

Stanton T. Friedman, Scientist Who Tracked U.F.O.s, Dies at 84

By **Richard Sandomir**

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Stanton T. Friedman, whose conviction that extraterrestrials have arrived on Earth led him to leave his career as a nuclear physicist to lecture widely about alien visitations, died on May 13 in Toronto. He was 84.

His family said he died of a heart attack at Toronto Pearson Airport on his way home to Fredericton, New Brunswick, from a speaking engagement in Columbus, Ohio.

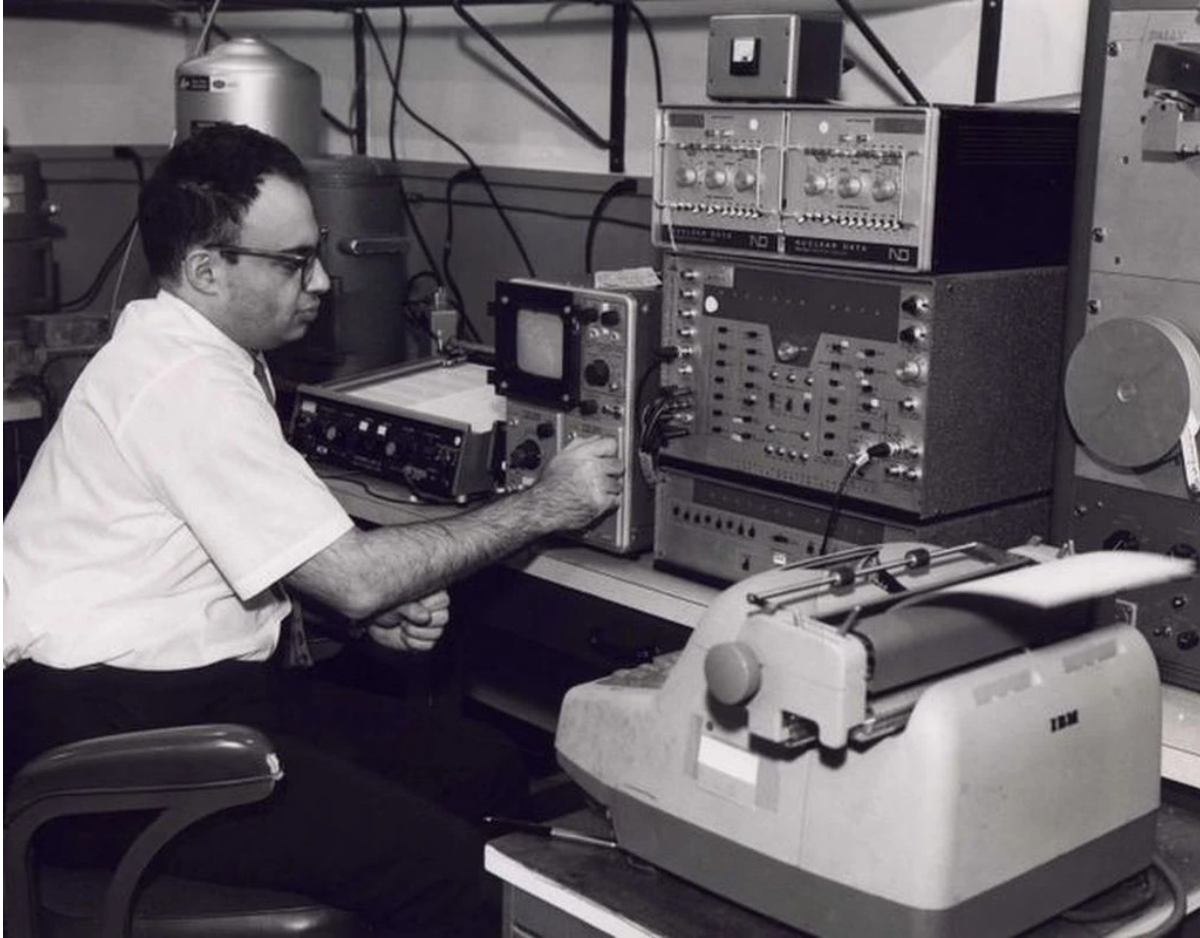
Mr. Friedman had worked for major corporations on projects like rockets and compact nuclear plants for space when he left the world of established science to become a prominent voice in the study of unidentified flying objects, or ufology, a field embraced by many but viewed by many more with skepticism.

“He was the ideal person for the role because he was a nuclear physicist, a rocket scientist — a genius — but he spoke the people’s language, and he didn’t put himself on a pedestal,” Kathleen Marden, one of Mr. Friedman’s co-authors, said in a telephone interview. Their book, “Captured! The Betty and Barney Hill U.F.O. Experience” (2007), chronicled her aunt and uncle’s supposed close encounter with aliens.

