

A Different Angle on the Socorro UFO of 1964

DAVID E. THOMAS

The Socorro, New Mexico, UFO "landing" of April 24, 1964, has long occupied a prominent place in UFOlogical lore. The case put New Mexico on the UFO map, and was overtaken by the Roswell Incident only when that legend emerged from obscurity and blossomed in the late seventies. The case is still highly regarded; Patrick Huyghe recently wrote about the Socorro sighting in *The Anomalist*, No. 8 (Spring 2000), in a piece titled "The Best UFO Case Ever? A Review and Update of the Socorro Incident."

The witness in the Socorro case is a well-respected policeman, Lonnie Zamora, who claimed in the report he filed (included in *Project Blue Book*, Brad Steiger, Ed., 1976) that he saw a flame in the sky, "bluish and sort of orange too ... sort of motionless flame, slowly descending ... narrower at top than at bottom. ... Sun was to west and did not help vision. Had green sunglasses over prescription glasses. Could not see bottom of flame because it was behind the hill ... noise was a roar, not a blast. ..."

The policeman drove around the area trying to see the flame again, and said he suddenly came across "a shiny type object ... oval in shape. It was smooth—no windows or doors ... seemed like O in shape and I at first glance took it to be overturned car." He also described "two people in white coveralls ... two persons. ..." Zamora said he saw the two

people at a distance of 150 to 200 yards, and that "they appeared normal in shape ... but possibly they were small adults or large kids." He also noted "what appeared to be two legs of some type from the object to the ground ... the two legs were at the bottom of the object, slanted outwards to the ground."

Zamora then got closer to the object, got out of his car, heard a loud roar, saw a flame, ran, bumped his leg, lost his glasses, and kept on going. He saw the object fly up, and move ten to fifteen feet above the ground, and then leave the area "travelling very fast." He radioed his dispatcher to look out his window for "an object ... it looks like a balloon." Nearby, the bushes were still smoldering. News reports in the local paper, *El Defensor Chieftain*, also mentioned "an unidentified tourist" who remarked about how "aircraft flew low around here," and that the strange object was a "funny-looking helicopter, if that's what it was."

Zamora's earnest nature and credibility, along with the physical traces, brought the Socorro "landing" to national attention. J. Allen Hynek came to town, and was very interested in the pod-like tracks and burn marks at the scene. Ray Stanford wrote a whole book about the incident, *Socorro Saucer in a Pentagon Pantry*. Phil Klass came to investigate. The Socorro event has appeared in numerous books and articles, and was even featured on *Unsolved Mysteries*. But what really happened there?

There are numerous hypotheses, of

course. Stanford thinks it's another case of extraterrestrial visitors and government cover-up. Phil Klass, in *UFOs Explained*, makes a case that the whole thing was cooked up by the mayor to give Socorro some publicity. (Incidentally, Klass argues that the "unidentified tourist" could not possibly have seen both the craft and the police car.) Yet another hypothesis is that physics students with a little too much extra time played a trick on the town, but that rumor doesn't have much credible support. Major Hector Quintanilla, the Blue Book investigator for the Air Force, looked into the possibility that the craft was a prototype of the Lunar Landing Module being developed for the Apollo Moon program, but found that no lunar lander prototypes were operational in April of 1964. Recently, Larry Robinson of Indiana University has suggested that Zamora saw "a manned hot air balloon." (See "Psychic Vibrations" column, this issue.) That scenario does match some aspects of the descriptions, such as the pitch changes from low to higher frequencies Zamora reported hearing from the flame, which might be a match for the propane burners of hot-air balloons.

Yet another possible candidate has emerged in recent years, about the time of the identification of the source of the Roswell Incident to a specific program, New York University constant-level balloon launches from Alamogordo in the summer of 1947 ("The Roswell Incident and Project Mogul," SI July/

Daily Range Schedule for Friday, 24 April 1964

Prepared by Range Operations Directorate
Deputy for Range Activities
AFMDC, HAFB, New Mexico, 23 April 1964

CODE	MISSION	TYPE	SCHED TIME	A/C SUPPORT	TGT SUPPORT	CONTROL
AA	Track	Sled Test	0715T.O.-0745Commo-0800T-0810C	Army Aviation		- - -
AB	Surveyor	Helicopter Flts	0745-1145			- - -
*AC	RF4C/RF-6	Photo	0830Tel-0900R-1100C			K
AD	EMB	Tracking	0855-1105			C
AE	Computer		0900-1000			- - -
**AF	ROD Check	Radar	0900-1500			- - -
AG	Aerobee	Ground Check	1000-1100			- - -

Portion of White Sands Missile Range Log for 24 April 1964 indicates a helicopter-borne test of the unmanned Surveyor lunar landing spacecraft was scheduled that day.

