

Mando Aéreo de Combate

Left sequence and above photo: Canary Islands UFO reported June 22, 1976. Below: Launch of a Poseidon ballistic missile from a U.S. Navy submarine.



**CANARY ISLANDS SIGHTINGS =
MISSILE TESTS?**

INTERNATIONAL UFO REPORTER

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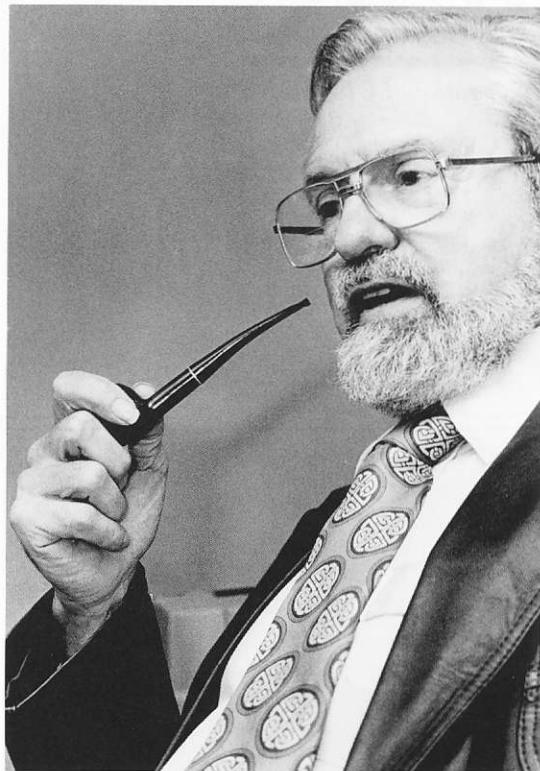
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J. Allen Hynek
1910-1986

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Published in July 2005.

International UFO Reporter (ISSN 0720-174X) is published quarterly by the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies, 2457 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited. Copyright © 2005 by the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies. Third-class postage paid at Chicago, Illinois.

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Illinois 60659. Address all subscription correspondence to *International UFO Reporter*, 2457 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659.

The *International UFO Reporter* is a benefit publication mailed to Associates of the Center for a contribution of \$25.00 or more. Foreign Associates add \$5.00 for delivery. All amounts in U.S. funds. Other publications also available for contributors of larger amounts. For details, write to the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies, 2457 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659, USA.

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NAVY MISSILE TESTS AND THE CANARY ISLANDS UFOs

BY VICENTE-JUAN BALLESTER OLmos AND RICARDO CAMPO PÉREZ

For more than 20 years, the first author (V. J. Ballester Olmos) has been trying to find the origin of a series of spectacular UFO sightings that occurred in the Canary archipelago, a Spanish territory located in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Morocco. There were thousands of witnesses, multiple series of photographs taken, extensive press coverage, and even an official Spanish Air Force investigation of these UFO observations. Separately, the second author (Campo Pérez) has compiled all of the massive amounts of information about the incidents.¹ The phenomena were also observed from Portugal's territories in the Atlantic, from aircraft in the area and as far distant as southern Spain, as well as from ships in the ocean and from the African coast.

The observations are summarized as follows:

November 22, 1974, about 7:30 p.m. According to the local press, at two-minute intervals three bright red lights were seen climbing very quickly from the marine horizon, after which they created brilliant concentric circles. They

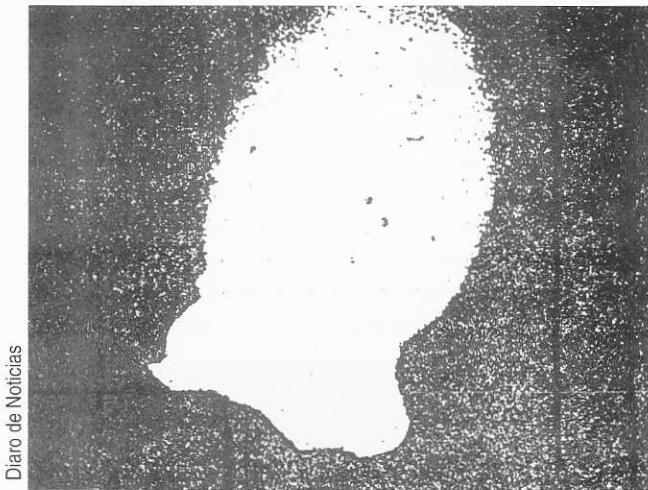


Fig. 1. Lights seen in Madeira, November 22, 1974.