In several books, many television appearances and hundreds of speeches around the world, Mr. Friedman demonstrated little doubt that alien spaceships had come and gone, and that extraterrestrials had walked the Earth.

“What this means,” he told The New York Times in 1987, “is that we humans are not the big shots we think we are.”

He argued that the United States government had engaged in a “cosmic Watergate” to cover up evidence of alien landings, most notably the one that believers say took place in 1947 on a ranch near Roswell, N.M., spawning an enduring fascination with reports of alien encounters.



Mr. Friedman in the 1960s working as a physicist. He abandoned the profession in 1970 to devote himself full-time to studying reports of extraterrestrials on Earth and lecturing widely as a true believer. Stanton Friedman Archive

Mr. Friedman was a civilian investigator of the Roswell incident and wrote about his findings with Don Berliner in the 1992 book “Crash at Corona: The U.S. Military Retrieval and Cover-Up of a U.F.O.”

Mr. Friedman trusted in the veracity of many eyewitness accounts of alien visitations and abductions, and accepted reports of burn circles, landing gear marks and small footprints as evidence of flying saucer landings and takeoffs.

He happily debated doubters and debunkers.

During a radio appearance in 2004 on “Coast to Coast AM with George Noory,” Mr. Friedman faced off against Seth Shostak, senior astronomer of the SETI Institute, in Mountain View, Calif. SETI (for search for extraterrestrial intelligence) performs experiments to detect radio or light signals from outer space that might reveal the presence there of sophisticated beings.

“They want us to provide a body, and we want them to provide any kind of evidence that there’s anybody out there sending signals,” Mr. Friedman said.

Mr. Shostak said SETI had not found evidence of “cosmic company” on Earth.

“While he’s claiming that he’s found the evidence and they’re here, I don’t find that evidence terribly compelling,” Mr. Shostak said of Mr. Friedman during the radio program, adding that “if we do find something, it won’t be claims like the ufologists’, but claims that can be verified by many people in many

ways where there will be no doubt.”

Mr. Friedman’s renown in the world of ufology brought him an appearance — caricatured as himself, but called “Dr. Stanton” — in a 1998 issue of the “Betty and Veronica” comic book series, in which the title characters attend a U.F.O. convention in their fictional hometown, Riverdale.

When Veronica cautions Betty, “Don’t turn into one of these spaceheads,” “Dr. Stanton” responds: “*Excuse me, miss! The term is ufologist!*”

Stanton Terry Friedman was born on July 29, 1934, in Elizabeth, N.J., and grew up in nearby Linden. His father, Louis, was a blue-collar worker, and his mother, Florence (Zeitlin) Friedman, was a homemaker.

After attending Rutgers University for two years, Mr. Friedman earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in physics from the University of Chicago. He became something of an itinerant nuclear physicist, working on projects for General Electric, Westinghouse, TRW and McDonnell Douglas.

Mr. Friedman was caricatured (as “Dr. Stanton”) in a 1998 issue of the “Betty and Veronica” comic book series. (The title characters attended a U.F.O. convention in their fictional hometown, Riverdale.) Archie Comics

His fascination with the possibility of extraterrestrial life began in 1958, when he read “The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects,” which had been published two years earlier. The author, Edward Ruppelt, a former Air Force officer, had worked for a federal government investigation of possible U.F.O. sightings called Project Blue Book.

Mr. Friedman became intrigued by the possibility that aliens used nuclear power to fuel their travels to Earth.

He became a true believer two years later, when he found a key volume of Project Blue Book and seized on one particular statistic in it: that 701 of all the sightings charted by the investigation had been categorized as “unknowns” — objects in the sky that could not be explained as more than conventional airborne craft.

He believed that some of the unknowns could have been flying saucers (the term he preferred over U.F.O.s), although the report doubted that they represented “technological developments outside of the range of present-day scientific knowledge.”

Mr. Friedman left nuclear physics to focus on ufology full-time in 1970, deriving his income largely from lecture fees. He was often ready to assert a government cover-up of alien arrivals.

A Pentagon report that was made public in 1997, shortly before the 50th anniversary of the Roswell incident, said that no flying saucer debris or alien bodies had been discovered in the New Mexican desert.

Mr. Friedman is survived by his wife, Marilyn (Kimball) Friedman; his daughters Melissa Friedman and Rachel Friedman; a grandson; and a great-grandson. His sons, Sean and James, died earlier. A previous marriage, to Susie Porter, ended in divorce.

Mr. Friedman acknowledged that he had never met an alien or seen a flying saucer. But that did not deter him from believing that they existed and that they had landed on Earth.

“I spent 14 years chasing gamma rays and neutrons in industry,” he said when he was interviewed by The Morning Call of Allentown, Pa., in 1976. “I’ve never seen a neutron or gamma ray. I’ve never seen Australia, but it’s there.”

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