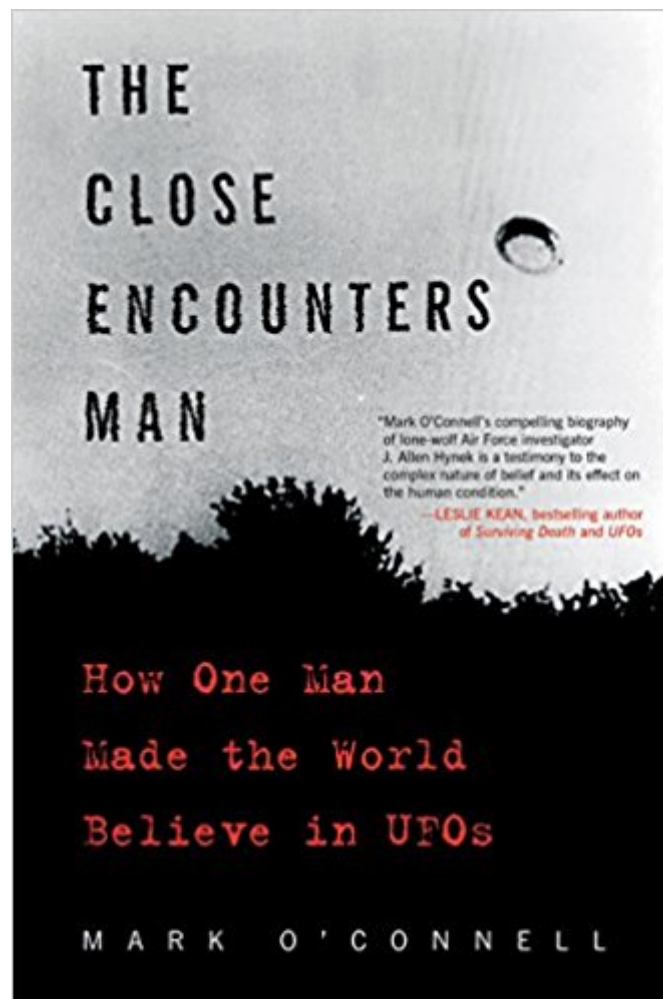




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# The Close Encounters Man: How One Man Made The World Believe In UFOs



## Synopsis

The wildly entertaining and eye-opening biography of J. Allen Hynek, the astronomer who invented the concept of "Close Encounters" with alien life, inspired Steven Spielberg's blockbuster classic science fiction epic film, and made a nation want to believe in UFOs. In June 1947, private pilot Kenneth Arnold looked out his cockpit window and saw a group of nine silvery crescents weaving between the peaks of the Cascade Mountains at an estimated 1,200 miles an hour. The media, the military, and the scientific community—led by J. Allen Hynek, an astronomer hired by the Air Force—debunked this and many other Unidentified Flying Object sightings reported across the country. But after years of denials, Hynek made a shocking pronouncement: UFOs are real. Thirty years after his death, Hynek's agonizing transformation from skepticism to true believer remains one of the great misunderstood stories of science. In this definitive biography, Mark O'Connell reveals for the first time how Hynek's work both as a celebrated astronomer and as the U. S. Air Force's go-to UFO expert for nearly twenty years stretched the boundaries of modern science, laid the groundwork for acceptance of the possibility of UFOs, and was the basis of the hit film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. With unprecedented access to Hynek's personal and professional files, O'Connell smashes conventional wisdom to reveal the intriguing man and scientist beneath the legend. Tracing Hynek's career, O'Connell examines Hynek's often-ignored work as a professional astronomer to create a complete portrait of a groundbreaking enthusiast who became an American cult icon and transformed the way we see our world and our universe.

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## Customer Reviews

“Mark O’Connell’s compelling biography of lone wolf Air Force investigator J. Allen Hynek is a testimony to the complex nature of belief and its effect on the human condition.” (Leslie Kean, bestselling author of *Surviving Death and UFOs*) “No serious study of the UFO phenomenon could be complete without a look at Dr. J. Allen Hynek. O’Connell has done a masterful job of interweaving the life of this scientist, star-gazer, and space pioneer with an engaging encapsulation of the UFO phenomenon. This is not to be missed.” (Jim Marrs, author of the world’s top-selling non-fiction UFO book *Alien Agenda*) “This book reveals why Dr Allen Hynek’s fight for a UFO science needs to be understood and turned into a powerful momentum for change. Hop on board the wild UFO comet ride of our lives.” (Bill Chalker, “UFO writer” and author of *The OZ Files: The Australian UFO Story, Hair of the Alien, and UFOs and Government*) “In telling the life story of Hynek, the ‘astro-beatnik,’ O’Connell winds up with a stunning panorama of the UFO movement and its colossal impact on pop culture and modern science.” (Vice) “Hynek’s story is one that deserves to be written in the stars instead of stuffed in a filing cabinet in a basement, where O’Connell found much research material for this book. O’Connell’s book is a good step to making that happen.” (Shepherd Express)

