

TWENTY YEARS OLD

Charles Bowen

TWENTY years ago, in January 1955, *Flying Saucer Review* first saw the light of day. A small issue — it was a quarterly, and that for the only time in the magazine's existence — appeared under the editorship of Derek Dempster. The issue in which this article appears therefore marks the completion of twenty years of publishing.

A little over ten years ago Waveney Girvan, who was then Editor, was battling against the onset of the vicious illness that was to end his life a few weeks later on October 22, 1964). Nevertheless he managed to write a piece for inclusion in Volume 10, No.6 (November-December 1964), entitled *Ten Years Old*. He had already put together the Editorial leader for that issue, so his article was almost certainly the last thing he wrote for the magazine, in the foundation of which he had been a guiding light, and which he edited with distinction for five years from September 1959. Editing skill and literary ability of the highest order together with charm, and a biting wit, were his strengths, but he also needed all his business skill and doggedness, for during much of his term — the period 1960 to 1963 to be precise — he guided the *Review* through what Vallée has called the "Dark Ages of Ufology."

This seems an appropriate moment to quote from two paragraphs of Waveney Girvan's *Ten Years Old*:

"To have survived ten years of publishing in an era of adverse economics and without subsidy or patronage of any sort would normally be regarded as an achievement for a small magazine dealing with any other interest, but as flying saucers are generally believed to lack both existence and significance, the achievement should appear much greater to the sceptic than to the believer. But the *Review* will not look forward with any confidence to a general acclaim and wishes for a happy birthday. The occasion will no doubt be allowed to pass with customary silence — customary, that is, to all who know the truth about the saucers and who patiently await the day when the subject can be intelligently and fearlessly discussed in the columns of the national press. That day is not yet with us.

"The *Review* can look back on its particular decade with mixed feelings (one of which, of course, is gratitude born of survival) upon a unique publishing experience. It is impossible to think of any other topic that would have brought a publisher similar problems. To begin with, as officially there is no such subject, strictly speaking the *Review* should never have been able to start, let alone pass its tenth milestone."

In some senses one could substitute the words *twenty* and *twentieth* for the words *ten* and *tenth* in the quoted paragraphs, for some part of it would still apply today. But only some small part, and any such easy substitution would convey a picture of the general situation that is far from the truth.

Certainly there will be those in the big battalions who will always be convinced that "flying saucers... lack both existence and significance," and there are those in both government and media who will go to any lengths to convince the public that this is the case. In this context, for example, we should never forget Low's notorious "Trick" memorandum sent to the University of Colorado where the U.S. Air Force investigation (the Condon Committee), of which he was Project Co-ordinator, was to be based...

"...Our study would be conducted almost exclusively by non-believers who, although they couldn't possibly prove a negative result, could and probably would add an impressive body of evidence that there is no reality to the observations. The trick would be, I think, to describe the project so that, to the public, it would appear a totally objective study but, to the scientific community would present the image of a group of non-believers trying their best to be objective, but having an almost zero expectation of finding a saucer. One way to do this would be to stress investigation, not of the physical phenomena, but rather of the people who do the observing — the psychology and sociology of persons and groups who report seeing UFOs. If the emphasis were put here rather than on examination of the old question of the physical reality of the saucer, I think the scientific community would quickly get the message. I'm inclined to feel...if we set up the thing right...we could carry off the job to our benefit."

(A file copy of this memo was seen by two members of the committee, and they were so disturbed by it that they communicated the contents to Dr. James E. McDonald at Arizona University. A row followed, and the two members, Drs. Saunders and Levine were sacked.)*

The outcome was inevitable. In January 1969, at a price of \$500,000 paid by the U.S. Air Force, the late Dr. Edward U. Condon and his team seemed to confirm officially that UFOs do not exist. (In fact Dr. Condon only *implied* that they do not exist: among the things he wrote in his conclusions,

* See John G. Fuller's article in *Look* magazine (May 15, 1968), as reported in *FSR* Vol. 14, No. 3 (May-June 1968).

with which he opened the 900 page Bantam Books version of the report — so effectively dissuading many members of the media from reading any further — were “...Careful consideration of the record as it is available to us leads us to conclude that further extensive study of UFOs probably cannot be justified in the expectation that science will be advanced thereby.” Which he could still write even when his report contained a very high proportion of inexplicable and puzzling incidents in the case histories to be found in its pages.)