Díaro de Notícias

Vicente-Juan Ballester Olmos is research director of the Anomaly Foundation in Valencia, Spain. He is currently compiling a comprehensive catalog of worldwide UFO photographs. Ricardo Campo Pérez is also a director of the Anomaly Foundation and has conducted extensive research into the Canary Islands series of UFO sightings.

gave off some kind of red jets leaving a triangular bright trail. The phenomenon was also seen from the Portuguese island of Madeira (about 500 kilometers north of the Canary Islands), where a reporter in Funchal took some photographs (Fig. 1). It was also seen from a Spanish fishing boat along the African coast.

June 22, 1976, about 10:30 p.m. From the horizon a point of bright red light, like a "rocket" emerging from the sea in the distance, climbed diagonally and developed a spiral trail until it became a big brilliant semicircular dome above the ocean. It was transparent, with a bluish-white hue. The crew of a Spanish Navy warship, the corvette *Atrevida*, observed the phenomenon for 40 minutes and its commander wrote about it in the logbook. During the sighting,

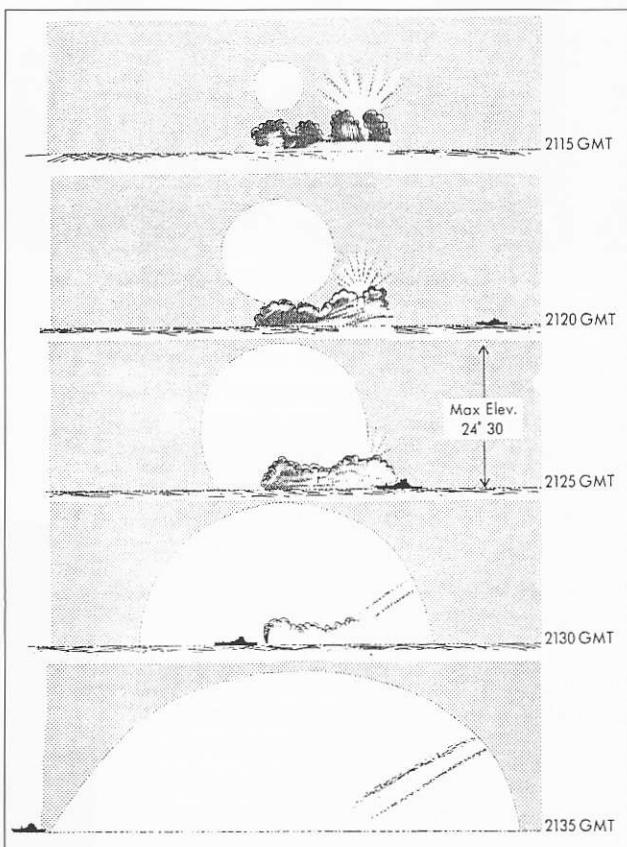


Fig. 2. Sighting from the Osaka Bay, June 22, 1976, published in *The Marine Observer*.

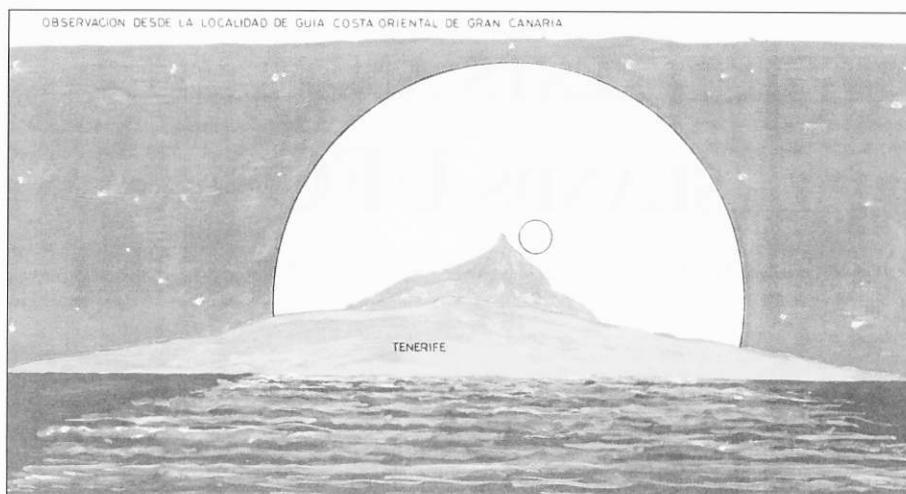


Fig. 3. November 19, 1976, observation from Santa María de Guía, Gran Canaria.

Ricardo Campo Pérez



Fig. 4. The November 19, 1976, luminous cloud as seen from Tacoronte, Tenerife.

a foreign tourist was able to take a photo, which was located with the help of the police (see cover illustrations).

