



The Alien Grey: An Unnatural History

Richard Dengrove

The Alien Grey is associated with flying saucers, and flying saucer advocates want to keep it that way. They wish for you to believe that it is an objective phenomenon and not a cultural artifact. However, the Alien Grey has had another life – in novels, short stories, movies and TV. Also, there is more to this talk than the title suggests: I am not only going to talk about the Alien Grey but the Future Man Grey and the Mad Scientist Grey. Each one is a kissing cousin of the others. Greys can come from under the ground as well. What the Grey does is try to answer questions often touted as deeply philosophical. However, I suspect it strikes a chord in our emotions, and the answers the Grey gives as popular art and pulp are more satisfying than any philosophical tome.

Richard Dengrove is a librarian in the U.S. Department of Agriculture and a member of NCAS since 1987. He has been active in amateur writing as part of clubs, in contributions to other people's amateur publications, and in his own publications. In recent years, he has researched any topic that took his fancy, from the sublime to the ridiculous: from explorers, to the

occult, to extraterrestrials, to the Newton apple tree, to the propeller beanie. In *The Skeptical Eye*, he has published articles on the early skeptic Reginald Scot, manuals of magic, success books, Wicca, Sir Isaac Newton, 17th Century parodies of astrological almanacs, Faust, 18th and 19th Century Mesmerism and 16th and 17th Century natural magic.

Saturday, Sept 13, 2008
1:30 - 4 pm
[Note the new start time]

Bethesda Library, 7400
Arlington Rd., Bethesda,
MD (near Bethesda metro)

Parking at the library is free, but you must enter your parking space number into a kiosk in the lobby. Parking is validated for two hours. Patrons can extend parking for an additional two hours by re-punching their number at the kiosk.

FREE admission – Everyone welcome,
members and non-members

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National Capital Area Skeptics Public Lecture Series
20/20 SINCE 1987



New Board Members Elected

Two new board members were elected in the recent voting: Nelson Davis, Jr. and Melissa Pollak. Re-elected and incumbent members are: Chip Denman, Grace Denman, Mike Epstein, Herb M. Federhen, Bing Garthright, Curtis Haymore, J. D. Mack, Brian Morton, Eugene W. Ossa, and Jamy Ian Swiss. Officers are: Scott Snell, president; Gary Stone, vice president; Walter F. Rowe, secretary; and Marv Zelkowitz, treasurer. ☒

Torn From Today's Headlines

Mitchell Claims ETs Are Here

by Scott Snell

Apollo 14 astronaut Dr. Edgar Mitchell, the 6th man to walk on the moon, attracted recent widespread media attention following an interview on "The Night Before," a program on "Kerrang! Radio" in the UK. Mitchell claimed to have been "...deeply involved in certain committees and certain research programs with very credible scientists and...intelligence people that do know the real inside story... We have been visited [by extraterrestrials]." Mitchell affirmed that the aliens' physical appearance, as typically portrayed in popular culture, is accurate. (*Our September speaker, Richard Dengrove, will explain why this is unlikely because of the cultural origins of the alien archetype.*) However, none of this news was actually new. Mitchell also made these claims in a 1996 edition of "Dateline NBC."

Personal Comment: I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Mitchell back in April 1994 at a church in Rockville, Md. During a break in his lecture (about metaphysics, not his lunar voyage), he stepped outside for a cigarette and I talked with him one-on-one for several minutes. My

impression is that he is highly intelligent and sincere in his quest to learn more about things for which there is no certain explanation. He seems very enthusiastic about provocative explanations, to the point that it affects his critical judgment. (e.g., Mitchell was a pivotal figure in the public emergence of self-proclaimed psychic Uri Geller in America, and even now believes Geller has genuine psychic powers, despite exposés by James Randi and other magicians showing that Geller achieves his "paranormal" effects through conjuring and mentalist techniques alone.)

Yet Mitchell's intellect and achievements as a military test pilot and lunar module pilot are unquestionable. He earned his PhD in Aeronautics and Astronautics from MIT. His lunar expedition faced formidable challenges following the earlier near-disastrous Apollo 13 flight. Its success was a testament to the skill and preparation of the entire project team, particularly the crew (Alan Shepard, Mitchell, and Stuart Roosa).

Mitchell also played an important role in the formation of the Association of Space Explorers during the cold war between the US and the USSR. Association membership was open to all astronauts and cosmonauts who had completed a space flight, regardless of nationality. The association was a bridge between the rival spacefaring nations and helped pave the way for the cooperative international space program of today.

Perhaps Mitchell serves also as a reminder that rarely are all the human virtues found in one individual, not even a genuine American hero like him. Some might consider Mitchell's heroic status untarnished by his lack of critical thinking skills. Or could it be that critical thinking is not universally considered a virtue? ☒

