

Ames Research Center
Moffett Field, California 94035

Reply to Attn of: SS:245-1

31 August 1990

Gary P. Posner
Tampa Bay Skeptics
6219 Palma Blvd #210
St. Petersburg, FA 33715

Dear Dr. Posner:

Thank you for the letter and accompanying information on Hoagland and the "Face on Mars." I thought that your "Editor's Reply" in the Summer issue of TBSR was excellent!

One point that needs to be stressed is that there is no "NASA position" on either Hoagland or the face. NASA is not a monolithic organization, and the Face is not an issue of any particular interest to NASA management. I expect that NASA management would prefer to have as little to do with pseudoscientific controversy as possible. Thus it is unreasonable to speak of a NASA position either for or against the Face idea. I speak only for myself as an individual scientist, and I expect that Ms. Bergstrom at Lewis also would not want to be considered an official NASA spokesperson.

Clearly Lewis Research Center makes its own decisions concerning outside speakers. They are not a Center with any direct involvement in Mars science or exploration, and they may have known little about either Hoagland or the Face controversy when they invited him. My only regret is that Hoagland should be using this event as justification for his bizarre ideas. I am reminded of the many references Velikovsky made to the time he was invited to speak by some astronomy graduate students at Princeton; ever afterward he used this invitation as a demonstration of his legitimacy. Unfortunately, a self-publicist like Hoagland can be expected to behave the same way, so I am sure we have not heard the last of this talk at Lewis.

I certainly know of no evidence for a "groundswell" of either interest or support for Hoagland within NASA. Nothing in this respect has changed in the past two years. I know of no one in the scientific community, or who is associated with the NASA Mars Science Working Group, or who is working on Mars missions plans at such NASA Centers as Ames, Johnson, or JPL, who ascribes even the smallest credibility to Hoagland or his wierd ideas about Mars.

Thank you also for the copy of Sagan's acknowledgment of Hoagland's contribution to the idea for the Pioneer plaque. I had not been aware of this reference. It seems to speak for itself, and I have nothing to add. I would be interested to know what Carl remembers of this event, however; I hope he replies to your question.

You are free to quote all or part of this letter as you see fit, but again let me emphasize that I am speaking for myself only, as a planetary scientist and skeptic, and not for NASA or Ames Research Center. Neither NASA nor Ames has any position on Hoagland.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "D. Morrison". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

David Morrison
Chief, Space Science Division

cc: Joyce Bergstrom
Manager, Awareness Office
NASA Lewis Research Center
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