Four hundred kilometers south of the Canary island of La Gomera, the crew of the ship *Osaka Bay* also witnessed this luminous phenomenon, which had the appearance of a sphere that increased in size to gigantic proportions (Fig. 2).

November 19, 1976, about 7:15 p.m. Witnesses from several aircraft and ships all around the Canary archipelago watched a phenomenon as spectacular as the one seen five months before. Initially, a point of light (brighter than a first magnitude star) began to climb towards the sky in a spiral motion, developing and expanding to a diameter two or three times that of the Moon. It had a semicircular shape and give the impression that it was resting on the horizon (Figs. 3-4). Among the hundreds of witnesses were Gen. Carlos Dolz de Espejo, at the time chief of staff of the Canary Islands Air Zone, and the crew of the

Spanish Navy school ship *Juan Sebastián Elcano*.

At the same time, the on-duty air traffic controller in Málaga (on the south coast of Spain) informed *Iberia* airline flights IB-825 and IB-562, as well as Monarch flight OM-300, of the observation of a "very bright cupola, which is not detected by radar" some 10 kilometers in altitude.

March 24, 1977, about 8:50 p.m. Witnesses on La Palma and Tenerife islands saw a reddish light emerge from the sea, climb very fast, move in a zigzag motion, and leave behind a huge, bright halo that lasted 10 minutes. Several minutes later, a Scandinavian DC-8 passing over Ad Dakhla on the coast of Western Sahara observed a luminous cloud to the west. A South African Airways jumbo jet described the same phenomenon.

Five hundred kilometers south of the Canary Islands, Capt. M. Brackenbridge and his crew aboard the merchant ship *Kinpurnie Castle* witnessed a luminous semicircle on the horizon, with a small bright area inside. In only three minutes it had reached colossal dimensions. Seven minutes later it was completely dispersed, after a second luminous spot appeared above it.

March 5, 1979. This was the most amazing event in the series.

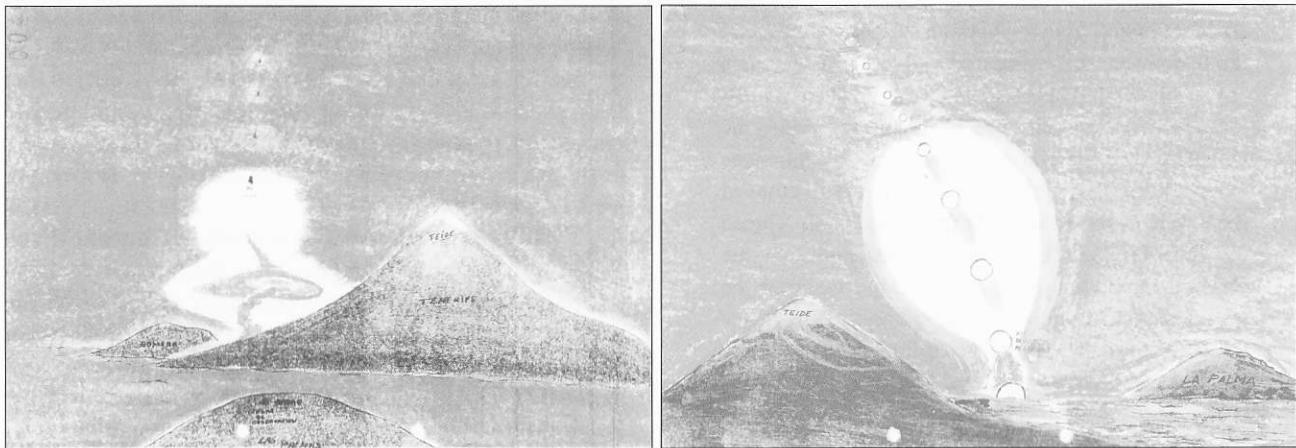
Many islanders were captivated by the sight of a strange sunset (Fig. 5). Multicolored concentric rings or bright zigzag trails were seen on the horizon towards the west, forming an enormous cloud. A few minutes after 8:00 p.m. when those trails had almost disappeared, a point of light was seen to ascend, leaving a luminous jet that began to



Fig. 5. March 5, 1979, phenomenon, Adeje, Tenerife.



Figs. 6–10. The phenomenon of March 5, 1979, as seen from Tenerife and La Gomera.



expand, developing into a huge bright dome. When the phenomenon ended, it left behind the same kind of trails seen at the beginning of the sighting. Thanks to its long duration, various independent sets of incredibly clear photographs were obtained from different distant points of view, allowing us to reconstruct the complete sequence of the apparition (Figs. 6–10). This marvelous phenomenon was even seen from Safi in Morocco, giving us a measure of its magnitude. There were thousands of witnesses, including the aircrews of several flights (Iberia, Aviaco, Spantax, Aeroamerica, and NAYSA). Also among them was a BX-816 flight located 800 kilometers northeast of Gran Canaria island.