August 1995). One of the participants in these launches, Charles B. Moore, stayed in Socorro and taught atmospheric physics at the college there, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology (my alma mater). Moore, now retired, has had a very distinguished career, and received the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) Otto C. Winzen Lifetime Achievement Award for his scientific exploits, which included flying a balloon to the very edge of space. He visited the Socorro "landing" site in 1966, and thinks that Lonnie Zamora is sincere, and that Zamora really did see something strange on that day in 1964.

In 1995, a colleague of Moore's who ran the Skyhook Balloon program at Holloman Air Force Base in Alamogordo, Bernard "Duke" Gildenberg, learned from Capt. James McAndrew, the Air Force's point man on its reinvestigations of the Roswell case in the 1990s, that on April 24, 1964, there were special tests being conducted at the north end of the White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) involving a helicopter used to carry a Lunar Surveyor landing craft around for some tests. A portion of the WSMR Range Log obtained by McAndrew appears on the previous page.

Surveyor was a three-legged, unmanned spacecraft, which was used to learn about the Moon before the Apollo program got there.

In fact, the Apollo 12 astronauts paid

a visit to Surveyor 3 almost three years after it had landed on the Moon. This new angle on the old Socorro story was first mentioned publicly in a brief piece in the July 15, 2000, edition of James Moseley's *Saucer Smear*.

The timing isn't right for the UFO sighting—the range log calls for morning tests, and the sightings occurred in late afternoon—but then things don't always go "according to plan," and many tests that have defied completion

Photograph by Alan L. Bean



Three years after the unmanned craft Surveyor 3 landed on the Moon, the Apollo 12 mission touched down nearby. This image shows mission commander Pete Conrad retrieving items from Surveyor 3.

by morning have been known to somehow get finished up in the afternoon. In fact, bombing runs scheduled for that part of the range might have delayed the tests. There are many other tantalizing bits that might support the Surveyor explanation for Socorro.

- The Surveyor tests were done with a small Bell helicopter that supported the craft from its side. The helicopter and spacecraft would have presented a bizarre profile. The Surveyor's slanted legs fit Zamora's description well, and

are also a match for the shape of the "landing pod imprints" found later. In Stanford's 1976 book, he mentions Phil Klass's comment that landing pads like Surveyor's were among the only practical shapes for that function.

- The spacecraft used vernier engines and attitude jets to probe and sample soil, which could explain the flames the policeman saw, and the burn marks many saw. The flames weren't being used for lift; that was supplied by the helicopter. The burn marks at the site did not indicate sufficient thrust to lift a large vehicle, according to Hynek.

- The Surveyor used a mechanical scoop with a shape that matches a rectangular trough photographed at the Socorro site.

- Zamora described the craft as "aluminum-white," which certainly matched the bulk of the Bell helicopter.

- The tests missions were manned by a helicopter pilot and a Hughes engineer . . . two persons, in white coveralls.

- Most people in Socorro, and several of the investigators, thought it was most likely a secret government experiment, and some Blue Book researchers even pinned it down as a tenant operation run by Holloman, the base for the Surveyor test flights.

- Lava beds were on the Surveyor sampling agenda, and there are indeed lava beds in and around the missile range (south of Socorro).

Of course, this new evidence is far from conclusive. A lot has happened since 1964, and it's difficult to reconstruct events from that long ago, especially events with strong implications. Was it a college prank? A hoax? A balloon? An alien craft from another world? Perhaps we'll never really know. Gildenberg is confident that William of Occam, of Occam's Razor fame, would think kindly of the Surveyor explanation, especially over some of the other contenders.

Dave Thomas is a physicist, president of New Mexicans for Science and Reason, a SKEPTICAL INQUIRER consulting editor, and a newly elected CSICOP Fellow.

Socorro a First Spark for Skeptical Curiosity

The Socorro Landing has a special place in my heart, as it sparked my first skeptical curiosity. Back in 1964, I was an eleven-year-old boy living just 90 miles north of Socorro, and the Socorro UFO story was big news in the young boy community. Some neighbor kids drew the outline of an alien foot in the alley, and tried to convince me it was real, but I "debunked" the assertions by pointing out the unnatural concave shape of the "feet," and the over-large distance between prints.

