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Chapter 1

UFOs and Hollywood Stars

Well, if I were a little green man in a flying saucer and wanted to get publicity, who would I contact faster than Captain Kirk of the starship *Enterprise*? - William Shatner on his UFO encounter

“Goddamn airlines!” William Shatner cursed through clenched teeth. “How the hell am I supposed to go on without makeup or clothes? Goddamn airlines.” Shatner's suitcase, containing his makeup and wardrobe, had not arrived with our flight. “Why me?” he mumbled. “Why does this have to happen to me?”

The enraged star paced back and forth, his brisk footsteps echoing through the marble lobby of Dulles Airport. He interrupted his frantic pacing just long enough to look up at the vaulted ceiling and shake his head in a gesture of total exasperation with how God was treating him.

Only William Shatner's luggage had disappeared. Cameraman Eddie Maritz carried his equipment with him on the short flight to Washington. My suitcase and two bags belonging

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to director Chuck Romine arrived safely with the other checked baggage. The four of us had flown down from New York to continue filming a documentary about ancient astronauts and UFOs titled *Mysteries of the Gods*.

Now, however, we were caught up in a spontaneous production that might more appropriately have been called *Conspiracies of the Airlines*. The volatile Shatner was convinced his missing bag was part of a plot by some faceless airline employee to sabotage his career. The source of his paranoia, I learned later, was a series of delayed flights and lost luggage that had plagued him for many years.

As we left the airport, Chuck tried to fall into step at his side, but Shatner kept darting to-and-fro like an angry dog trapped behind a fence. Finally, the director positioned himself in the middle of the actor's path and tried to get his attention.

“Look,” Chuck said calmly, “we can get some cosmetics and clothes at a department store first thing in the morning.” When he heard the suggestion, Shatner grimaced and looked like he was going to burst into tears. His shoulders sank, and he twisted his head down to one side. From that odd angle, he looked me straight in the eye.

“Designer clothes?” It was all I could think of saying. “Yeahzzz!” he intoned, as if I were the only one in the world who understood the seriousness of the situation.

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“Maybe we should get checked into the hotel,” Chuck quickly suggested. Before Shatner could resume his compulsive pacing, the director stretched out his arms and herded all of us toward the nearest exit and a waiting limousine.



Fig. 1. Director Chuck Romine.

Chuck Romine was a tall man with long gray hair and puffy, world-weary blue eyes. A noted investigative reporter, Romine had written and produced for Edward R. Murrow. Now, in September 1976, he was directing a documentary about space aliens.

Luckily, the director had taken charge, because the host and narrator of the film was not talking to anyone. Shatner just stood emptyhanded and watched silently as the rest of us slid our luggage into the trunk of the limo. I could not help feeling a twinge of guilt. When we reached the Hotel Wellington, I made sure the porter carried my bag.

After registering at the front desk, we agreed to meet later for dinner and headed for our individual

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rooms. I followed an elderly porter down a narrow first floor corridor whose walls were decorated with flowered red felt wallpaper. My room was small and over-furnished, with a gaudy maroon-and-white color scheme. The porter tossed my suitcase on the bed and lingered patiently while I fumbled through my wallet for a tip. On his way out, he pulled the door shut, exposing a tiny closet.

I unzipped my suitcase and took out a stack of folded shirts and trousers. As I draped my clothes neatly over the hangers, I imagined Shatner in similarly garish quarters, sitting on the edge of his bed with nothing to unpack. Captain Kirk might have had a handsome new wardrobe beamed down immediately, but William Shatner was sitting alone, pissed off and frustrated, in an antebellum room in the middle of the nation's capital.

I had gotten involved in this project almost by accident. At the time, I was working in New York City as the editor of *The Journal of UFOlogy*, *Ancient Astronauts*, *Official UFO*, and two other newsstand magazines dealing with paranormal topics. Pamela Childs, an executive for Hemisphere Pictures, had seen me on a local cable television show and suggested that I make an audition tape for the film.