OFFICIAL INVESTIGATION

Three of these events (June 22, 1976; November 19, 1976; and March 5, 1979) were investigated by Spanish Air Force officers. The files of those military inquiries were finally declassified and made available during the UFO declassification process implemented by the Spanish Air Force from 1992 to 1999,² prompted by one of us (Ballester Olmos). The event of June 22, 1976, took on an exaggerated tone when a local doctor in the small village of Santa María de Guía de Gran Canaria gave a very personal interpretation about what he had seen, transforming a big and remote luminous cupola to an object floating very near him and manned by beings nine feet tall! His explanations in the local papers clearly showed his subjective and unique beliefs.

Maj. Antonio Munáiz Ferro-Sastre, from the Canary Islands Air Zone, conducted the official inquiry into the

June 22 sighting and wrote a quite naïve, 100-page report. He considered the hypothesis that missile launches from ships or submarines were the source of the phenomenon, but he rejected it with the incorrect argument that “no missile is able to leave a luminous trail 20 minutes long” and also because the phenomenon appeared from the direction of the land. As it was not detected by radar, he concluded that its nature was “that of an unknown energy.”

The investigation of the November 19, 1979, phenomenon was also charged to Maj. Munáiz. He once more considered the missile hypothesis but, not being an expert in this area, he rejected it because he thought that a missile launched from a submarine below the water “might have produced such effects on a dark night, but never to such an extent.” He finally suggested “a nuclear explosion in the ionosphere,” placing the phenomenon about 100 kilometers above the sea. Nevertheless, having connected the case with two preceding UFO sightings in the area—June 22, 1976, and November 24, 1974 (this one is unrelated to the type of cases discussed here)—Maj. Munáiz much preferred the hypothesis of “a craft of unknown origin endowed with an unknown propulsion energy, flying freely over the Canary skies.”

When this second (80-page) report was received by Gen. Dolz, he sent it on to the Air Ministry in Madrid, not without adding a short note which offered valuable insights. “I have myself personally observed the phenomenon,” wrote Dolz, “and I did not see any flying object, just an optical phenomenon,” so he suggested that “a group of experts in these kind of incidents (from the U.S., for example) should be presented with the evidence, just in case the incidents

were due to experiments performed by certain powers." As we soon will see, the general, much more realistic than his subordinate, was quite right.

The officer appointed to investigate the March 5, 1979, incident was Maj. Pedro Ortega García, assisted by Capt. José Juan Abad Cellini. Their report, declassified by the Air Force in 1995, is 229 pages long. It includes their estimation that the luminous cloud was at an altitude not below 64 kilometers and reaching 516 kilometers in diameter! The description is precise:

At 20:08 hours, from the horizon, at the same place of the first object, there appeared a silvery disc leaving a red trail behind. It approached the island at an impressive speed. Its trajectory was like a spiral . . . When the object reached the bottom of the preceding luminous cloud it began to rise almost vertically . . . as it climbed there were observed several explosions that developed in a huge bright trail. . . . With the last explosion, the object reached a higher velocity and separated from the trail, changing its trajectory to horizontal for a few seconds, before acquiring a parabolic path disappearing in the sky at a tremendous speed.

Note that this account is a good description of a missile launch, including the separation of its second stage.

Nevertheless, when this officer discussed the various possible, alternative hypotheses to explain the sighting, he unimaginatively repeated his predecessor's arguments, thinking that "the solid propellants used in missiles would not produce such big trails," even though he suggested that NASA should be contacted to find out if the U.S. had launched two rockets that day. At the end, officers Ortega and Abad concluded that the nature of the phenomenon is "for the moment, unknown."

With an official letter classified "Secret," the General Chief of the Canary Islands Air Command sent this report to the Air Chief of Staff in the Madrid Air Staff Headquarters. This document made clear that "my personal conjecture is that the phenomenon was caused by two missiles, with an extraordinary power and caliber, launched from the area noted in the report." Then, he speculated about possible Soviet responsibility for the incident.

Several years later, then Lt. Col. Munáiz presented a monograph about the Canary UFOs to his staff course. We cannot resist citing one of his conclusions: "Missiles, especially those launched from submerged submarines, can easily explain 95% of the sightings of this kind of phenomena, seen from the land, from a vessel or from an aircraft."³

SOME SCIENTIFIC OPINIONS

Several years later, French engineer François Louange told us that this incident had an exceptionally qualified witness. Claude Poher, who was sailing in his ship through the Atlantic, was the founder of the French government's UFO investigative effort (GEPAN) and had previously been the

director of CNES (France's National Center for Space Studies) rocket division; he was completely sure that the phenomenon was "some kind of a missile."

