

Abstract Submitted
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Babson, Bahnson, the DeWitts and the General Relativity Renaissance¹ HAMILTON CARTER, New Mexico State University — During the 1950s the efforts of an unlikely group composed of two colorful businessmen, a handful of physicists, and Air Force representatives helped to create a renaissance in general relativity research. Industrialist Agnew Bahson was an air conditioning magnate with connections to leading scientists, and the Air Force. In addition to his contribution to “respectable” physics, his life and death are shrouded in a cloak of UFO and anti-gravity conspiracy theories. Business theorist Roger Babson was driven to search for a solution to anti-gravity after first his sister and later his grandson drowned tragically as children. This presentation tells of the globe spanning, harrowing adventure of mountainside crashes, an international love affair, physicists masquerading as secretaries, the founding of Les Houches, the development of the first radar defense system and how Bahnson and Babson became benefactors of mainstream physics, leading to the creation of the Institute of Field Physics at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill led by Cecile and Bryce DeWitt and ultimately to the groundbreaking research that predicted the Higgs boson.

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