When the producers asked me to appear in the movie and serve as a consultant, the first advice I gave them was to find a bigger name than me. I suggested they contact astronomer Carl Sagan or Dr. J. Allen Hynek, the government scientist-

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turned-UFO-investigator. They told me they had already talked with them and decided that I had a “fresh approach that deserved a larger audience.” What they did not tell me was that both men had already declined to be in the movie.

I accepted primarily for the opportunity to work with William Shatner, whose characterization of Captain Kirk had fired my imagination while I was still a student in college. Like many *Star Trek* fans, I had found the show's optimistic message, the idea that our species would one day conquer its earthbound problems and travel to the farthest reaches of the universe, welcome relief from the everyday world of petty wars, prejudice, and corruption. I wanted to believe that some cosmic intelligence was ready to communicate the Big Idea, to let us in on nature's secrets, or at least help us get beyond ourselves. *Star Trek* made that seem possible.

But I did not find Captain Kirk in William Shatner. In the few days I had worked with him so far, I found the man to be driven and self-centered. He ran off gut energies that sometimes surfaced out of control, distorting his whole personality. At such times, his voice became pinched and high, and he spoke in short, rapid bursts. Then he became petulant or pompous, swinging between nitpicking perfectionism and condescending boredom. Yet at other times, he could be charming and extremely sensitive to other people's feelings.

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It was as if Shatner were made up of two distinct personalities. One was the gallant and beguiling Captain. Kirk. The other was the insensitive and twisted person whom others dubbed “Captain Quirk.” Unfortunately, I had never mastered the Vulcan grip that Spock had used to subdue the malicious Kirk. Instead, Shatner was free to vacillate between his two opposing personas in a split second and for no discernible reason. But one thing was certain: whoever the man really was, he was much more complicated and fascinating than the two-dimensional character he portrayed on the TV tube. I looked forward to talking with him more that evening.

At the Captain's Table

At our dinner table in the restaurant of the Hotel Wellington, Shatner sat with his legs tightly crossed on a chair pushed back at least four feet from the edge of the table. He was obviously still upset about his luggage. Except for cursory greetings, we all sat in silence for several uncomfortable minutes. The first words Shatner spoke were detailed instructions he gave the waiter about the preparation of his red snapper. Slowly, as the wine was poured and the dinner progressed, Shatner loosened up, and we all started to relax a

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little.

“I suppose we should go over what we're going to shoot tomorrow,” he said. It was the first indication that the host of the film was willing to continue, and Chuck jumped at the opportunity.

The director said he planned to drive to COMSAT, the Communications Satellite Corporation, a few hours outside Washington. Dr. John Billingham, who worked nearby at NASA's Ames Research Center, would meet us there. Billingham headed the Extraterrestrial Intelligence Division, and the plan was to interview him on the roof of the COMSAT building, against the backdrop of an array of gigantic satellite dishes. Chuck hoped we would have enough time in the afternoon to drive to a radio telescope site, tucked away deep in the Virginia hills, to interview me.

I suggested going over a list of questions we might cover, but Shatner cut me off. “When I'm interviewing somebody,” he said, “I never work from prepared questions.” He was a firm believer in spontaneity and did not want to discuss the specifics of interviews any further. He felt it best to let things unfold on screen, and then he only wanted to talk about things that really interested him.

While eating his red snapper, Shatner suddenly turned in his chair to face me and asked: “What do you think of the Crystal Skull?” He was referring to a life-sized quartz skull and jawbone found in

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1927 during the excavation of an ancient Mayan city in Honduras.

“I know it's quite a work of art,” I answered. “There are no tooling marks, so it must have been made by hand rubbing over many years. Some people have suggested it was fashioned by ancient astronauts using a laser. I read somewhere that if you shine a light up through the base, the light is projected out through the eyes. But I've never seen it up close.”

