

# THE UFOIN CONCEPT

*Jenny Randles*

FLYING SAUCER REVIEW announced the formation of the new team of British Investigators, *UFO Investigators' Network* (UFOIN), in its editorial leader in the issue Volume 23, No. 2, and several times since then the magazine has carried notes about developments and progress. Each issue has also featured a number of UFOIN investigation reports (or, more correctly, summaries thereof). I welcome this opportunity from the Editor for putting into perspective the concept of UFOIN, and explaining what we are setting out to do, and why. I feel that it has merits on a wider scale, and hope that perhaps like-minded individuals elsewhere might be tempted to consider its applications in their countries.

The problem with UFO investigation, and with UFO investigation groups, is a universal one (no pun intended!). Ufology is of great interest to a wide cross-section of the populace, and beliefs, levels of involvement, and commitment vary enormously. UFO groups, and UFO publications to some extent, have to cater for this variation, and problems ensue. Through no fault of its own an organisation ends up establishing a bureaucracy to proliferate the needs of its mass membership, and valuable time and money has to be channelled into catering for these people. The result not only leads to reduction of concentration on the aims of the organisation, but also to considerable waste of effort and potential.

Another problem is that UFO investigation is a skilled job, which basically is learned by experience. Most UFO groups have to rely on a member or members investigating a case, and thus standards swing about from one extreme to the other. Many brave attempts have been made to overcome this problem, but it is one inherent in UFO group systems.

It has been suggested by several ufologists — John Rimmer, the editor of *MUFOB* magazine is one — that the only solution is to “disown” groups altogether as individuals. However, in the United Kingdom we had seen the success of a couple of local groups who had selected their membership and concentrated purely on UFOs.” So late in 1976 a number of us got together to ponder whether or not we could make a similar thing work on a national scale. It was also known at the time that discussions were under way that have led recently to the formation of the Institute for UFO Studies, and that a much-needed prerequisite of this would be *consistent* and good quality data, and not a hodge-podge of material.

Consequently, UFOIN came into being. It must be pointed out that at first there was no desire to give the body a name, since it was our wish to avoid group connotations altogether. However, a majority felt that a name was necessary and this has led to

false conceptions about the team. I will try to correct these now by explaining how the idea has functioned in its first two-and-a-half years of operation since Spring 1977 — the fruits of which have been seen in *FSR*.

Firstly UFOIN decided to discard *all* group attributes. In other words nobody was elected to form a committee, and every member was given equal status. It is true I was asked to be secretary, but this is purely an honorary position that involves administrative “Interim Reports” which update members on developments and new cases) and I have no authority whatsoever by virtue of this position. Not only this, but we also dispensed with cumbersome rules and regulations. In fact there is really only one rule and that is that every investigator must act objectively and in the best interests of ufology. If a majority of the membership feels that someone has brought ufology into disrepute then that person will be asked to leave after such a vote is taken at one of the twice-yearly meetings of all members. So far this has not happened, and it is to be hoped that it will not.

The second important proposal that UFOIN insisted on was that membership should only be open to capable investigators. Initially this meant inviting participation by any experienced investigator with a proven track record. Inevitably this involved many of the well-known names, like Peter Johnson, Omar Fowler, Randall Jones Pugh and so on. Several had involvements with the national groups BUFORA or CONTACT UK, being prime elements in the investigator systems. The aim was never to supersede these organisations. Principally it was to bring the “best” people together in an informal system which overcame any artificial boundaries imposed by group allegiances. This has worked well, and few found it necessary to leave their parent association or to diminish their involvement with their individual motivations. Not surprisingly, however, the groups themselves were suspicious, and viewed this concept as a “take over” of their better investigators. Co-operation was, therefore, virtually nil. However, now that suspicions are being placated by the reality of what has happened there is hope that the groups might see the advantages of the system and come formally to recognise it. There is undoubted scope for fruitful co-operation.

As for newcomers to the team, it was decided that we should base this on their ability to prove that

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they could produce a detailed and unbiased report on a case. They do not become a fully-fledged member until they have provided such a report and it is published in a reputable journal, such as FSR. The standards of the work of all members are reviewed by all other members at the six-monthly meetings, and each area of the United Kingdom (UFOIN is split for this purpose into five areas) has as a co-ordinator the most experienced investigator within that region who simply acts as a guide to any newcomers. Again no authority whatsoever is invested in these positions, and the co-ordinators do not distribute news of sightings, since all members are considered equal and self-sufficient.

