

The Face Behind the 'Face' on Mars

A Skeptical Look at Richard C. Hoagland

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*From the "Face" on Mars, to the Pioneer plaque, to the possibility of a liquid ocean on Europa, Richard Hoagland boasts of his scientific prescience.
But beneath that facade lies a yawning credibility gap.*

GARY P. POSNER

In July 1976, as NASA's Viking 1 spacecraft orbited Mars, a couple of its photographs included coverage of a geographic region designated as Cydonia. Strewn with rocky mesas and devoid of dried river channels, this landscape did not strike NASA as an inviting target for their next lander mission to search for traces of possible ancient life.

But when the photos were released to the public, one of the many mesas seen in Plate #035A72 captured the national spotlight because of its striking resemblance to a humanoid face, complete with headdress (figure 1). Speculation then arose in some quarters that perhaps this mile-long structure was not a natural surface feature at all, but rather an artificial monument. But was it constructed by

a once-thriving Martian civilization? Was it erected by beings from elsewhere in the galaxy, during a brief junket through our solar system, perhaps as a “calling card” for when we became a space-faring species? Or might earthlings—from our own future—be responsible?

The person most intimately associated with the “Face on Mars” is Richard C. Hoagland, a gifted speaker and author of the 1987 book *The Monuments of Mars: A City on the Edge of Forever*. Yes, a “City.” For within 035A72, Hoagland and his associates believe they have also discovered evidence of, among other relics, a “fortress,” an artificial “cliff,” a “five-sided pyramid . . . apparently damaged by explosive penetration [that] seems to possess . . . the proportions of humanoids [with] its ‘head’ pointing directly toward the [more-famous] ‘Face’” (italics in original), and a collection of structures dubbed the “City Square.” According to Hoagland, the city may date back approximately 500,000 years to a time when, if one had stood in the middle of the City Square, “the Summer Solstice sun would have arisen directly over the ‘Face’.”

But by 1990, despite the popularity of Hoagland’s book, there still appeared to be no NASA program in the works to aggressively explore Cydonia. Yet, to hear Hoagland tell it, all was about to change dramatically, thanks to his efforts.

At that time, Hoagland was serving as science advisor to the *For The People* radio program, which was based in Cedar Key, Florida, and broadcast daily across the United States on the Sun Radio Network (and worldwide via shortwave). Hosted by Chuck Harder, this “overheated radio talk show” (as described by Alex Heard in his June/July 1991 *Air & Space Smithsonian* article) was devoted partly to useful consumer-oriented advice, and partly to conspiracy and fringe-science themes such as UFOs, suppressed cancer cures, and perpetual energy machines. Given the nature of much of the subject matter, the program’s Florida roots, and my position as founder of the Tampa Bay Skeptics (and editor of its newsletter, *TBS Report*), I began taping some of the broadcasts, saving and cataloging the most preposterous comments (winding up with nearly five hours of priceless “Greatest Hits” snippets, many involving Hoagland), and writing about them in *TBS Report*.

Hoagland Speaks at NASA

My initial inquiries into some of Hoagland’s pronouncements on *For The People* had concerned the first of his two 1990 presentations (March 20) at the NASA Lewis Research Center in Cleveland, Ohio. In a May 13, 1990, Letter to the Editor of

TBS Report, Chuck Harder had claimed that

NASA invited [Hoagland] after their own internal investigation of the [Cydonia] photos gave his mission sufficient credibility to ask him . . . to present the program to 4,000 NASA scientists and employees. Hardly a laughing matter. . . . Thus on the “NASA ALERT Presentation—Was There Life on Mars?” I suggest you contact Joyce E. Bergstrom at NASA. I have photocopied her business card (attached).

At Harder’s suggestion, I wrote to Bergstrom on May 19. And on June 5 she telephoned me, only too happy to clarify the circumstances surrounding Hoagland’s presentation at NASA/Lewis. She explained that the Lewis center “brings in speakers on a variety of topics of interest as an employee perk. They can legally charge their time for one hour away from

their job to go to the auditorium to listen to a colloquium.” Regarding the “ALERT” designation attached to the title of his presentation, Bergstrom told me that ALERT is just a “catchy acronym” for Alert Lewis Employees on Relevant Topics, and connotes no special importance to the subject matter. And as for this being “no laughing matter,” Bergstrom chuckled at the suggestion that Hoagland’s invitation had resulted from “an internal investigation by NASA giving sufficient



Figure 1. The “Face on Mars,” photographed in 1976 by the Viking 1 spacecraft.

credibility” to his claims, saying, “No, sir. Not at all. Hoagland was invited to the center by our director as a guest for the day based on an employee’s recommendation that he would have an interesting subject.” She added that no NASA scientist had ever expressed to her a belief in Hoagland’s theories about Mars.