However, almost as soon as the Condon Report was published, and the U.S. Air Force had achieved what surely must have been its aim, namely of being relieved of the responsibility of logging and explaining the troublesome UFO phenomenon, the report was out-of-date. For people all around the world continued to report seeing UFOs in the skies, close to the ground, on the ground, often with occupants inside and/or outside the ‘craft,’ and sometimes leaving marks on the ground. The wholesome fact being that generally people did not succumb to being brainwashed. Some bought the Bantam paperback version of the Condon Report *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects*, but millions didn’t. (In the United States this publication was remaindered at a giveaway price quite early in its career, and in my collection of books I have one of these copies, sent to me by the late Dr. James McDonald — a copy distinguished from the other one I possess by having had its front cover torn off prior to sale!)

The foregoing is typical of the rearguard actions fought by the powers-that-be against any advance of the truth about the UFO phenomenon. I hope older readers will recognize the need to make these quotations from the past: there is now a new generation of readers who may not know of these things.

Despite the various attempts to hoodwink the public in recent years, the situation now is far removed from what it was ten long years ago. Whereas Waveney Girvan and his contemporary workers and researchers were hanging on tooth and nail, it is usually the “knockers” who find themselves in that position nowadays. Whatever they say, whatever gems of ridicule escape from their lips, the phenomenon continues as though oblivious to their efforts to deny it.

Changing atmosphere

The change in atmosphere was already detectable before Waveney Girvan died. The translating work of Gordon Creighton, and the valued assistance of researchers Oscar Galindez, Nigel Rimes and Walter Buhler revealed that the “Dark Ages” of the early sixties were nowhere as dark as had been imagined, because there had been vast waves of reports in South America during the period 1962 — 1964. Then the 1964 wave burst on the world, with cases like Socorro+ and Newark Valley** occurring on the same day, April 24, 1964.

The 1964 wave merged into the great global wave of 1965, and by 1966 we were treated to the

spectacle of a Hearing on Unidentified Flying Objects by the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives, at Washington D.C. Later that year the Condon Committee was set up, with its “trick” philosophy to guide it, and while that body was still deliberating, the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Science and Astronautics held a Symposium on UFOs in July 1968. The Condon Committee’s investigations are now seen to have been something of a façade, but they did at least reveal to the world some details of the hitherto secret Lakenheath USAF/RAF radar-visual incidents, and did admit the unsolvability of certain cases like, for example, the McMinnville sightings and photographs. And while the U.S. Air Force investigation group, Project Blue Book, was — as a result of Condon’s deliberations — being dissolved by a grateful Air Force, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) devoted part of its Christmas 1969 Meeting to papers on the subject. Shortly after that the influential American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) became involved with UFO reports, a process which we expect to see develop interestingly in January 1975, at Pasadena, when the Association meets under the chairmanship of Dr. Joachim Kuettner, and when Drs. Poher and Vallée are giving a paper on an aspect of the UFO phenomenon.

Meanwhile, having achieved emancipation thanks to his enforced release from his consultancy to Project Blue Book, Dr. J. Allen Hynek wrote a valuable book *The UFO Experience*, in which we had glimpses of the chaotic methods at Blue Book, as well as a valuable dissertation on the subject. Dr. Hynek then set about forming his Institute, the Center for UFO Studies, and, as readers will know, officially associated himself with *Flying Saucer Review* in September 1974.

In the second decade of FSR’s history there have been other very significant moves which have promoted the growth of respectability of the subject. In France a sane and traditional commonsense had built up from the wise and calm appraisals of the historian of the 1952 and 1954 waves, Aimé Michel, and his friends. But while two groups of amateur investigators, the Groupement d’Etudes de Phénomènes Aériennes (GEPa), guided by R. Fouéré, and Lumières dans la Nuit (LDLN), under the direction of R. Veillith and F. Lagarde, have been quietly and unsensationally active over the years, it was the effect of the massive 1973-74 wave of reports that suddenly broadened the horizons of ufology in France, and the world. Not surprisingly the wave lapped over into Spain and Italy, and it was the remarkable radar-visual case at Caselle Airport, Turin, that excited the attention of Jean-Claude Bourret of Radio *France-Inter*, and led to the series of 39 radio programmes.

+ See, for example, the contribution of W.T. Powers to *The Humanoids*.