The third proposal that we made was that we should *concentrate* on high strangeness cases. In other words, so far as the UFOIN files are concerned, investigators are only asked to supply reports on cases that offer potential for adding to our knowledge (i.e. LITS, or medium definition cases of ordinary status, are not involved). Obviously the investigators often work for BUFORA, CONTACT, NUFON, or a local group and therefore they, or colleagues of theirs, do investigate other cases. These are therefore collated by their respective organisations. The purpose of this UFOIN specialisation is twofold. It means that we can collate detailed reports on these interesting cases, *and* it means that the UFOIN files contain just high interest material perfect for research purposes, and no "padding."

Of course there have been problems. Not everyone investigates in the same way. Some use standard report forms as a basis. Others consider these to be a restriction and prefer to take each case as it comes. However, standards have been pleasingly high with reports often made in great depth — a 30-page A4 text on one case is not unusual, and several have gone well above that level. Consequently *do not* take what you see in FSR as the UFOIN report. This is always a summary, compiled usually by the Editor or by myself from the greater detail of the report that is on file.

More recently we have decided to adopt a standardised report format, formulated by Irish researcher, John Hind, and agreed by the membership. This does not dictate how a report should be investigated, but sets out a standard method of supplying the data so that it is more amenable to research.

All the files are presently stored at the HQ of the network, which is run by the local UFO Investigation Group in Nottingham (NUFOIS).<sup>\*</sup> This is a converted house that has files neatly and individually located, with cross reference indexes. At present about 100 UFOIN files are there, and the NUFON files (well over 1000 cases) are also stored in the same room. The building also contains accommodation facilities for researchers so that, provided arrangement is made in advance, they can stay there and utilise the facil-

ities. Be warned it is no five star hotel — far from it — but that is not the aim!

As for future developments the most important one is to expand the HQ. We have set as an urgent priority the purchase of a plain paper copier (rather than a cheaper photocopier). This will enable copies of *all* UFOIN cases to be made available to any researcher at *minimum* possible cost. At present a 30-page report costs about £1.50 (plus postage) to copy, but with the copier we seek, this could be reduced to about 50p. Following this we intend to employ someone (at least part time) to run the HQ, which also has a library of books and magazines for research. A further long-term aim is the installation of computer facilities there.

One problem of aims such as these is that of finance. UFOIN is *not* a membership organisation and, other than a £5 initial "token of faith" no membership fee is requested from the participants — just their hard work! FSR do, very generously, provide a small fund which is used to cover any extraordinary expenses incurred in an investigation. The aim, of course, being to ensure that all that is possible is done on a case. In return UFOIN uses FSR as its chief vehicle for publication of the more interesting reports. Methods of raising funds are being devised, but the HQ has set up a development fund and if you feel that you are able, or would like to contribute something towards this, please contact the HQ address (see below). We are also very keen to acquire any material for the library that you might be able to spare for a wider ufological use. Particularly, of course, rare journals or books would be useful. Ultimately, where they are not available, indexes will be prepared and a project to index FSR in a *very* comprehensive fashion is already under way. (Your help would be gratefully received on this if you have older issues of FSR at your disposal.)

The UFOIN concept is still a young one, but it seems to be worthwhile. Of course it succeeds not only because it specialises, concentrates, and allows complete freedom for its members, but also because it has one *simple* aim. It does not set out to reach the public, or interest the masses, or hold meetings. It just sets out to investigate reports culled largely from local sources by its members, as well as from contacts with police stations, weather centres and such like. This is no mass membership group, and anyone who is thinking of writing to me to find out more about it should *only* do so if they feel they have the ability and dedication required. Otherwise there are two excellent mass membership organisations that do exist in Britain and you would be well advised to get in touch with them.

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<sup>\*</sup> UFOIN HQ, c/o Dr Robert Morell, 443 Meadow Lane, Nottingham NG2 3GB. Any cheques, postal orders etc., should be crossed and made payable to UFO INVESTIGATORS NETWORK.

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# MAIL BAG

Correspondence is invited from our readers, but they are asked to keep their letters short. Unless letters give the sender's full name and address (not necessarily for publication) they cannot be considered. The Editor would like to remind correspondents that it is not always possible to acknowledge every letter personally, so he takes this opportunity of thanking all who write to him.

## The "cow" explanation defended

Dear Sir, — While J. R. Taplin (25.1) is fully entitled to describe my explanation of the Rainford incident as "preposterous," he is then obliged to refute in detail the considerations advanced in support of the conclusions I draw. This he fails to do.