On the July 13 *For The People* program, Hoagland discussed his March 20 presentation at NASA/Lewis. Among his statements was one to the effect that NASA’s Dr. John Klineberg, as he introduced Hoagland, credited him with playing a role in President Bush’s decision that we reinvigorate our exploration of Mars. But Klineberg informed me (in an October 24, 1990, letter) that his remark was “of insufficient gravity to be quotable” since he had “no insight” into any such connection. Lewis’s Director of Internal Affairs, Americo F. Forestieri, had written to me on October 4 saying, “I understand [Klineberg’s] remark was made with tongue in cheek.”

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Figure 2. A higher-resolution view of the "Face on Mars," photographed by the Mars Global Surveyor in 1998.



A "Smiley Face" on Mars (Galle Crater), as seen by the Mars Global Surveyor spacecraft in 1999.

Drawing by Joe Nickell



Richard Hoagland

During the same July 13, 1990, *FTP* broadcast, Hoagland said that his second NASA/Lewis invitation was to address an upcoming September 11 "major national NASA education conference." On the September 17 *FTP* program, he described what had been "a packed auditorium full of teachers and scientists and engineers and educators." He added that NASA's Dr. Eddie Anderson had "made a very big point of congratulating me, of expressing his interest in our work." But, according to Forestieri,

This conference . . . [of] the NASA/Oklahoma State University Aerospace Education Services Project . . . was attended by about 50 people. . . . To say this was a "major NASA education conference" and that "the auditorium was full" would be stretching it a bit. . . . According to Dr. L. Bondurant, the organizer of the conference, Mr. Hoagland was invited to speak at this conference "to stretch the peoples' minds [and] give them something to think about." Dr. Eddie Anderson's comment to me, when I asked him your question, was that he was just being a genial host in expressing interest in Mr. Hoagland's findings. He made no comment as to their veracity. . . . I took the liberty of contacting some of the people that worked on the Viking program [and] also some working on the proposed new mission to Mars, and they are not aware of any interest in Mr. Hoagland's claims.

Hoagland also announced on September 17 that NASA was preparing a three-part "miniseries" on his presentations, entitled *Hoagland's Mars*, to air on PBS. He added, "I and Carl now both have our own miniseries," as if to compare his to Sagan's award-winning series *Cosmos*. In a November 5, 1990, telephone conversation, I learned from Craig De Sagnick, a contract video production manager to NASA/Lewis, that the original two-show project had been reduced to a single, half-hour program about Hoagland's March 20 presentation, which would carry a disclaimer making clear that Hoagland's theories were his own and not NASA's (the second half-hour production was deemed of insufficient technical quality to warrant a TV show being made). He told me that NASA produced between thirteen and twenty-six new shows per year on a variety of space-related topics, which any individual PBS station could elect to broadcast if it so wished.

Dubious Claims for Due Credit

On July 6, 1990, Hoagland accused *Omni* magazine of "the height of editorial irresponsibility." What prompted him to vent his outrage to the international *FTP* audience? In its July article about a hypothetical "Mars Rover" mission to Cydonia, according to Hoagland the magazine "ascribed to Carl Sagan [my] work on . . . the pyramids and all the other things that are there." But the article referred to the "face" as merely a "mesa . . . named for its resemblance to human features," not as an artificial structure. And there were no references to the rest of Hoagland's "work," although Sagan did refer, metaphorically, to the region's mile-high mountains as "beckoning pyramids."