** See B.E. Schwarz: “Gary Wilcox and the Ufonauts” in FSR Special Issue No. 3, *UFO Percipients*.

In one of J-C. Bourret's programmes, on February 21, 1974, the French Ministre des Armées (the equivalent of our Minister of Defence), M. Robert Galley, gave an interview. He admitted official interest in the subject since the great wave of 1954 and spoke of the sheer massiveness of the phenomenon and the volume of reporting of it. He spoke of puzzling radar cases, of the collaboration of the Gendarmerie in gathering information, of the passing of old information to GEPA, and of the channelling of all information to Dr. Claude Poher of the Centre Nationale d'Etudes Spatiales at Toulouse.

So, all in all, our second ten years have witnessed steady but significant changes in the situation since the last days of Waveney Girvan when the future still seemed somewhat bleak. Needless to say the situation does not appear to have changed over much in Britain, but at least we were treated to a small but excellent item in *Nature* on the subject of Dr. Hynek's Center,†† and a number of young scientists are known to be tremendously interested in paranormal events, including UFOs, and I suppose it is only a matter of time before they replace the old traditionalists as they fade away.

FSR publications

Flying Saucer Review benefitted from the escalating interest which accompanied the waves of the middle sixties. Circulation slowly climbed away from the miserable level to which it had sunk during the "Dark Ages" but, however hard we have tried, it has never reached "take off point." Always something happens to dampen our progress. Like the postal strike of 1971, or the industrial troubles and paper shortage of more recent memory.

The Review's biggest success was *The Humanoids*, the first of the Special Issues, which began its career in October 1966. The idea for this venture was suggested originally by Jacques Vallée, and as we printed and sold 4000 copies of our own first version — which has also appeared in a Spanish hard-cover edition — and as the augmented version has so far appeared as a hard-cover edition in Britain (Neville Spearman Ltd.) and the U.S.A. (Henry Regnery Co.), and in paperback versions in Britain and France (under the title *En Quête des Humanoïdes*) our finances were put on a sound footing.

Succeeding Special Issues (2–5 inclusive) have all done well without achieving the same impact as *The Humanoids*.

Support for *Flying Saucer Review* built up unexpectacularly until 1970, and remained at a reasonable level until the unfortunate postal strike of 1971, which was but a prelude to the ensuing troubles of 1973 and 1974. Consequently it was unfortunate that we chose to embark on our series of supplements, *FSR Case Histories*, at the tail-end of 1970. This venture was never supported to the same degree as the main magazine. It was just about paying its way when FSR Publications Ltd. became involved in the massive delays brought about by first having to change our printer, and secondly, going to a newly started firm which was immediately put flat on its back by the effect of strikes, power shortages, paper

shortages and three-day-weeks. With our tiny spare-time-only staff *FSR Case Histories* became too much of a burden. There were also rapidly rising costs, and a prospect of financial loss, so, after a valiant try, which ran for 18 numbers, we were forced to suspend publication of the supplements. There are still substantial stocks remaining of most of the numbers (only 1 and 2 are out-of-print), so it would do FSR a good turn if those readers who do not know the supplements were to acquire sets. A wealth of valuable and interesting material is to be found in their pages.

The problem of advertising

Our attempts to advertise, where we could afford to do so, in journals and the press, have never met with great success. The general public is still not deeply interested in our subject. There are those who think we should embark on public advertising (e.g. "train spots") and the absence of this is usually regretted whenever something happens, like a big newspaper article which uses our material but fails to quote us or to say how FSR can be obtained. The difficulty, however, is knowing when to have advertisements in the right place at the right time, or to be able to afford permanent and wide cover — or even to know whether such advertisements would be accepted.

The need is to find a way to attract the small minority who *need* to find us. As it would sound the death knell of FSR if we tried to sell the magazine on a sale-or-return basis on the bookstalls‡. I feel that our best hope of doing this lies in our address being given in books where there are quotations and ideas from our magazines.

Again, we rely very much on word-of-mouth recommendations by our readers, and I take this opportunity of thanking all those who have supported us in this way.

The future

While we expect to push our production schedules back to somewhere nearer normal, perhaps by early 1976, it is impossible to make promises at this time about going monthly, or resuming publication of *FSR Case Histories*: there are too many other problems to overcome at this stage. What we would like to do, if humanly possible, is to reduce our price. That, however, would require a growth to at least double the present size of our subscription list.

At present it is difficult to see how such growth can be achieved with our present set-up. Now and again we receive letters of complaint from readers

†† See "A Major Breakthrough" in *FSR* Vol.20, No.3, with reference to *Nature*, Vol.251, No.5474 of Oct. 4, 1974.

