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To: Chuck Harder

Your letter of April 25 has been received. We of course have no interest in embarking upon "a campaign to defame" you. But we do plan, at present, to report upon the contents of your recent magazine, and about the status of your commitment to doing a three-hour UFO program featuring Phil Klass vs. a UFO proponent. Please inform us as to the status of your plans for said program.

Your beating of the Dave Barry "dead horse" is growing tiresome. (The irony of this situation is that I trusted the CUFOS publication enough to quote from it.) Ditto your "reputation is my equity" refrain. Is even the mighty Dan Rather immune from criticism when he goes out on a limb from time to time? Of course not.

Having now had time to see and read Willy Smith's analysis of the Ed Walters photographs, are you now prepared to state that the best available scientific evidence favors a "hoax" as their most likely explanation? Keep in mind Bruce Maccabee's own computations (based upon the NIMSLO photographs) that the "UFO" measures only a few feet in diameter.

Thanks very much for the Mars tape, which I plan to show at the next TBS meeting this summer. As I understand Hoagland's hypothesis, the "monuments" were built by explorers from another part of the galaxy who reached our solar system some 500,000 years ago, noted Homo erectus on Earth, and decided to leave a "message" for us to read when we developed the technology to reach our nearest neighboring planet (clearly the architects were not from a civilization that evolved on Mars, since aside from the Cydonia monuments, made of rock, there are no remnants on Mars of any technological society).

One wonders why our visitors, with an entire galaxy to explore, decided to spend months/years erecting a "city" of "pyramids" and the other Cydonia structures, which Hoagland only "discovered" when he hypothesized that perhaps the "face" was meant to be viewed at right angles from the ground (rather than from the front!) as well as from the air. Q: Who would be living on Mars to view the face from the ground, other than the architects themselves?

If the visitors' intent was to attract man's attention to a location on Mars where we could discover (a) that we are not alone in the universe, and (b) that "tetrahedral geometry" is the key to the workings of the universe, they need not have spent months erecting a tetrahedrally mathematically redundant series of grand structures, each of which being many miles across. Any species that intelligent, with an entire galaxy to explore, must surely have realized that they could have simply drawn their "tetrahedral" message in advance on a

high-tech scratch pad of sorts, left one page in a sturdy container, and erected a simple arrow pointing to the area to which they wished our attention drawn (or, rather than an arrow, a "Homo erectus" face might do just as nicely, perhaps with the container in the mouth, but not an entire "city", etc.).

One wonders why they would have chosen Mars rather than the moon. Or why they spent months erecting a face of dirt/stone whose left side is already "worse for wear" (I think Hoagland used those words), and which could easily have been obliterated beyond recognition by erosion or crater impact prior to discovery. Or why they chose a site riddled with formations almost exactly the same size as the "face" (with many looking only slightly less face-like), where the "real" face could have been missed.

Assuming UFOs to be real, and the myriad of sizes/shapes of the crafts and their occupants indicative of a multitude of civilizations currently visiting Earth (implying that contrary to the known laws of physics, interstellar space travel is a breeze), one wonders why our visitors didn't simply decide to return one day when we were ready for their "tetrahedral" message. One also wonders why, if erecting such structures makes any logical sense, some of the visitors from the myriad of other civilizations haven't done the same.

My position, of course, is the skeptical, scientific one. In the absence of the type of extraordinary proof required to substantiate such an extraordinary (and illogical) claim, such a claim must be rejected as unworthy of acceptance until such time as the proof is provided. Hoagland implies that in 1993, when Mars Observer is expected to return photographs with 50x the resolution of Viking's, the proof will make itself known. This is a perfectly acceptable scientific hypothesis, assuming that Hoagland is willing to concede that if the photographs fail to indicate the presence of anything other than natural geological formations, he will accept that his hypothesis was a house of cards, constructed of nothing more than wishful thinking and exaggeration (for instance, I had difficulty appreciating the perfect "symmetry" that Hoagland talked about). That is, his hypothesis, to be scientific, must be falsifiable.

Is Hoagland willing to let the evidence decide, if the evidence is unfavorable? I'm not so sure, based upon one unsettling statement he made in the tape, to the effect that 'Nothing in Mars Observer can take back what we've found' (the pseudoscientist's "out"?). Is Posner willing to accept Hoagland's "discovery" if Mars Observer returns unambiguous proof of man-made structures? Of course, and I'll be as thrilled as Carl Sagan and the rest of the scientific community, and the world at large, at such an historic discovery. And I'd be the first to recommend Hoagland for a Nobel Prize. But I wonder, if it is true as you claim, that the Russians have "better" photos of the region, why Hoagland hasn't obtained copies for use in his presentations.

To change the subject...

George Knapp's recent letter to Phil Klass is an obscenity. His absolute ignorance of who and what Phil is might under other circumstances be comprehensible, given the reputability of Knapp's sources in the UFO community.

But even a cursory effort on Knapp's part to find out the truth first-hand is the least that one would expect from a professional journalist. After all, even the lowly Tampa Bay Skeptics, in preparation of our review of your own UFO crusade, embarked upon a lengthy correspondence with you, carefully reviewed your magazine, and monitored your radio programs.

I am enclosing two 1968 Klass white-papers on Dr. James McDonald, a troubled man who was obsessed with proving the reality of UFOs, and who obviously believed that the end justifies the means. In addition to his dishonesty re: Phil's plasma hypothesis, McDonald was caught using government/Navy funds, earmarked for his atmospheric research, for his private UFO travels around the world. As I understand his tragic demise, his first suicide attempt was a bullet through the temple, which succeeded only in blinding him. After leaving the hospital, a second attempt was successful.

Sincerely,



Gary P. Posner, M.D.

cc: Phil Klass