After the neighbor kids confessed, I penciled in a little UFO on a photograph of my back yard, and showed it to them. I expected them to laugh it off as yet another hoax, but was surprised when the former hoaxers bought into my doctored photo hook, line, and sinker. That was my first encounter with the power of the paranormal; I'm sure it won't be my last.—D.E.T.

Rebirthing Update: Therapists Convicted, Therapy Outlawed in Colorado

Two Colorado therapists, Julie Ponder and Connell Watkins, were convicted April 20 of reckless child abuse resulting in a young girl's death during a New Age "rebirthing" therapy session. They each face up to forty-eight years in prison on the abuse charge, and are to be sentenced in June. The verdict came almost exactly one year to the day that ten-year-old Candace Newmaker died in the care of Watkins and Ponder. During the session, the girl was wrapped tightly in a flannel blanket and pushed on with pillows to simulate birth. The session was held at the home of the unlicensed and unregistered Watkins. (See Martin Gardner's column "Primal Scream: A Persistent New Age Therapy" in the last issue, and "New Age 'Rebirthing' Treatment Kills Girl," SI 24[5] September/October 2000.)

At the trial, an important piece of evidence was a videotape of the session, which showed Candace begging for her life from under her heavy fabric "womb." Excerpts of dialogue from the video were published by the *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, and provide a disturbing and chilling account of Candace's last hour of life. Throughout the 70-minute tape, while Candace suffocates and lies in her vomit and feces, she begs the therapists to get off of her and let her breathe. At one point, in response to Candace's crying and pleas, the four adults present pushed even harder on the girl, putting nearly 700 pounds on top of the seventy-pound fourth-grader. Here are excerpts from the tape:

CANDACE NEWMAKER: I can't do it. (Screams) I'm gonna die.

JULIE PONDER: Do you want to be reborn or do you want to stay in there and die?

CANDACE NEWMAKER: Quit pushing on me, please . . . I'm gonna die now.

JULIE PONDER: Do you want to die?

CANDACE NEWMAKER: No, but I'm about to. . . . Please, please I can't breathe. . . .

CANDACE NEWMAKER: Can you let me have some oxygen? You mean, like you want me to die for real?

JULIE PONDER: Uh huh.

CANDACE NEWMAKER: Die right now and go to heaven?

JULIE PONDER: Go ahead and die right now. For real. For real. . . .

CANDACE NEWMAKER: Get off. I'm sick. Get off. Where am I supposed to come out? Where? How can I get there?

CONNELL WATKINS: Just go ahead and die. It's easier. . . . It takes a lot of courage to be born.

CANDACE NEWMAKER: You said you would give me oxygen.

CONNELL WATKINS: You gotta fight for it. . . . (Candace vomits and defecates.)

CONNELL WATKINS: Stay in there with the poop and vomit.

CANDACE NEWMAKER: Help! I can't breathe. I can't breathe. It's hot. I can't breathe. . . .

CONNELL WATKINS: Getting pretty tight in there.

JULIE PONDER: Yep. . . . less and less air all the time. . . .

JULIE PONDER: She gets to be stuck in her own puke and poop.

CONNELL WATKINS: Uh huh. It's her own life. She's a quitter.

CANDACE NEWMAKER: No. . . . (This is Candace's last word.)

The women's defense rested, in part, on trying to convince the jury that the dead girl was a manipulative liar and was being deceptive when she said she couldn't breathe and begged to be set free. Watkins sent a message to her supporters saying that "somehow the 10-year-old inexplicably stopped breathing." A day after the verdict Colorado Governor Bill Owens signed a law making rebirthing therapy illegal, though nothing was done to address the larger problem of allowing unlicensed therapists such as Watkins to practice other dubious treatments. In Colorado no license is required to practice psychotherapy.

A search of rebirthing Web sites showed them oddly silent about both the girl's death and the verdict, though one proponent of rebirthing, Peter DeLong, wrote a letter to the *Los Angeles Times*

defending the therapy. In it he claimed that Watkins and Ponder's technique "bears no resemblance" to rebirthing therapy as he practices and teaches it; "it does not involve physical contact or restriction in any way." Another rebirther reported that the therapist "apparently knew about rebirthing, but she wasn't using that technique with the child when she died."