“We went up to Kitchner, Ontario,” Chuck commented, “where we interviewed Anna Mitchell Hedges, the daughter of the archaeologist who found it.”

“I got the chance to actually hold it!” interjected Shatner. The memory rekindled his enthusiasm, and he huddled closer to the table. Then he really opened up: “She has it sitting in her apartment. I held it in my lap and tried to psychically tune myself into it. I tried to go back in time to when they used it in their ceremonies. I tell you, I really felt something. It was eerie!”

“Didn't the priests use it in death ritual?” I queried.

“She said the high priest used it to will the death of certain people,” Shatner replied, “and they used it in a ceremony to transfer knowledge from a dying priest to a young boy.”

“That's fascinating,” I said. “Can you imagine what something like that is worth? And she has it

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in her apartment!”

“She's not worried,” said Shatner. “She thinks it's cursed! She told us about a group of students from Australia who visited her father to see it. One girl picked up the skull and made fun of it. Anna's father felt insulted and put it back in the case. The girl died mysteriously a few months later, and just before her death, she told her friends she believed the Crystal Skull was the cause of her ill health!”

Eddie the cameraman rolled his eyes. At least he kept his mouth shut. Shatner was finally engaged with us, and I wanted to keep the conversation going. But Chuck was ready to change the subject. “While we're here in Washington,” the director said, “we're going to interview Jeane Dixon. She's predicted UFOs are going to land and contact earthlings soon.”

I felt uncomfortable about Jeane Dixon being in the film. I wanted to concentrate on the hard evidence, but the film was loosely based on Erich von Daniken's *Miracles of the Gods*, a book that stated that the impulse to produce visions and psychic phenomena is of extraterrestrial origin. One of his chapters even contained an interview with Jeane Dixon. Shatner sensed my unease.

“Don't you believe in psychics?” he asked.

“Well, Jeane Dixon? I don't know,” I hedged. “She was right about the death of Marilyn Monroe and the assassinations of the Kennedys, but she was way off on other things. I was hoping we

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could interview some heads of UFO organizations about what evidence they have found.”

“Jeane believes UFOs are going to land on earth in August of 1977,” Chuck countered. “That’s one hell of a prediction.” He glanced over at Shatner and continued: “Besides, I’m sick of trying to work with ufologist groups.”

Chuck, a hardnosed reporter who had survived military actions and Mafia exposés, told me he had never met such obstinate and backbiting types than those heading UFO organizations. After the Air Force had officially stopped investigating such phenomena in 1956, an alphabet soup of nonprofit organizations took over the responsibility.

The oldest group, APRO (Aerial Phenomena Research Organization), would not work with anyone from MUFON (Mutual UFO Network), whose founder had left APRO to form his own group. NICAP (National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomenon) was thought to be infiltrated by the CIA in a plot to discredit UFO research. CRUFON (Citizen’s Radio UFO Network) was run by the IUFOR (International UFO Registry). No one trusted them because they had set up a national toll-free hotline, in what looked like an attempt to hog all the sighting reports. CUFOS (Center for UFO Studies) was an academic group that would not work with anyone from the intellectual fringes, such as the Ancient Astronaut Society (AAS). The organizations were

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wasting their energies arguing about who should best handle a problem that most people denied even existed.

“Everyone has their own wagon to push,” Shatner said, smiling. “The funny thing is that there's most likely intelligent life in outer space, but I'm not sure about here on earth!”

Shatner suddenly turned very serious. “What do you know about these people who are going around saying they're in contact with aliens from outer space?”

“I guess you mean the HIM couple,” I replied, assuming he was referring to a pair of UFO cultists currently making the rounds. “They're called Bo and Peep, or simply 'the Two,' by their followers.”

“What's HIM?” Shatner queried.

