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UFO STUDY: INTERNAL MEETING

November 4, 1966

Low: It has occurred to me that one of the things we might do is to develop a small kit of instruments and information that all physics departments across the country might try to assemble and have available. We could write the departments and ask that, if a sighting occurs there, couldn't they go out and obtain some basic information, on both physical and social science aspects. The kit could include a pocket spectroscope, questionnaire forms, things of that sort. Somebody has suggested that we should try to determine the optical thickness of UFO's, for example. Perhaps this would be one way of obtaining that kind of information, one way to solve the problem of how to get teams to sighting locations quickly.

Roach: I am in favor of physical measurement, but I am pessimistic about the chance of really getting good scientific measurements, for this reason: if a phenomenon lasts an hour or two, even if one is fairly close, it is hard to get to it while it is still going on; so I think that we have to be prepared for a rather small return on this kind of investment over a year.

Low: But, if we're going to get something worthwhile, it will only be through the help of an institution that is right there.

Roach: Some things, such as the will-o'-the-wisp, marsh gas, can be measured and explained. You can go where it is common, with a spectroscope and a camera, and photograph it. I think that we need to get the spectrum of the will-o'-the-wisp and have that as part of our knowledge; but I don't think that we necessarily have to wait for someone to get excited and call us up. I understand that in Mississippi it occurs frequently; it is a common thing.

I have a general idea that I would like to present: each of us might take some one completely unexplained phenomenon as a project, an individual study, and, after we have gone into it in some depth, submit it to the group as a kind of seminar presentation. If each of us took a sighting case, for example--the Exeter sightings, or the Socorro, New Mexico, one--we could tell the other members of the group everything we can find out by going into it in depth as much as we can--telephoning, doing personal interviewing. A lot of criticism of the Air Force stems from the charge that they have done a very superficial

job, although necessarily so because of the large number of sightings and because many of them were never officially reported to the Air Force. Perhaps we could find something significant by doing six or seven such in-depth studies.

Scott: I wonder whether current sightings might not be better for this kind of intensive study.

Roach: We can't predict, of course, whether, on a current basis, there will be interesting and significant ones.

Scott: I think that we have to take what we can find. I've had a time finding subjects here who are willing to talk about sightings they have made. I took seriously the report of forty-three students in my class who had seen UFO's, and I asked in class for them to come in on Wednesday. I didn't see a single one of them. I don't know whether they are embarrassed, or whether they were pulling my leg, or what. Now I have an ad in the Boulder Camera soliciting sighting reports. I need people who have seen UFO's to try to systematize information for presentation to this group.

Wertheimer: Do you have any specific plans for how you are going to interview?

Scott: I have a short questionnaire made up, which I am going to try out, and ask for comments. Then I am going to ask sighting reporters to talk freely in a group of five or so next Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday nights.

Wertheimer: Would you mind an audience?

Scott: Yes, I would. I don't want anybody at this point because I don't know what effect observers will have on the conversations. Once I know how to handle it, then we can have audiences. I will let my graduate students come. I don't want more spectators than reporters.

Low: Have you gotten responses to the ads?

Scott: Two people have called up.

Roach: Let me read you some of the material from the House Committee on Armed Services Hearing on Unidentified Flying Objects (April 5, 1966): Mr. Stratton says, ". . . It does seem to me when a national magazine that has as much influence as Life has, prints some photographic--what purports to be photographic--pieces of evidence of these objects, we ought to if we are going to allay the concern of these people who have started this investigation by our committee in the first place, that we ought to have an answer to it". The Chairman (L. Mendel Rivers): "I think so, too, but I don't think we should

criticize the Secretary for not having done it. Mr. Secretary, here is what I am going to request you do. You get in touch with Life magazine and request them to furnish you with this information that Mr. Stratton has brought to your attention, or any other magazine, and report back to this committee". Secretary Brown: "We will be glad to do so".
/P. 6070 of the published hearing./

The problem was that Life did not turn over the original negatives, and the weak defense was well, we didn't have the original negatives, so we couldn't do anything about them. /The Life referred to is the issue of April 1, 1966./ It would be part of our education to do in-depth studies.

Wertheimer: The assumption is that, if we conduct studies in this way, we will find enough similarity among the sightings that we will get a representative feel for what it is like to study a UFO report. I'm not at all convinced that we don't have a "phenomenon" that really is about a dozen different "phenomena".

Low: I think that it would be helpful to find out what our colleagues think of our presentations. This kind of thing could be quite useful, to see what kind of separate thinking occurs.

Roach: If I were to make such a presentation, I would try to marshal all the facts: the reports by the people involved and then possibly two alternative interpretations, not necessarily my own, but perhaps the official Air Force explanation and the sighters' interpretation, so that we can see the alternative interpretations.

Scott: I believe that only by getting such concrete cases are we going to become acutely aware of those variables that other people consider relevant. We can talk abstractly, but only when we find your, or my, or somebody else's report inadequate to satisfy us are we going to know what should be gotten next time.

Roach: To make a presentation to this group, of course, would be an entirely different thing than, for example, the NICAP people's presenting something to themselves.

Scott: There were some sightings on Long Island just this last week, for instance, that were very similar to the Exeter ones apparently. I think that the older sightings are the very kind that are too circumscribed now to get anything that would be useful for our purposes.

The people involved have talked about them too much; they are too self-conscious. And I believe we have, then, experience which is no longer representative of the kind we are going to study in the future.

Low: Do we perhaps want to limit ourselves to situations in which the occurrence has been observed by persons who are independent of each other, at least two persons who don't know each other and who made their reports before they communicate with each other?

Roach: We might find out that in the future we will want to have a psychologist and a physicist work together on a particular sighting. We might ask Dr. Hynek's advice next week on a list of six or seven cases to study.

Wertheimer: We might ask NICAP to prepare a similar kind of list or perhaps a list of questions to ask observers rather than a list of sightings to consider.