

Los Alamos

Los Alamos National Laboratory
Los Alamos, New Mexico 87545

DATE: September 24, 1984
IN REPLY REFER TO: ESS-5:84-OU-538
MAIL STOP: F665
TELEPHONE: (505) 667-6386
(FTS) 843-6386

Dr. Emil Konopinski
Indiana University
Department of Physics
Swain West - Room 117
Bloomington, IN 47405

Dear Dr. Konopinski:

I recently got a letter from Herb York confirming that he was present at a luncheon conversation involving himself, Fermi, Teller, and you, a conversation that has become as famous in the SETI (search for extraterrestrial intelligence) community as "Newton and the Apple." According to a popular version there was some discussion of flying saucers and the like. Fermi became engrossed in a calculation and suddenly asked "Well, if you are right, then where is everybody?" The modern implication is that if interstellar travel is feasible then the Solar System ought to have been visited and settled many times in the past, something we see no convincing evidence of.

Do you remember the incident? If so, I would greatly appreciate a written account which I would use along with York's and Teller's (copies enclosed) in composing a "true" version of the Fermi Story. The composite will appear in the proceedings of a conference called "Interstellar Migration and the Human Experience" to be published by the University of California Press in September 1985. Ben Finney (an anthropologist at the University of Hawaii) and I are the editors.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely yours,

Eric

Eric M. Jones

EMJ:gam

ENC. - a/s

CY: CRM-4 (2), w/o Enc., MS A150
E. M. Jones, ESS-5, MS F665
ESS-5 File (2)