Speaking of Sagan, the Pioneer 10 plaque (figure 3) and its elegant message have always to me epitomized his poetic genius. But Hoagland told the *FTP* audience on July 13, 1990, that "Carl for many years has been taking public credit for the Pioneer plaque which, of course, Eric Burgess and I

conceived." On a broadcast later that year (November 16) he added that "Carl . . . was involved with Eric Burgess and me in the design of [the] message." And in the publisher's foreword to *The Monuments of Mars* we find this passage:

Among Hoagland's most valued contributions to history and science is the conception, along with Eric Burgess, of Mankind's First Interstellar Message in 1971, an engraved plaque carried beyond the solar system by the first man-made object to escape from the sun's influence, Pioneer 10. Hoagland and Burgess took the idea to Carl Sagan, who successfully executed it aboard the spacecraft and acknowledged their creation in the prestigious journal *Science*.

When I inquired of Carl Sagan as to the precise nature of Hoagland's role in the "creation" and "design" of the Pioneer 10 plaque, Sagan's reply of September 6, 1990, made clear that "Eric Burgess and Richard Hoagland did no more than suggest to me that a message be put aboard Pioneer 10 and 11. Frank Drake and I, with an assist from Linda Sagan [Carl's wife at the time, who prepared the artwork], did the design, and I was responsible for getting it through the NASA and White House approval process. . . . [Hoagland] did not contribute one bit of data towards the message design."

Frank Drake confirmed Sagan's account (September 27): "Neither Eric Burgess nor Richard Hoagland contributed any ideas or even suggestions as to what should be on the Pioneer 10, and no suggestions as to any message content. They did point out that Pioneer 10 was going to leave the solar system and it would be nice to put some form of message on it. That was as far as their involvement went. I am sure that Eric Burgess would be glad to confirm this. . . . The idea that there should be an engraved plaque, and the type of information which should be engraved, was developed mutually by Carl and me. . . . I remember very clearly that we started with completely open minds as to what the message should be, and without any prior suggestions as to possible message content."

In a note of acknowledgements at the conclusion of Sagan and Drake's February 25, 1972, *Science* article entitled "A Message From Earth," Burgess and Hoagland are credited with the "initial suggestion to include some message aboard Pioneer 10." But as Hoagland acknowledges on page 98 of his own book, it was actually Burgess who first said to Hoagland, "It ought to carry a message." (Then, on the next line, Hoagland claims that *he had already thought of the idea*: "That was the unvoiced thought, which had been nagging at me ever since I'd gazed in through [the craft's] thick quartz windows" [italics in original].)

At Drake's suggestion, and thanks to his tip in helping me locate Eric Burgess (who had been a writer for the *Christian*

Science Monitor at the time of the Pioneer 10 project), I telephoned Burgess, who told me the following (and subsequently mailed me a copy of the epilog to his 1982 book, *By Jupiter: Odysseys to a Giant*, in which he recounts a virtually identical sequence of events):

I came up with the idea [that the craft carry a message from Earth]. And I mentioned it [at lunch that afternoon] to Hoagland [then a freelance writer] and Don Bane [*Los Angeles Herald Examiner*]. . . . And I said that the right man to get this onboard would be Carl Sagan. So I went around to JPL [NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory]—Hoagland was in tow with me—and found Sagan. . . . And I said, "Hey, Carl, I've got an idea for you." All Hoagland did was support me and say it's a good idea.

Hoagland is also widely believed to have been the first to deduce the tantalizing notion of an ocean, possibly harboring life, flowing beneath the icy crust of Europa, one of the moons of Jupiter. Even Arthur C. Clarke, in an acknowledgment at the end of his book *2010: Odyssey Two* (his sequel to *2001: A Space Odyssey*), credits Hoagland:

The fascinating idea that there might be life on Europa, beneath ice-covered oceans kept liquid by the same Jovian tidal forces that heat Io [Jupiter's volcanic moon], was first proposed by Richard C. Hoagland in the magazine *Star & Sky* ("The Europa Enigma," January, 1980). This quite brilliant concept has been taken seriously by a number of astronomers (notably NASA's Institute of Space Studies, Dr. Robert Jastrow), and may provide one of the best motives for the projected GALILEO Mission.