“Human Individual Metamorphosis. That's what they call their blueprint for saving souls on our planet. This couple, a man and woman in their mid-forties, claim they are ageless UFO beings come to earth to help humans evolve to the next level. I heard them speak at a public library in Waldport, Oregon.”

“What did you think?” Shatner said eagerly.

“Well, they're quite impressive. They dress in identical outfits and speak in slow, measured tones. Mostly, they talk about the need for a leap in human evolution, which is something that's hard to argue with. But then they ask everyone to give up all their possessions and meet them at a remote

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camp in Colorado, where they all will be picked up by a UFO and taken to another planet. Once there, people will undergo psychic training and be returned to earth as seeds of a new consciousness. Supposedly, Christ, Elijah, Ezekiel, and all the saints left earth the same way. In fact, the Two say they are the 'two witnesses' described in Revelations. It's an enticing message. Out of 200 people at the meeting, 20 joined up.”

“They gave up everything to join them?” Shatner asked. “Oh, yes. There was a millionaire in Durango who gave up his real estate company to join them, and lots of people who sold their homes and donated the money to the movement. There must be over 150 members by now. Both Jackie Gleason and musician Steve Halpern came close to joining the group.”

“And why didn't you go with them?” Shatner remarked. “Well, the Two travel around in a 1964 Pontiac and communicate with members by a network of post office boxes. It just doesn't seem all that advanced. Plus, the Oregon police say they have identified them as a couple from Texas. He is Marshall Applewhite, son of a Presbyterian minister, and she is Bonnie Nettles, who worked as a nurse. Both have had some minor run-ins with the law.”

As it turned out, I was lucky I never joined HIM. Applewhite and Nettles reorganized HIM into the Heaven's Gate church, a UFO millenarian

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religion based in San Diego. They adapted many terms from *Star Trek* to describe their religious practices and remained an active organization for over twenty years. Then, on March 26, 1997, Applewhite and thirty-eight other members committed mass suicide to reach an extraterrestrial spacecraft hidden in the tail of the Hale-Bopp comet, which was passing closest to earth at the time.

Their bodies were discovered lying in their bunk beds covered by purple cloths and wearing black outfits with white Nike Decades athletic shoes. They all had arm bands reading “Heaven’s Gate Away Team,” another reference to *Star Trek*. They had taken phenobarbital mixed in applesauce, and they ranged in age from 26 to 72 years old. Among the dead was Thomas Nichols, brother of the *Star Trek* actress Nichelle Nichols. Two former members of the church also committed suicide when they heard what happened.

But Shatner was not really interested in the HIM group. He had something else in mind. “Are they the only ones you know of,” he continued. “Have you heard of the Nine?”

“Yes,” I replied. “They’re supposed to be sort of a consortium of extraterrestrial intelligences who only communicate telepathically to certain people.” I paused to sip some wine, hoping he’d drop the subject. But Shatner pressed me to go on.

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“Well, Uri Geller,” I continued, “an Israeli psychic, says he has been in contact with the Nine. I've interviewed him, and he believes they are the driving force behind his psychokinetic powers. I also interviewed Andrija Puharich, who discovered Geller and brought him back to the United States. Puharich is a respected scientist who is channeling the Nine at his laboratory in Ossining, New York. But for me, these kind of psychic connections can't be studied objectively. If this is all in people's minds, how do you prove anything?”

I expected Shatner to get all excited and insist on visiting Gellar and Puharich, but he just leaned back in his chair and abruptly changed the subject. I did not realize until three months later that Shatner knew all about the Nine. He and Gene Roddenberry were thinking about making a short film about the phenomenon and had already talked to Puharich. I assumed Shatner did not want to blow their exclusivity by talking about the Nine in someone else's movie.

William Shatner's Close Encounter

Shatner had a compelling interest in the contactee experience and seemed to believe that extraterrestrials were visiting our planet. A little research revealed the shocking truth: William

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Shatner believed he was abducted by aliens, and he had talked about it publicly on several occasions.