Meet the man who believed . . . the astronomer who invented the concept of “Close Encounters” with alien life, inspired Steven Spielberg’s blockbuster classic science fiction film, and made a nation want to believe in UFOs. In June 1947, private pilot Kenneth Arnold looked out his cockpit window and saw a group of nine silvery crescents weaving between the peaks of the Cascade Mountains at an estimated 1,200 miles an hour. The media, the military, and the scientific community led by J. Allen Hynek, an astronomer hired by the Air Force “debunked this and many other Unidentified Flying Object sightings reported across the country. But after years of denials, Hynek made a shocking pronouncement: UFOs are real. Thirty years after his death, Hynek’s agonizing transformation from skeptic to true believer remains one of the great misunderstood stories of science. In this definitive biography, Mark O’Connell reveals for the first time how Hynek’s work both as a celebrated astronomer and as the U.S. Air Force’s go-to UFO expert for nearly twenty years stretched the boundaries of modern science, laid the groundwork for acceptance of the possibility of UFOs, and was the basis of the hit film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. With unprecedented access to Hynek’s personal and professional files, O’Connell smashes conventional wisdom to reveal the intriguing man and scientist behind the legend. Tracing Hynek’s career, O’Connell examines his often-ignored work as a

professional astronomer to create a complete portrait of a groundbreaking enthusiast who became an American cult icon and transformed the way we see our world and our universe.

This is a well done biography. I'd recommend it to anyone who is interested in the historical side of the UFO problem or Hynek's life. It doesn't carry an ETH bias, which was appreciated, and does a great job of narrating bigger UFO events such as the Michigan Swamp Gas event, the Pascagoula, Mississippi incident, and several others that Hynek either directly investigating or of peripheral importance on the field of UFOs. Mark also covers some of the lesser known esoteric interests of Hynek, as well as his academic career and government-contracted work. This is a great text to read before getting into Hynek's actual literature and essays, or as solid background on the author if you've previously read Hynek's work.

Mr. O'Connell unravels the life and work of a mostly forgotten man who had an undeniable impact on science and American culture. CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND, and THE X-FILES owe Dr. Hynek a great debt, and if you're fan of either, so do you. O'Connell creates a 3D image of Hynek, and refuses to let us discount the contributions he made to astronomy, physics, and WWII. Like Hynek, O'Connell does not make leaps in logic or editorialize about UFOs. This is an honest look at a man who researched a ubiquitous phenomenon that remains unexplained and diminished to this day. It is a riveting biography, and deep look into a broad swath of American history. I cannot recommend it more highly.

I'd like to point out how well pulled together this book is and how entertaining to read -- as a biography, as a pop culture history, as a serious attempt to understand a time and place in the world. It really is a page-turner; the style just flows. I highly recommend it.

An easy and delightful read filled with deep research resulting in a story enriched with fascinating details. If you have any interest in UFOs, then this book is worth reading. It brings not only Hynek, the man, to life but also enriches your knowledge and understanding of what was going on in our skies and what the government was doing about it. Fact-filled, fascinating, and fun to read. Highly recommended.

This was a very well written book about an amazing man. You learn so much about Dr. Hyneck and the early years of UFO investigations. I cannot recommend it enough for all readers.

A really great book that had an amazing scientist chasing the ufo phenomena. The subject matter itself is strange and now has become part of our folklore.

A wonderfully written biography of J. Allen Hynek and a comprehensive overview of the subject of UFOs.

As a UFO researcher and a playwright/screenwriter, I found this book extremely fascinating, well-written, and compiled by an obvious passionate author. Mark O'Connell, given access to material on J. Allen Hynek that many have never been given, paints a very personal picture on the early years of an astronomer who was thrust into a world he never imagined he'd be a part of; Official UFO studies. O'Connell chronicles both the history of UFO reports and seamlessly intertwines them with the career of Hynek. The book also chronicles the official study of UFOs by the air force and the U.S. government under the Project Sign, Project Grudge, and Project Blue Book. For a veteran researcher, a new UFO enthusiast, or even astronomy buffs, this book has something for everyone. And the author clearly did his homework to make a book worth reading, and a topic worth discussing. A wonderful addition to any UFO bookshelf and beyond.

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