But late into my preparation of this article (in fact, some days after I first posted its precursor on my Web site), I came across the "Europa" Web site of Ralph Greenberg, a professor of mathematics at the University of Washington in Seattle, who has been attempting for several years, without success, to have Hoagland clarify the record on Europa. One night in July 1996, Greenberg was listening to Art Bell's wildly popular late-night *Coast to Coast A.M.* radio program (now hosted by Mike Siegel following Bell's retirement). Bell's guest was Richard Hoagland, who proceeded to accuse NASA of preparing to steal the credit for his own original ideas about Europa. Hoagland singled out a particular NASA scientist, Cornell University's Steven Squyres, as one who had already begun the process earlier that month during a scientific meeting in England. Greenberg knew nothing of these matters, but was disturbed that Hoagland would make such an accusation, in a national venue, on the basis of a newspaper account of that meeting. (It turned out that Squyres had made no claim to having been the idea's originator.) As Greenberg relates on his Web site, "During Hoagland's [later] frequent guest appearances, Art Bell would often mention some recent news item

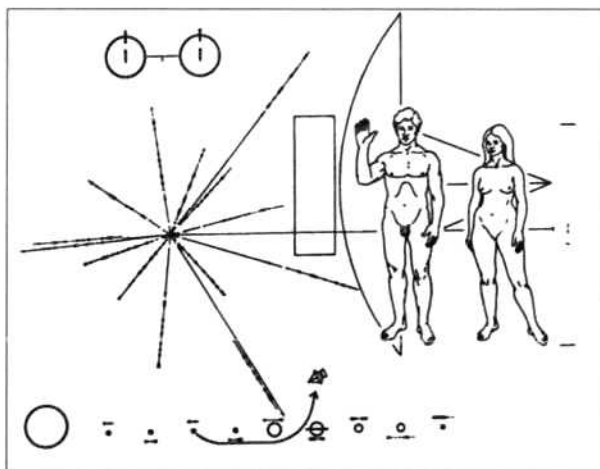


Figure 3. The plaque that flies in perpetuity aboard Pioneer 10 and 11, as designed by Carl Sagan and Frank Drake.

about Europa and either he or Hoagland would bring up the subject of Hoagland's 1980 article, always giving the impression that it was he who first proposed [the idea]. Art Bell would then usually add some sarcastic comments about the scientific community not giving Hoagland his due credit."

Then, in early 1997, Greenberg happened to see an article in *Science News* mentioning that the idea of a liquid-water ocean under the ice of Europa had first been proposed in 1971 by John S. Lewis. Taken somewhat aback, Greenberg decided to do a little more digging, and found that a series of additional scientists had also chimed in with concurring articles throughout the 1970s. And he found at least three scientists who, prior to 1980, had speculated publicly about the possibility that life might have evolved in such an ocean (Robert Shapiro, Gerald Feinberg, and Benton Clark), as well as science-fiction writer Duncan Lunan.

In his 1980 article, Hoagland clearly does acknowledge (on page 28) that "it was [space scientists] Cassen, Peale and Reynolds who arrived at the estimate [of] Jupiter's tidal influence upon [Europa]... Those energies should produce... internal heating." Hoagland shortly thereafter offers the following, which one might incorrectly assume to be an original flash of extrapolated insight: "Unless... There, in the tidal calculations, was the provocative potential that *beneath* a thin, outer shell of ice, the bulk of Europa's planetary ocean *was still ocean*" (italics in original). He doesn't mention that this was the central point of the scientists' paper, and that it was entitled "Is There Liquid Water on Europa?" (*Geophysical Research Letters*, Vol. 6, September 1979).

When Greenberg sent to Arthur C. Clarke (and others) six pages summarizing the history/chronology of this evolving view of Europa, Clarke replied that "I have [since] become aware of the fact that many others had thought of it first, as you point out." But Clarke also expressed his enduring gratitude to Hoagland for his "excellent 1980 article [which was] my first introduction to the idea."

Indeed, the *Monuments of Mars* publisher's foreword makes Hoagland sound like somewhat of a science prodigy:

Richard C. Hoagland is, by career, a science writer as well as a consultant in the fields of astronomy, planetarium curating, and space-program education. . . . In 1965, at the age of nineteen, [Hoagland] became Curator (possibly the youngest in the country) of the Springfield, Massachusetts, Museum of Science. . . . In 1966 Hoagland served as NBC [Television] consultant for the historic soft landing of a U.S. spacecraft on the moon—*Surveyor 1*. Later he appeared on "The Tonight Show" explaining the significance of the landing to Johnny

Carson. . . . At Christmas [of 1968, for the Apollo 8 lunar-orbital mission] he was asked to become a consultant to CBS News . . . and served as [a science] advisor to Walter Cronkite.