It all started in the summer of 1967, when Shatner observed a UFO in the Mojave Desert northeast of Palmdale, California. During the encounter, he seemed to have engaged in psychic contact with the extraterrestrials, and he even suspected he was abducted for a short time.

At the time, a flap of UFO sightings was occurring near Palmdale, in the area between the San Gabriel Mountains and Edwards Air Force Base. Sightings included both unidentified nocturnal lights and odd, disk-shaped objects seen during the day. There were also reports of close encounters. At least one witness claimed to have communicated with the aliens prior to Shatner's experience.

This is the same area where Shatner would ride his Suzuki Titan 500 motorcycle to get away from the hassles of Los Angeles and relax in the sun. He had heard of the UFO reports and sometimes looked skyward, wondering if the alleged space visitors could tune into his thoughts.

One day, he was riding through the desert with four friends when his motorcycle hit a hole and he was thrown off. The heavy bike fell on top of him, striking his head, and he lost consciousness for a brief time. Oddly, the other riders saw none of this. They later said a fourth figure on a bike behind them, which they assumed was Shatner, was never

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out of their sight. The identity of the mysterious rider has never been determined.

Just as he was coming to, Shatner felt and heard something strange. He later described it as “like when you have a nightmare and you feel something crawling over your body or wrestling with you.” Whatever the “shadowy phantom” was, Shatner immediately felt better, as if he were infused with fresh energy. He got up, righted his motorcycle, and tried to get it to start. But the machine stubbornly refused to engage.

Shatner suddenly realized he was stranded in the middle of the desert at the hottest part of the day. Still, he did not want to leave his expensive motorcycle lying in the sand, so he picked it up and started to push it along the desert trail.

It was 110 degrees, and Shatner was wearing a leather jacket and heavy clothing. He kept removing the hot, padded helmet from his head, only to put it back on to protect himself from the blazing sun.

Suddenly, his motorcycle seemed to acquire a mind of its own, as if an unseen force was directing it. He could push the bike in one direction only. On the horizon, directly in front of him, he kept seeing a mysterious dark figure waving him on. Seeing the figure caused Shatner to push forward with renewed vigor.

Finally, he arrived at an old gas station just off a paved road. Nearly six hours had passed, but he

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had reached safety. At that moment, far off in the distance, he observed a pie-pan-shaped object glistening in the sky.

His buddies eventually realized Shatner was missing and began a frantic search. They found him relaxing with a cool drink at the gas station. He almost certainly would have died had he not been guided to safety by the unknown force.

The Transformed Man

Shatner's close encounter in the Mojave Desert was so real to him that he planned to produce a half-hour film to document his experience. The film project never got off the ground, but Shatner did begin to question publicly the general lack of progress in identifying the real nature of "flying saucers." Though not a religious man, he became convinced there were superior intelligences in the universe capable of interacting with our species.

"I can't prove UFOs exist," he told the press at the time, "but anyone who denies they exist is as foolish as the person who denies that God exists. The mystery is there. We humans aren't yet all-knowing creatures, and therefore I would not say that unidentified flying objects aren't what some believers say they are. There are still some mysteries that none of us can solve."

In 1968, a few months after his UFO

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experience, Shatner worked out a deal with Decca Records to record his first album. Charles Bud Dant served as producer, and Don Ralke arranged and conducted the music. Titled *the Transformed Man*, the recording was Shatner's attempt to express his feelings about his strange experience in the desert.

Shatner begins by reading King Henry's charge to his troops from Shakespeare's *Henry V*, in which the king beseeches his reluctant men not to lose their courage even though they are overwhelmed by incredible odds. Next, Shatner renders "Elegy to the Brave, which describes a pale young man lying unconscious on the ground in a valley as shining diamonds fall from the sky. The scene is reminiscent of Shatner's loss of consciousness after being thrown from his motorcycle in the Mojave Desert.