Although the police stated that the witnesses were not intoxicated they carried out no tests to establish the fact, and from what the witnesses themselves related we know they stopped on the journey for a drink, having spent the earlier part of the evening at a social function at which intoxicants were available. It is a known fact that the degree of intoxication can be curbed through shock, and on the journey back, after the witnesses had visited a public house, the car skidded while rounding a bend and almost crashed — it ended up in a small ditch close to a hedge. As an individual can appear reasonably sober while not being so, mere appearance cannot be accepted as demonstrating that the witnesses in this case were not intoxicated. These facts, then, show that the issue of intoxication cannot be got around quite as easily as Mr. Taplin imagines it can.

As the Nottingham UFO Investigation Society has never investigated a UFO landing at or near Crich — nor for the matter have I — it is quite impossible to comment upon the second part of Mr. Taplin's letter which refers to such a case, claiming that NUFOIS investigated it and presented certain conclusions involving a cow. NUFOIS publishes the reports of its investigations in its journal, the *UFO Research Review*. In the four years this magazine has been published no report has been printed which refers to a cow as an explanation; furthermore, no investigation report on file at NUFOIS H.Q. (and reports go back seven years) which has remained unpublished carries such a conclusion. Naturally NUFOIS cannot be held responsible for the content matter of newspaper reports, and anyone seriously interested in UFOs rapidly comes to a position from which all such material is treated with extreme caution in so far as its accuracy is concerned, it would seem, though, that Mr. Taplin is an exception to this rule, and rather than quote directly from any official

NUFOIS publication, or NUFOIS files (which are open to inspection subject to certain safeguards), presents a garbled comment based upon some half-remembered newspaper cutting. If he seriously thinks that NUFOIS presented as a conclusion to an investigation that all a witness saw was a cow then let him quote from the report in question, giving the date on which NUFOIS published the report and in what publication. If he has any difficulty getting hold of NUFOIS publications he can always come over to Nottingham and go through those in the library at NUFOIS H.Q., or in the Nottingham Public Library Reference Library. A full run of NUFOIS publications can be consulted at the British Library in London.

Yours faithfully,  
R.W. Morrell,  
Nottingham UFO Investigation Society,  
443 Meadow Lane,  
Nottingham NG2 3GB.  
7 July 1979

## The ufologist's dilemma

Dear Sir, — I have in the past admired Pierre Guerin's soundly analytical approach to the UFO problem, notably his essay on the question of proof in Bourret's *Nouveau Defi des OVNI*: so I was the more disappointed that his trenchantly argued and splendidly thought-provoking piece in FSR 25/1 should lead him to such negative inconclusions. By contrast Vieroudy, whom he so lightly dismisses, seems to me to have far more to offer by way of constructive suggestion.

Vieroudy recognises the basic dilemma which faces the ufologist, that UFOs are *at the same time* (i) 'real' objects and (ii) 'psychic' constructs. He insists that any explanation must start by taking into account this paradoxical duality.

We at the Society for Psychical Research have long been aware that a similar paradox exists with regard to many of the phenomena we are called upon to study. The question 'Do you believe in ghosts?' that I am asked when wearing my SPR hat is precisely as question-begging as the 'Do you believe in UFOs?' put to me as a BUFORA member: and the question

begged is the same one — how can a 'ghost' or a UFO be *both* an autonomous entity *and* an illusion, modelled if not actually generated by our own subconscious mind?

Vieroudy, though perceptively spotlighting recurrent 'psychic' patterns in UFO sightings, refuses to allow them to persuade him that therefore UFOs have no material existence. His firm insistence on accepting this paradox, in defiance of seeming logic, gives us, in my opinion, the firmest basis on which a solution may, hopefully, ultimately be constructed.

Yours sincerely,  
Hilary Evans,  
Chairman,  
UFO Study Group,  
Society for Psychical Research,  
1 Adam & Eve Mews, London W8,  
12 July 1979

## A matter of Spatial Speech

Dear Sirs, — I am writing to point out a mistake in one of your articles that could be very misleading to other readers. The article in question is "Thirty Years After Kenneth Arnold" which appeared in volume 25, No 1.

In the passage entitled "The inadequacy of the Classic Extraterrestrial model" Pierre Guerin frequently uses the theory of relativity to discourage people who favour the Spacecraft Theory. Unfortunately, he has made a mistake. Einstein's theories (which have since been proven in the laboratory) said that no matter could travel AT the speed of light. there is nothing to prevent a space craft from travelling at superphotic speeds, as long as this crucial speed of 186282.39 miles per sec. is never attained. This presents many problems, but who knows what "they" can do!

If achieving a speed without passing through a lower one seems to be unbelievable, recent work has yielded another way around the problem. A trip through a black hole is not, as some might think, a science fiction dodge, but a properly worked-out theory. (For details of the black hole theory, Adrian Berry's book *THE IRON SUN* is excellent). This gives a