But I learned from David Morrison, Chief of the Space Science Division at NASA's Ames Research Center, that Hoagland was largely "self-educated" in science. In an August 31, 1990, letter, Morrison told me that he knew of "no one in the scientific community, or who is associated with the NASA Mars Science Working Group, or who is working on Mars mission plans at such NASA centers as Ames, Johnson, or JPL, who ascribes even the smallest credibility to Hoagland or his weird ideas about Mars." So much for the "groundswell of official NASA interest" that

Hoagland boasted of during his July 13 *For The People* appearance.

The \$10,000 Stamp Set

Hoagland also endeavored to help create a groundswell of public interest in a set of souvenir stamp sheets being sold through mail order, by promoter (and occasional stamp dealer) Alan Shawn Feinstein, for more than \$100, roughly two to three times its face value. The thirty-seven-stamp series from Sierra Leone was devoted to "saluting the

coming exploration of Mars" by the ill-fated Mars Observer craft, which was to have returned high-definition photographs of the Red Planet, including the Cydonia region. The stamps depict likenesses varying from Galileo and Percival Lowell to space probes and Martian surface features, including the "Face" (figure 4).

According to Michael Laurence's "Editor's Choice" column in the April 30, 1990, issue of the authoritative *Linn's Stamp News*, Feinstein's sales pitch included the following heads-up: "If that Face should turn out to be created by intelligent life, this stamp set could become one of the most valuable collector items in the world." Laurence noted that Feinstein's latest venture combined "his interest in extraterrestrial life with his penchant for selling stamps at high markups to non-collectors." (A recent Web search revealed that Feinstein has since created the Feinstein Foundation, whose Web site describes him as "a nationally known philanthropist and humanitarian [who] founded the World Hunger Program at Brown University . . . the World Hunger Brigade . . . and the Feinstein International Famine Center at Tufts University.")

In a follow-up December 10, 1990, column, Laurence reported that the stamp set from Sierra Leone, "an obscure and corrupt-ridden African nation," had recently been "blacklisted by a Swiss-based combine of international stamp organizations



Figure 4. Stamp sheet issued by Sierra Leone featuring the "Face on Mars."

[due to Sierra Leone's violations of] the philatelic code of ethics of the Universal Postal Union." He also noted that Richard Hoagland had been engaged by Feinstein for some months "as an expert witness to support the assertion that the Sierra Leone set will soon be worth five figures." Laurence then quoted from the October issue of Feinstein's *Wealthmaker Quarterly Report*, in which Hoagland asserted that the stamp set

should soon be worth \$10,000 or more. That's what I believe. I know basically nothing about stamps. But I know a great deal about the specific subject of the Sierra Leone stamp set. On the basis of my research, that's what I think that set is going to be worth. The value of a commemorative is dependent on the intrinsic value of the event it is commemorating. . . . [The "Face"] is a constructed monument made by intelligent life. When the world finds that out, it will be nothing less than the greatest discovery in the world. It will have an unprecedented effect on people everywhere, and on the value of the Sierra Leone set.

Michael Laurence's learned response followed: "Those who believe such breathless nonsense probably deserve financial disappointment. And that's the likely reward in store for anyone who expects speculative profit from this overpriced and highly manipulated stamp set." Indeed, Laurence informs me that the current philatelic retail value of the set remains less than \$100. But don't lose hope. Several Web sites contain sale listings for the set (in mint condition) with owners requesting anywhere from \$99 (rare), to several hundred dollars (more plentiful), to Hoagland's \$10,000 figure. (Most appear to be asking for about \$5,000.)

Free-Energy Machines

During the course of my 1990 monitoring of *For The People* broadcasts, Hoagland (with Chuck Harder) was also engaged in selling a book, published by *FTP* and edited by Hoagland, which promoted a perpetual-energy device dubbed the "N Machine." According to Hoagland on September 7, the machine opens "a gate to the 4th dimension [as it] reaches into space-time and converts direct electrical energy from the basic properties of the space-time continuum." He "clarified" matters on November 16:

It [only] looks like it's perpetual motion, but it's not. Because what I think is happening, based on our Cydonia work, is that the rotation of the magnets opens a gate to the 4th dimension, and the energy simply flows downhill from the 4th to the 3rd, and is manifest in 3-space as electrical energy. [The magnets] are hexagonally shaped in terms of their crystalline form, and it's the hexagonal pattern, which is really the double tetrahedral pattern, which is the heart of our Cydonia equations. . . . [And] there's a more general field effect [going on], a more general energy transfer, and that's what's doing the slowing down of time.