Then, after reading Cyrano de Bergerac's pledge never to be false to himself, Shatner goes into a rendition of "Mr. Tambourine Man" that has left listeners dumbfounded ever since the album was released. Because of it, Shatner's fledgling singing career took a crash dive, and he became the butt of scores of jokes that continue to this day. In 1991, a group of New York publishers offered him \$10,000 to sing it at their convention (Shatner refused).

The song is very personal. It is about William Shatner's close encounter with a tambourine-

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shaped craft in the desert. Haltingly, with tremendous feeling, he sings to the alien presence:

In the jingle-jangle morning, I'll come following you.

Take me on a trip in your magic, SWIRLING ship.

My senses have been stripped. My hands can't feel to grip.

My toes, too numb to step, wait only for my boot heels to be wandering.

I'm ready to go ANYWHERE.

I'm ready to fade into my own parade.

Cast your dancing spell my way. I promise to go under it.

I'm not sleepy and there is no place I'm going to.

Mr. TAMBOURINE MAN. Mr. Tambourine Man.

Oh, Mr. Tambourine Man! MR. TAMBOURINE MAN!!!

After that, Shatner centers himself with a quote from Hamlet's "to be or not to be" speech and then intones a down-to-earth version of "It Was a Very Good Year." But his composure does not last. Before long, he is carried away by Romeo's description of Juliet's sparkling eyes and how they "speak without words." With breathtaking

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emotion, Shatner describes how Juliet came to Romeo like a “winged messenger of heaven that sails upon the bosom of the air.”

Could Shatner's Juliet have been a telepathic alien? Whether the star's UFO encounter was real or sprung from some unconscious archetype, Shatner's alien is very like entities described by other witnesses. In fact, instead of diminishing, the contactee phenomena has mushroomed over the last fifty years. Some recent studies suggest that as many as 3.7 million Americans have had an alien abduction experience.

In the album track entitled “How Insensitive,” Shatner goes on to describe his feelings of inadequacy in dealing with the telepathic entity he encountered. To the Latin beat of “Insensate,” he laments how insensitive and cold he must have seemed when “she spoke to me,” and admits that the memory of her parting look will stay with him forever. It was obviously an extremely emotional experience for him.

Shatner's last song, “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds,” sounds like a modern abductee's description of almond-eyed beings on a mother ship. His emotional tribute to “the girl with kaleidoscope eyes” makes it sound like he really misses the alien.

Not surprisingly, people had a tough time figuring out exactly what Shatner was trying to convey in *The Transformed Man*. Reviewers

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dubbed his interpretations “bizarre,” “psychedelic,” and even “drug crazed.” Reviewer Greg Prato wrote: “When listening to the album, it's unclear if Shatner is merely having a good time and goofing around, or if he's embarrassingly dead serious, and creating an overly indulgent work. You cannot tell if Shatner is play-acting or painfully serious. The result is a must hear, an unintentional comedy classic.”

In 1990, the recording was featured in a book entitled *The Worst Rock 'n' Roll Albums of All Time*. That same year, two selections from the album (“Mr. Tambourine Man” and “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds”) were released by Rhino Records in their tongue-in-cheek collection of celebrity singers called *Golden Throats*. Nearly fifty years later, the album is still getting bad reviews. In 2016, *Alternative Nation* crowned the album number one on their “Top 10 Musical Oddities” list, and in 2006, *Q Magazine* put it on their list of the fifty worst albums ever.

But of *Transformed Man*, Shatner has said: “The thrill I got from making this album was deeper and more satisfying than anything I have ever experienced. I was *really* in orbit.” So, Shatner's first album was a sincere effort, and critics had totally misunderstood his deeply personal interpretations of Shakespearean narratives and modern lyrics.

In the title track for *The Transformed Man*,

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Shatner concludes: “Then, one day, in the split of a moment, the shutter within flashed open and a rush of light flooded my being. I became as a pure crystal submerged in a translucent sea, and I knew that I had been awakened. I had touched the face of *God*.”

