

# 'We're on the level,' Flat Earthers claim

*Canadian Press*

FREDERICTON, N.B. — The United States space administration may believe the shuttle Columbia orbits the earth, but Leo Ferrari does not. He is convinced the Columbia travels in a straight line.

Ferrari, president of the Flat Earth Society and a philosophy professor at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, says widespread belief in a round earth is the horrible outcome of centuries of mind-control by malicious "globularists."

"The globs, they've got it all their own way," he complained during an interview in his university office.

"They start brainwashing from day one — the poor, misguided mother wants to put her child on a well-rounded feeding routine and from then on its round rattles, round balls and then he's sent to school to get a well-rounded education — round, round, round... it's very subtle, but persistent."

The Flat Earth Society, now 11 years old, has a full-time membership of 100 people, including a Canadian senator who prefers to remain anonymous, a dean of law

at a U.S. university, and Canadian authors Farley Mowat and Alden Nowlan.

There are an additional 150 associate members, all carefully screened through Ferrari's HHGA (Hope He Goes Away) file "to make sure we don't let in any nuts."

Society members, who abide by the motto "we're on the level," also screen applicants to make sure no globularists sneak in to sabotage the organization.

"The Flat Earth Society was founded here, not very far from this spot, on the 18th of November, 1970, after a night of very heavy drink... er... thinking at the home of UNB writer-in-residence Dr. Alden Nowlan," Ferrari explained.

"Nowlan and Farley Mowat are very devoted members. Mowat says the earth is not only flat but corrugated and this explains the disappearance of a ship over the horizon — it's merely going over the first of the corrugations."

Ferrari said members of the society not only believe the earth is flat, they know it is. "After all, just look at it..."

## SCIENCE

# Flat earth proponent decries shuttle 'fake'

LANCASTER, Calif. (FNS) — "Well, I see the hoax was canceled," said the genial white-bearded man who contends the Earth is flat and that the space program is an elaborate fake.

To Charles Johnson, president of the International Flat Earth Society, Wednesday's cancellation of the flight of the space shuttle Columbia came as no surprise.

"I think they were getting a bit worried that people were catching on to the fakery," he said.

Johnson, who lives in the Mojave Desert within sight of Edwards Air Force Base, where the space shuttle landed last April, has been preaching the gospel of the Flat Earth Society for the past 10 years.

According to Johnson there never has been a space flight. What the public sees, he contended in an interview, is film of the takeoff and landing. His concept of what happens in between is that after takeoff the spacecraft lands again and is "hidden" while the public is shown pre-filmed shots drawn from science fiction movies.

"The space program is a scientific plot to hoodwink the public — it has to be because there is no way to orbit a flat surface," Johnson said.

The Flat Earth Society was founded in England in 1832 and counts 1,900 members here and abroad, according to its president, who said

"infinite frozen water and outer darkness."

If there were any validity to the "spinning ball theory" he said, his wife Marjory, who is an Australian, would have lived upside down.

"You didn't grow up hanging upside down by your heels, did you, dear?" he asked. Mrs. Johnson, who is secretary of the Flat Earth Society and a woman of few words, shook her head.

There is plenty of evidence that the Earth is flat, continued Johnson, who pointed to his coffee cup to show that the level of liquid in it did not tilt.

That was a simple demonstration, he said. More scientific was the experiment carried out in the 19th Century by an English doctor who measured a section of a canal and concluded that if the Earth were round, water bodies would curve.

As Johnson put it, "Have you ever seen a lake with a hump?"

If the Earth were round, he continued, surely a ship would disappear from view as it sailed over the horizon.

Johnson blamed Christopher Columbus and Isaac Newton for what he called the scientific conspiracy that had culminated in the "space fraud."

The Flat Earth Society president, who said he had a small independent