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THE 1990S HAVE SEEN a boom in UFO publishing, from slick, big-budget productions to self-published manifestoes on the Internet. Unfortunately, the crop is larger on quantity than quality.

With so much overproduction, familiar stories like Roswell or Bentwaters are repeated over and over again, with only slight variations or updates. Fortunately, there are exceptions.

Encyclopedia Ufologica

First and foremost in this literary avalanche is *The UFO Encyclopedia: The Phenomenon from the Beginning*, a monumental 1178-page work by Jerome Clark, published last year by Omnigraphics.

Longtime FATE readers will remember Clark as a former editor and UFO columnist for this magazine; he's also been the editor of the *International UFO Reporter* and author of many books. Last year he received the prestigious Ben Franklin Award for *The UFO Book*, an abridged paperback version of *The UFO Encyclopedia*. Jerry has been active in ufology since the 1960s, and his knowledge of the field is, well, encyclopedic.

The UFO Encyclopedia is a revised edition of a work published from 1990 to 1996. Those earlier volumes were organized chronologically by era, whereas the new set uses the standard alphabetical listing for its 273 entries, from "Abduction Phenomenon" to "Jennie Ziedman," who investigated the 1973 Coyne helicopter case in Ohio.

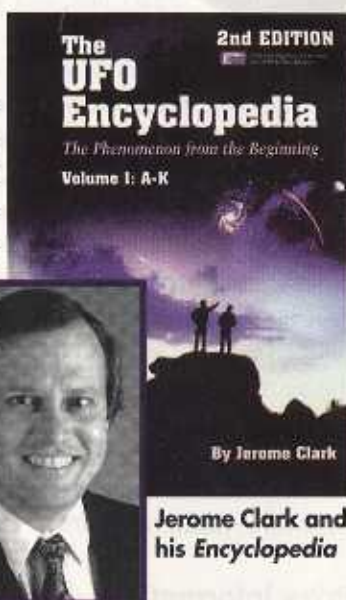
Although the price is a steep \$140, organizations and people interested in UFOs for the long haul should make the investment. The two-volume set contains more than 125 entries for specific UFO incidents, including abductions, contactee claims, and hoaxes. Many more are found among the long essays on various subjects like abductions, close encounters, crash/retrievals, paranormal and occult theories about UFOs,

and even sex and UFOs. Some entries run more than 20 pages, each with a separate list of sources. The set also features some photos and illustrations (though it's not a picture book), a complete index, a 93-page bibliography, and even an entry on FATE.

In considering the highly strange cases presented in the *Encyclopedia*, Clark tackles some of the ontological implications in his introduction: "We lack the vocabulary that would permit us to discuss these matters with precision. We do possess the technical tools to judge the value and meaning of physical evidence, and we can cite correlations between UFO data and current scientific thinking about the possible nature of advanced extraterrestrial civilizations. Yet we cannot always explain how something that seems entirely real on an experience level may not be real on an event level. Of experiences with Mothman and other exotic entities, all we can say is that it is possible to experience them. Both rationalist and magical 'explanations' only beg the question, presuming knowledge not currently available to us."

Encyclopedias are meant to provide a quick summary of information about an event or person. Only rarely does an entry make a new contribution to a particular topic, but such is the case with some of the entries in this work. For instance, the 29-page treatment of the "RB-47 Radar/Visual Case" by researcher Brad Sparks is now the definitive account of that incident. On July 17, 1957, a UFO was detected on radar onboard a USAF RB-47 jet reconnaissance aircraft engaged on an electronic warfare training flight over the Gulf of Mexico coast. Why is this case important? "The RB-47 incident is the first conclusive scientific proof for the existence of UFOs," Sparks writes. "Calibrations of the RB-47's electronic measurements provide an irrefutable case." Those interested in the highly technical details that led Sparks, a careful and not at all gullible researcher, to that conclusion, will have to consult the *Encyclopedia*.

The *Encyclopedia* is not without its shortcomings. Many important cases, particularly foreign ones, do not have their own entry. With the exception of a few classic Brazilian incidents, there are no Latin American cases, which are as numerous and bizarre as they come. Only one incident is listed for Russia — the 1989 Voronezh encounter — and Felix Zigel, the founding father of Russian ufology, is ignored. The same can be said about UFO incidents in China, Japan, and elsewhere. Many prominent UFO researchers and personalities don't have entries either, including John Mack,



Jerome Clark and his *Encyclopedia*

UFO CHRONICLE