‡ One nationwide chain of stalls and shops said they would be prepared to take only 3000 copies, provided we halved our cover price, and agreed to repurchase unsold copies (in an unsaleable condition, we know, because it has happened to us in our dealings with other, smaller concerns).

who feel they are entitled to a better service, with magazines coming out regularly, and on time, from our big organisation and plush offices. Naturally we agree that they are entitled to such service, and we apologize that there have been some hold-ups in recent months. What those readers do not realise is that FSR is produced by devoted people who, over the years, have mostly worked voluntarily and for nothing in their spare time, and frequently in arduous conditions. There is so much that requires to be done, and so little time to do it that, for example, the Editorial leader for this issue was sketched out while I was standing in the luggage van of a crowded commuter train on my daily 25-mile journey to work in London. And that goes also for much of this article, except that for large parts of it I managed to get a seat! Not that there is anything unusual about editing in the train: I caught the habit from Waveney Girvan (although I never saw him doing creative writing, but only proof reading, manuscript correcting, or discussing ideas with me) and I've seen many other people correcting galley proofs too. So much for plush offices.

My only regret is that we cannot possibly enter into much in the way of correspondence. The choice lies between chatty letters or FSR: one or the other, not both. The gap between our present position, and a full-time organisation observing all the niceties, seems insurmountable without large-scale backing.

One thing is very much in my mind, and that is to produce limited edition reprints of certain out-of-print issues of *Flying Saucer Review*. Among those

very much in demand are, for example, Vol. 15, No.6 (November-December 1969) with Aimé Michel's fabulous study "Palaeolithic UFO-shapes," and also Special Issue No. 3, *UFO Percipients*, and Vol. 17, No. 6 (November-December 1971) each of which contains a part of the study of "Dr. X," again by Aimé Michel. Naturally these would cost more than the current issues because new plates would have to be made, and the printing run would be much smaller than usual. Nevertheless several readers have assured me they would be quite happy to pay more for those issues which are of special interest, or which they need to fill gaps in their collections.

Now, as the *Review* closes its twentieth year of publication, I would like to thank all those who devote so much of their precious time to help keep the wheels turning: Assistant Editor Eileen Buckle, right-hand man and "electronic interpreter" Gordon Creighton, Mrs. E. Spencer, who still answers the telephone for us, Mrs. Enid Guinness who distributes the magazine so efficiently, Mrs. Jo Hugill who helps with new enquiries, and Tim Good who helps with some correspondence when his musical career with the LSO affords him some spare time. I am grateful too for all the scores of clippings of news items that are sent in, and the reports sometimes collected from friends and neighbours; not all are published for we just do not have space, but please continue to send them!

Once more I would like to thank all our readers for the loyal and continuing support that has enabled us to reach this milestone.

London, December 30, 1974

PERSONAL COLUMN

£0.25 per line or part: £1.00 for 4 lines and so on.

WARMINSTER skywatch caravan available until October. Details from Mrs. M. Carey, 61, Corton, Nr. Warminster, Wilts. (s.a.e. essential).

LARGE SEMI-DETACHED older style house, 5 minutes station and new town centre. £14,000 or offer. Write to: A. West, 16 Southway, Burgess Hill, Sussex RH15 9ST or 'phone Burgess Hill 6738 (STD code 044 46).

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NORTH ESSEX/SUFFOLK. Advertiser interested in UFO and all associated phenomena seeks to contact others in the same area. Tel. Mike Stuttle, Clare 295 (evenings).

WANTED: FSR Special Issue No.2, "Beyond Condon." Good condition preferred. State price. D. Smith, 7 Broadhead Road, Deepcar, Sheffield, S30 5PL.

IMPORTANT BUFORA NOTICE

THE BUFORA NATIONAL RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATIONS CONFERENCE

To be held at the GRAND HOTEL, STOKE-ON-TRENT,
STAFFS

Saturday May 10, 1975, at 2.0 p.m., until Sunday,
May 11, at 4.0 p.m.

Speakers on Saturday will include:

Professor John Taylor of King's College, London

Leonard G. Cramp

Dr. Joachim Kuettner (Chairman this year of the AIAA)

Tim O'Brien

On Sunday, speakers will include:

Martin Janta-Polczynski, or SOBEPS

Trevor Whittaker

For details send S.A.E. to the Chairman: Roger
Stanway, Old Brook Cottage, White Cross,
Haughton, Staffs.

DON'T FORGET

Tell your friends about FLYING SAUCER REVIEW
By general acclaim the best in the World!

THE MYSTERIOUS "UMMO" AFFAIR. We regret we have been unable to publish Part 3 in this issue, and it has been held over for the next issue of FSR.