Further, Hoagland's studies in "tetrahedral geometry" suggest to him a connection not only between the "N Machine" and the Cydonia structures, but also with our own planet's "crop circles": "The measurements of the units by which this object on Earth

[crop circle] was laid out are part and parcel of the exact same units that the objects on Mars are laid out—Alexander Thom's famous megalithic yard, 2.72 British feet" (July 27).

Referring to Dr. Duncan G. Cumming's article about the "N Machine" in the Fall 1990 issue of *SKEPTICAL INQUIRER*, Hoagland claimed on November 9 that "If you carefully read the article, they . . . take potshots but they never do the exper-

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iments." In reality, Dr. Cumming *does* discuss his experiments in the article. On November 5 I had written to Chuck Harder: "In the interest of full disclosure, I would request that you please send a review copy [of the book] to Dr. Cumming, and arrange for an on-air interview with him. . . . If necessary, I would be willing to pay for the book and shipping costs." Harder replied on November 27, informing me that he was "sending [my letter] on to Richard Hoagland who will respond." When Hoagland failed to do so, I sent Harder a reminder on January 12, 1991, to which he responded, "If you or Duncan Cumming want a book from us, you can order one from the catalog and pay for it."

According to *FTP*, a variation of the "N Machine" was already in full operation. Thus, on September 21, 1990, I wrote to B. Premanand, founder of the Indian Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal:

I would like to know if the Indian government has in operation a power generator that produces more energy than it consumes (i.e., a perpetual energy machine). This claim is being made repeatedly on the "For The People" radio program (heard on 7.520 MHz internationally from 2400 to 0200 hours UTC). The machine is supposedly a magnetized gyroscope, located on the west coast of India in a city that sounded like "Caroa," which is supposedly south of an old Portuguese colony that sounded like "Doa." If I heard correctly, a German company that sounded like "Gadori" may have actually built it.

Although Premanand's letter of reply never made its way back to me, mine did reach him. I was quite surprised, and delighted, to discover that, as a result of my letter, he had devoted nine pages to this subject in the April 1995 issue of his group's *Indian Skeptic* newsletter (in which a copy of my letter was reproduced). Premanand wrote about his efforts to track down Dr. Paramahansa Tewari, who, according to a 1987 Indian newspaper account, had demonstrated his machine in Hannover, Germany, before an audience that included 1,500 scientists from around the world. His Space Power Generator (SPG), one of about twenty-five similar machines presented at that conference, supposedly extracts power from the vacuum

of space. Though the prototype was said to have been built at the Tarapur Atomic Plant in India, Premanand could find no one in the Department of Science & Technology of the Indian government who knew of Dr. Tewari or his SPG.

In a June 21, 1994, letter (reproduced in *Indian Skeptic*), N.A. Janardan Rao, Vice President for R&D and Technology Development of Kirloskar Electric Company Ltd. in Bangalore, wrote (to the author of a 1994 Indian newspaper article), "Many years ago I had corresponded with Dr. Thiwari [*sic*] and he had sent me a small book written by him on this subject. I then proceeded to actually design and fabricate a free energy machine. We incurred an expense of more than one hundred thousand rupees and 8 man months in fabricating this unique device. Subsequent testing showed that *there was no free energy as claimed*; an infinitesimal electrical output was detected which could be attributed entirely to Faraday's law" (emphasis added).

Rao's letter went on to provide Tewari's whereabouts: He turned out to be director of the Kaiga Project for the Indian government's Nuclear Power Corporation in Karwar, Karnataka. Premanand then wrote to Tewari, whose August 25, 1994, letter of response reported, "The experiments on various models of Space Power Generators are continuing with a hope to come out with the most commercially viable system. . . . By end September [1994] one of the machines [should] be in operating condition."