Spokesman for Extraterrestrials

“I believe in UFOs,” Shatner declared in 1968. “The time is long past when the Air Force or the scientists or the government can say that what people are seeing in the sky are nothing but hot air balloons or the planet Venus. That kind of doubletalk won't wash any longer. There has been too much evidence over the years that UFOs exist.

“Although I believe in UFOs, I must admit that I fail completely to understand what their purpose is. I just can't find the answers to the intriguing questions that they raise. For example, if these vehicles are piloted by intelligent beings from outer space, then why have they made no effort to contact heads of government or other responsible agencies?

“They have kidnapped farmers in a Georgia swamp and a couple driving a car, but have made no effort to contact the people of earth on a large scale. Perhaps soon, they'll make their purpose known.”

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Shatner worked on several projects aimed at expanding the public's awareness of extraterrestrial life after the *Star Trek* series was canceled. In a 1975 television special called *The Star Trek Dream*, he described humankind's yearning to return to the stars. In 1976, he recorded part one of Isaac Asimov's classic trilogy, *Foundation*, which told the adventures of a small colony of humans created by a dying galactic empire. The course of the colony's growth was plotted according to the science of psychohistory, in which prearranged crises force the people to evolve rapidly. It was an elegant exposition of the ancient astronaut theory, and Shatner's popular recording was nominated for a Grammy Award.

That same year, he recorded Henry Kutner's science fiction short story "Mimsy Were the Borograves." The premise was that alien beings would have thought processes so different that no adult human would be capable of understanding their behavior. For instance, what seem like random events to us would be entirely predictable by their logic. Only young children would be able to completely assimilate an extraterrestrial's viewpoint of reality. The album jacket shows a photo of Shatner with a young child in pajamas gazing up at the stars. Both Shatner's sci-fi albums were rereleased in the *Science Fiction Soundbook* collection by Caedmon Records the following year.

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After the release of *Mysteries of the Gods*, he began his *Evening with William Shatner* tour to forty-five college campuses with audiences ranging in size from 3,000 to 10,000 people. The content of the one-man show centered on man's dream of freedom from earth and our own species' limitations. After asking the audience to relax and listen to the "stars talking to you," he contrasted Aristotle's and Galileo's views of cosmology. Then he presented a variety of concepts about space travel by portraying characters from *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Shakespeare, Rostand, and Brecht. He read "Earthbound" by poet Irene Jackson, "Galileo" by Bertoldt Brecht, and selections from H. G. Wells's *War of the Worlds*. Other titles included "Go with Me," "High Flight," "Summer Spaceship," and "Three Way Alchemy: The Brain."

Although critics asked such questions as "Has Captain Kirk become a poetry-reading Punk Rocker?" the college tour proved very popular. Audience members came away with the impression that Shatner was trying to expand their mental horizons by demonstrating how our historical concept of space travel is linked with the cultural and scientific norm popular at the time. A recording of his performance at Hofstra University was released by Lemli Productions, Shatner's own company.

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Within a few months of completing *Mysteries of the Gods*, Shatner started work on another documentary that explored our place in the cosmos. The NASA sponsored film, *Universe*, was nominated for an Oscar and won many prestigious awards. “In doing a documentary,” Shatner noted later, “there is this process of discovery. It's not like a film or a play with a set script. It sort of reveals itself. You follow a lead and that leads you to something else, and then by the time you finish, the story is nothing like you expected.”

In August 1976, during a speech at a *Star Trek* convention in Oakland, California, two scientists rushed into the auditorium and interrupted Shatner to announce that NASA had discovered life on Mars. It turned out to be a false report, but everyone started screaming and applauding in a frenzy of amazement.

“You have just been told that alien life has been found on Mars,” he told the quieted assembly, “but you and I knew it all the time!”

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