Some evidence suggests that what Watkins and Ponder were doing was in fact out of the mainstream even for "alternative" psychotherapy. Watkins had been trained in that particular technique in 1999 by California marriage and family therapist Douglas Gosney, and cited him as an expert. Gosney defended his brand of "rebirthing" therapy and suggested that some pre-existing condition had caused Candace's death. Gosney believes that the patients he treats with his therapy act out because they were traumatized during (or before) birth. (There is, however, no credible evidence that either adolescent or adult brains harbor any repressed memories of birth.)

Whether Ponder and Watkins were using rebirthing therapy correctly (or at all), the fact remains that a child died while undergoing an unproven and unorthodox New Age therapy by those who claimed to know what they were doing. This case should serve as a powerful response to the common question, "What harm does the New Age do?"

—Benjamin Radford

Benjamin Radford is Managing Editor of the SKEPTICAL INQUIRER.

Chiropractic Deal with York University Is Dead

In 1994, plans were begun for the union of the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College (CMCC) with York University in Toronto, which would have been the world's first such union of a chiropractic school with a major university. These plans were given momentum when, in

May 1998, York University's Senate granted "approval in principle" to a proposal that would allow York University to issue a "Doctor of Chiropractic" degree. This would have provided chiropractic practitioners with the legitimacy that they have long sought.

York's Faculty of Pure and Applied Science, as well as most of York's psychology faculty members, were strongly opposed to such a union, but it appeared that the proposal had sufficient support within the administration, and indeed within the university community at large, to make it all but unstoppable. A campaign to educate the York community about the many pseudoscientific and antiscientific aspects of chiropractic was mounted by a small handful of opponents. In support of their efforts, an international petition—sponsored by the Council for Scientific Medicine, and which included the names of two Nobel laureates in Medicine, as well as several CSICOP members—was delivered to York University's administration and the Chair of Board of Governors in February 1999. It strongly urged the university not to affiliate with CMCC.

In the end, the Senate's Academic Policy and Planning Committee maintained that an academic relationship with the CMCC could not proceed without the sponsorship of an academic faculty. The Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences had refused such sponsorship early on, and so the administration turned to the Atkinson Faculty of Liberal and Professional Studies—which includes under its mandate a health sciences orientation—for sponsorship. Early indications were that this faculty was very amenable to the proposal.

However, at a meeting held on March 28, 2001, the Atkinson Faculty Council narrowly voted against a resolution to establish an academic relationship with the CMCC, thus effectively blocking the establishment of a York Doctor of Chiropractic degree. At a subsequent meeting of the University Senate on April 26, an official announcement was made that "Senate's approval in principle [for an

affiliation with the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College] has been negated." With this, the project to bring chiropractic and the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College to York University formally died. An important battle in defense of science and rationality has been won. (For a full chronicling of the attempt to bring chiropractic to York University, consult www.ndir.com/chiro.)

—James Alcock

James Alcock is a professor in the Department of Psychology at Glendon College, York University, Toronto, Ontario.

CSICOP Elects Six New Fellows

The Executive Council of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) has elected six new CSICOP Fellows. Fellows are chosen for distinguished contributions to science and skepticism. The new Fellows:

- Saul Green, biochemist, science editor of the *Scientific Review of Alternative Medicine*, and President of ZOL Consultants, New York City.
- Irmgard Oepen, professor of medicine (retired), Marburg, Germany.
- Massimo Polidoro, magician, writer, investigator, executive director of CICAP (*Comitato Italiano per il Controllo delle Affermazioni sul Paranormale*), Italy.
- David E. Thomas, physicist and mathematician (Quasar International, Albuquerque, New Mexico), president of New Mexicans for Science in Reason.
- Neil deGrasse Tyson, astrophysicist and director, Hayden Planetarium, New York City.
- Richard Wiseman, psychologist, University of Hertfordshire, U.K.

Thomas, Tyson, and Wiseman were CSICOP scientific consultants prior to being named Fellows.

—Kendrick Frazier

Kendrick Frazier is Editor of the SKEPTICAL INQUIRER.

Pyramid Schemes: For Women Only

Five women were recently charged with felonies in southern New Mexico for being involved in pyramid scams that have been making their way through the state since 1999. The new women-only pyramid scheme has been gathering momentum across North America with reports coming in from across Canada and the United States. Large amounts of money are said to be changing hands with the majority of those hands left empty when the scam ends.

The latest twist on an old con makes many women especially vulnerable to being taken advantage of by other women. The *Albuquerque Journal* recently published a front page feature article on the issue, "Women Scamming Women."

