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Dr. Gary Posner
5320 Lantern Court
Baltimore, MD 21229

January 11, 1978

Dear Dr. Posner,

Thank you for your most excellent letter of December 27th. Because you have taken the time to write in considerable detail, I am putting your letter ahead of the stack to acknowledge it.

You have raised some interesting points indeed, especially the one about "walking a tightrope." I feel I have been doing that for some years now! My basic premise has always been not "are UFOs space ships" but "what are UFOs?" My "platform", which perhaps ought to be printed at the top of each letter (!), is simply that we are faced with a phenomenon which might indeed be called a phenomenon of our times and which phenomenon consists of the continued flow of UFO reports from this and many other countries. The phenomenon has persisted and has not disappeared as one might expect a fad to do, and further, and most importantly, many of the reporters are persons of considerable responsibility and stature. This then is the phenomenon, and any phenomenon that has intrigued and involved as many people as this one has, as evidenced by the Gallup Poll but by the continued flow of articles, talk shows, etc., and now the movie, CLOSE ENCOUNTERS, warrants some group of sane people to take the trouble to examine the phenomenon. Accordingly, you will see listed on our new masthead the names of a number of responsible persons, among not the least of which is Margaret Mead.

The publication in which the Center cooperates, THE INTERNATIONAL UFO REPORTER, (I am sending you herewith the January issue) is an attempt to bring sane and sensible information about the subject to the interested public. Unfortunately it cannot compete with the slop that one finds in the tabloid press and in such horrendous publications such as OFFICIAL UFO, which announced recently that the town of Chester, Illinois had been totally destroyed by aliens! I like to think of the Center and the REPORTER as responsible craft, riding a horrendous wave of popular nonsense, attempting to rescue bits of truth bobbing up and down in that wave.

You refer to Philip Klass. I wonder whether you are aware that in his second book, UFOs EXPLAINED, he refers not at all to his first book, UFOs IDENTIFIED, in which the plasma theory was put forth, and now resorts almost entirely to considering UFO reports as hoaxes, hallucinations, etc. The plasma theory was so effectively shot down that he has had to resort to another approach. He appears embarrassed when UFOs IDENTIFIED is brought up in conversation. I urge you to read UFOs EXPLAINED and to note in particular his adroit use of argumenti ad homini; when he can't find serious evidence, he resorts to character smearing. This is hardly the scientific method. His contention, for instance, that the Socorro, New Mexico case was engineered by the town's chamber of commerce in order to improve tourism I found by personal investigation has not a shred of evidence to support it. Indeed, when Ronnie Zamora and I went out a few months ago to try to find the original site, we had to use a pick-up truck to get there since our rented car would not navigate the rough road, and he himself had to spend some fifteen minutes trying to locate the site. This is quite different from improved roads, concession stands and historical markers that one infers from Klass' writing.

As it stands now, I continue to have questions, not answers. I concur with the results of the Sturrock Report from Stanford University that the UFO phenomenon is worthy of scientific study. This report, which contained results of the questionnaire which was sent to all the members of the American Astronomical Society, is certainly worth reading. It can be obtained directly for five dollars from Dr. Peter Sturrock, Plasma Physics Laboratory, Stanford University.

Thank you again for your thoughtful letter. I concur that polygraph examinations should be much more frequent, and I think also PSE tests. But this requires funding and as yet we have not been so fortunate. I am quite well aware of the fact that funding cannot be obtained until "hard" evidence can be used as exhibit A. In the meantime, "we'll have to make do with gin" and do the best we can. I deliberately allied myself with the CLOSE ENCOUNTERS movie in order to make the work of the Center much better known and to let it be known that there is such a place as the Center For UFO Studies where the subject is taken seriously but which offers no panaceas or magic pills. If we could only get across the idea to the public that this is a research problem, not a quiz program.

Sincerely yours,



J. Allen Hynek

JAH/ecp