling for further rigorous investigation. It is also a case with ingredients to suit adherents to both the extraterrestrial hypothesis, and those who are convinced we are