Groups are formed with appealing names such as "The Circle of Friends," "Women Helping Women," and "Women's Gifting Circle." In addition to paying a joining fee of up to \$5,000 and securing a place at the bottom tier of the pyramid, women are also finding other "benefits" in joining these groups. The common attractions found within the New Age movement that have proven successful in their appeal to the female population have also been injected into the pyramid scheme to maximize participation among this latest target audience. Friendship, spiritual guidance, holistic healing, and emotional therapies are included as part of the package.



New recruits are assured that all activity is above-board and that their involvement is perfectly legal—New Mexico Attorney General Patricia Madrid disagrees. Despite that, women sign waivers upon joining stating they do not expect any returns on their money. Potential members are encouraged to sign up by friends and family members who genuinely believe they have the individual's best interests at heart. Participation is touted as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Stories of philanthropy and good deeds sweep through the group to demonstrate the sincerity and benevolence of those involved. The temptation is not limited to poor and uneducated women either—doctors, teachers, and women of all sorts fall prey to the empty promises of this pyramid scheme.

The mathematics involved is often glossed over: for all eight new members joining the bottom tier of the pyramid to receive their fortune, fourteen new pyramids must be created and a total of 112 additional members must be recruited. More often than not, before this happens, recruitment declines to nil and only the few women in the top tiers have received their "gift." When all is said and done the pyramid collapses, with many women losing not only a substantial amount of money but also peace of mind.

—Amanda Chesworth

Amanda Chesworth runs CSICOP's new Young Skeptics Program. She lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Rhine Research Center Plans to Build a New Home in Durham

Parapsychology is going to get a new home.

That is, parapsychologists at the Rhine Research Center in Durham, North Carolina, named for J.B. Rhine, the so-called father of parapsychology who conducted his experiments in Durham, plan to trade in the Colonial Revival-style home they have occupied for forty years for a new building constructed solely for the study of psi phenomena.

The Rhine Research Center is the nation's oldest laboratory for the scientific study of psychic experiences, telepathy, and ESP. The center's board of directors have sold the pre-1920s house to Duke University and plan a new \$300,000 to \$500,000 center near Duke's West Campus.

According to a feature article in the *Raleigh News & Observer* (March 12), center officials hope to be in the new building by April 2002. They say it will have capabilities the old one never had as the center expands its research in what the newspaper called "a renaissance for psychic studies."

There are other labs for psi research, but Stephan A. Schwartz, a spokesman for the Parapsychological Association, said he could think of no freestanding building in the United States that has been constructed from the ground up for studying parapsychology, as the new one will be. Schwartz said the Rhine Research center is to parapsychology what St. Andrews is to golf.

There's even talk at Rhine of officially joining forces with Duke again, through the Duke University Health System's Center for Integrative Medicine.

"Thirty years ago, there was a huge chasm between parapsychology and standard biomedical research," the newspaper quotes Martin J. Sullivan, co-director of the Duke Center for Integrative Medicine, as saying. "The edges are blurring."

Critics of parapsychology say most of the experiments conducted by J.B. Rhine and his associates in Durham starting in the late 1920s, are, in retrospect, flawed, unreplicable, and inconclusive. But the article says many parapsychologists have moved past the question of whether psi exists—they assume it does—to the questions of how it works and what it can be used for.

Said John Palmer, director of the Rhine Research Center, "We're very confident we're not wasting our time."

—Kendrick Frazier

Belief, Perceptions, and Full Moons at a Psychiatric Hospital

I'm known as both an artist and a cult expert, but over the past two and a half years I have worked for a hospital that serves patients with mental health problems on an emergency basis. This facility has been in operation for twenty-five years. It opened about the same time that a large, 6,000-bed state mental hospital began a process of transferring patients back to their home communities. The latter process reflected a new approach for treating mental patients. Consistent with new laws and taking advantage of new medicines, the mental health industry offered a customized, per need treatment at localized "base service units," as opposed to the old style of "warehousing" large populations. Despite this more humanized treatment, many patients nevertheless experienced acute episodes of relapse with increased symptoms, thus needing immediate treatment. The emergency hospital emerged as an important way to treat this need.

My current job is as the night manager in the crisis intake department, where I take all emergency calls and begin processing of incoming patients after midnight until eight in the morning. I work with a wide range of staff, including psychiatrists, nurses, and psych-technicians. I encounter many police officers who bring in clients with mental symptoms for involuntary treatment. Among the staff and police officers, I regularly hear mention of the full moon effect. These people believe that a full moon produces more incidents of mental crisis than non-full moon days, as evidenced by one police officer who recently stated to me: "It is crazy out here. Tonight must be a full moon." In that case, he was about a week short on his guess.