Six more years have since transpired, with still no confirmation of the miracle machine that Hoagland and Harder had touted as operational (and sold books about) back in 1990. No matter. Largely with Hoagland's help, *For The People's* ratings (according to Harder) soared that year (e.g., up by more than 1,000% in Gainesville, Florida). Given the program's (and its companion magazine's) pro-paranormal, conspiratorial bent, such is certainly understandable.

The Scrupulously Skeptical Hoagland

But like a Hollywood marriage, the Hoagland/Harder relationship didn't last, and by 1992 Hoagland was no longer a fixture, or even a footnote, on *For The People*. The reason (improbable as it sounds): Apparently Hoagland had seen fit to chastise Harder for promoting a wild claim without first having nailed down the facts! Harder had been hyping a story about an "intelligently guided" asteroid that was slowly decelerating, and making course corrections, as it worked its way toward the inner solar system. An authentic-looking *New York Times* article, dated October 6, 1977, quoted a number of scientists as confirming the artificial nature of the "asteroid," and projecting that it would enter Earth's orbit, between Earth and Moon, on or about October 25—1977! The fact that no such event had occurred was not enough to quash Harder's fascination. Writing in the first 1992 issue of *UFO* (Vol. 7, No. 1), the magazine's research director, Don Ecker, reported that Hoagland had "embarrassed host Chuck Harder on the air, thereby severing his

weekly spot on Harder's show. . . . On one of Hoagland's weekly spots, he attacked Harder on the air, lambasting him for giving out the story without, according to Hoagland, checking out the facts. . . . It turned out that when the *New York Times* Index was checked, along with microfiche copies from that date and several days after, no such article could be found."

On March 21, 1996, the scrupulously skeptical Hoagland presented his best evidence for extraterrestrial civilizations during a news conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. According to Richard Leiby's article in the following day's *Washington Post*,

Reporters from about fifty worldwide media organizations came to see . . . "suppressed evidence" . . . "apparent lunar ruins" . . . [and other] proof of aliens. They scrutinized grainy blowups of old NASA photos and slides of impossibly fuzzy objects—including a blob that [Hoagland's] assembled research team called "the castle." To be more precise: "an extraordinary, highly geometric, glittering glass object hanging more than nine miles above the surface of the moon," in the words of Richard Hoagland, the New Jersey author and noted pseudo-scientist who [organized] the conference.

Hoagland, 50, is, basically, a kook. He's famous for popularizing the sighting of an alleged "human face" in the terrain of Mars, and he more recently claimed that

the Bosnian peace talks were held in Dayton, Ohio, so the world leaders could view alien bodies housed in an Air Force hangar there.

But . . . the collective media didn't snort with laughter and walk out. Instead, journalists politely asked [questions]. . . . Later, reporters from CNN and the Associated Press, among others, called Apollo 12 astronaut Alan Bean to ask whether he'd ever stood on the moon near a "massive tier of glass-like ruins," as alleged in one Hoagland handout. . . .

Hoagland said a source at [NASA's] Goddard Space Flight Center . . . leaked him a pristine negative from the Apollo 10 mission showing a 1 1/2-mile-high "shard" protruding from the lunar surface. . . . "I see absolutely nothing like the so-called shard," said Paul Lowman, a Goddard geologist and expert in orbital photography, after examining the frame cited at the news conference. "He's seeing some sort of a [photo] processing defect."

In 1998, a bit more than a decade after publication of *The Monuments of Mars*, the Mars Global Surveyor orbital craft returned an image of the "Face" (Photo #22003) with more than 10× greater resolution than Viking had obtained two decades earlier. Contrary to Hoagland's theories, the new 20/20 view revealed the "Face" to be nothing more than what NASA scientists knew it to be all along, one of many similar natural features sculpted into the dusty, rocky surface by the red planet's fierce, swirling winds (figure 2). And a 1999 view of the "City Square" (Release No. MOC2-142) revealed it, also, to consist of nothing more than buttes and hills.

With benefit of hindsight, has Hoagland now abandoned his "City" on Mars? A visit to his "Enterprise Mission" Web site (www.enterprisemission.com) reveals quite the opposite.

Gary Posner's Web version of this article (available at <http://members.aol.com/garypos2/Hoagland.html>) contains numerous relevant links. □