Out of curiosity, I decided to run a brief study on the full moon effect, if any, on this hospital. I was aware that all serious, reputable studies done in the past show that there is little or no

evidence to support a full moon effect on human behavior. (See I.W. Kelly, et al., "The Moon Was Full and Nothing Happened: A Review of Studies on the Moon and Human Behavior," *SI* 10 [2], Winter 1985–86.) I was also aware, as I had studied astrology extensively, that many astrologers believe that the full moon effect carries over a three-day period that includes the days before and after a full moon. What I chose to do was examine the numbers of admissions over a twenty-six-month period at this hospital, because increased admission activity correlates nicely with what most believers in the full moon effect expect. Believers as well as many patients I encounter tend to think that mental health consumers are particularly sensitive to the full moon. I recorded results for both the full moon days as well as for the three-day sequence of alleged "moon power," and I calculated the average day's admissions over that period.

Over the study period, this hospital was considered full with sixty-three patients and averaged over fifty patients per day. The average length of stay was around eight days.

The study period was from January 1999 through February 2001, or twenty six full moons and months. Full moons were recorded according to the *Old Farmer's Almanac*, eastern standard time. The results are:

Total admissions on full moon days = 158 with 6.0 as the average.

Total admissions over a three-day period of full moon = 492 with 6.3 as the average.

Average admissions per day (188 average per month divided by 30.2) = 6.23. (There were 4,888 admissions during the 26-month period.)

Once again, statistics show that the full moon period over time is not extraordinary at a psychiatric emergency hospital. In fact, it is quite normal.

This brief, informal study also demonstrates that the full moon's power is primarily aesthetic in human affairs, not unlike any other common symbol. Though the moon has power as a force in nature over tides and the amount of night

light that Earth creatures experience, its ability to influence affairs of the heart and mind remains symbolic. This is not to say that symbols have no power to move human emotions or thoughts. Take the swastika, for example. The "twisted cross" in the hands of the Nazis transformed from a symbol of well-being in ancient India or the Buddhist symbol of limitlessness and eternity later in China to one of fascist and racist ideology. Nazis also attributed occult power to the swastika, not unlike astrologers attribute occult power to the moon. I think it is this attribution of occult or magical power that fascinates the average believer in full moon effects. Though the believers swear they experience an increase in activity in a mental hospital, the facts do not support their perceptions.

—Joe Szimhart

Joe Szimhart is a cult expert, artist, and psychiatric hospital staff member who lives in Pottstown, Pennsylvania.

SKEPTICAL INQUIRER 25-Year Index Now Available Online

A twenty-five-year index to all issues of the *SKEPTICAL INQUIRER*, volumes 1–25, 1976–2001, is now available and online. You can access it at CSICOP's Web site www.csicop.org. Go to the *SKEPTICAL INQUIRER* home page and click on "Complete Index to Articles." Or go straight to the index at www.csicop.org/si/index/. It will be periodically revised and updated.

A subject index has been completed first. You can click on any letter of the alphabet to find subjects beginning with that letter. Each entry gives the title, author, volume number, issue number, and inclusive pagination. Indexes for authors and reviews will be following later this year.

The *SKEPTICAL INQUIRER*'s Complete Online Index was compiled and indexed by Andrew Lutes and adapted for the

Web by Kevin Christopher.

The table of contents of all issues of the *SKEPTICAL INQUIRER* are also available on the SI Web page. All back issues of SI are kept in print and any can be ordered through a link on the index home page, or at www.csicop.org/si/back-issues.html, or by calling 1-800-634-1610. This is the same number for ordering subscriptions.

—Kendrick Frazier



Lack of UFOs Shuts Down British Flying Saucer Bureau

"The British Flying Saucer Bureau, which has been hunting for extraterrestrial activity for a half a century, has closed," according to an Australian Associated Press report published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on April 23.

The bureau, which at one time boasted 1,500 members worldwide, has over the years received weekly reports listing up to thirty UFO sightings. These days there are rarely any such reports, and the bureau's monthly meetings have now been scrapped because of lack of participants. Denis Plunkett, who was a co-founder of the bureau in 1953, says UFO sightings are in the middle of a long trough. He says there are not enough sightings to warrant continuing.

—Kendrick Frazier □