Desmond King-Hele is considered a world-class expert in rockets and artificial satellites. A member of the Royal Aircraft Establishment of the British Ministry of Defence, he studied the photos taken during this incident and pointed out that the iridescent clouds were typical of the trails ejected by a rocket and that the curvatures at the lower part of the trail were due to the variable winds flowing in the upper atmosphere. He also explained that the wider expansion observed took place at greater heights and was due to the rarified air at that atmospheric level. He estimated that the minimum altitude for the luminous trail would be 100 kilometers, pointing to a missile launched 1,000 kilometers to the west. "A non-declared launching" (i.e., secret), he wrote.

Other outstanding scientists are well aware of the March 5, 1979, photographs. Among them, thanks to a personal meeting of one of the authors (Ballester Olmos) with the Russians Yulii Platov, main researcher for the Institute of Terrestrial Magnetism, Ionosphere, and Radiowave Propagation (IZMIRAN) and Sergey Chernouss, working with the Polar Geophysics Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Platov and Chernouss inspected the photographs and concluded that the beautiful optical effects displayed were due to rocket or missile launches, explaining that the typical dome structure of the dust and gaseous trail was caused by the separation process of the missile's second stage. The greenish-blue color at the separation point confirms that it was a solid-propelled missile, and the limit between the thin trail and the big luminous cloud marks a rough altitude of 100 kilometers (the tropopause).

ANALYSIS BY MANUEL BORRAZ

Previous investigations had by this point already pointed to the hypothesis that this series of incidents was caused by military tests, more specifically the launching of ballistic missiles.⁴ But it was through a detailed scientific study by Manuel Borraz, a Spanish telecommunications engineer, that it was possible to confirm the above qualitative conclusions with quantitative precision.⁵ Borraz proved that all five major cases listed above were luminous phenomena of an extreme magnitude taking place *about 1,000 kilometers to the west of the observation point, in the middle of the North Atlantic*. This implies that the phenomena cannot be anything else than launches of ballistic missiles. Borraz's mathematical calculations demonstrated that the minimum distance between these phenomena and the Canary Islands was really around 700 and 1,000 kilometers, and their altitude should be at least 40 kilometers above sea level.

This analysis pointed to the location from which the missiles were launched, and it proved that, instead of being nearby incidents, the phenomena were really occurring very far away from the Canary Islands, and quite high in the

atmosphere. This, of course, allowed witnesses from many distant points to view the phenomena.

Since then, Borraz has informed us of refined calculations. Considering that a missile leaves a visible trail only during its propulsion phase (altitude ceiling: 200 kilometers), Borraz has now employed a mathematical formula relating viewing angle, Earth radius, and maximum altitude to calculate the maximum distance between the missile rising point and the Canary Islands, arriving at a value of 1,600 kilometers for the visible points at the horizon. "It can be concluded," Borraz noted in an email dated September 1999, "that the missiles responsible for the Canary sightings were launched from submarines sailing between 700 and 1,600 kilometers to the west of Tenerife island."

MISSILES, YES; BUT WHOSE?

Many years of correspondence with international experts, plus basic comparisons with similar series of photographs taken in other places around the world,⁶ allowed us to reach a consensus about the nature of these extraordinary "UFO observations" in the Canary Islands. We conducted an extensive investigation because these were some of the most famous events in the Spanish UFO scene. The conclusion was clear—the testimonies and the images coincided with the launch of intercontinental missiles. It would be irrational (or an evident wish to deceive the public) not to accept that explanation. Ironically, from the very start, the local mainstream press saw in the missile hypothesis the perfectly natural solution to the sightings that worried the Canary population, while some yellow-press ufologists have maintained that flying saucers were responsible for the events.

The secrecy around these test launchings (and therefore the lack of a source) is probably related to nuclear treaty limitations. We should remember that in 1972 the United States and the Soviet Union signed the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks interim agreement (SALT I) in Moscow, prohibiting for five years tests and deployments of intercontinental ballistic missiles.

To convince the most recalcitrant doubters about our explanation, we needed even more evidence. This would include public and reliable data about ballistic tests carried out (a) precisely in those five days, (b) at the time of the observations, and (c) from an area located in the North Atlantic.

For many years, unfortunately, we were somewhat frustrated, as we could not respond to this challenge. We were unable to prove what we maintained was the sightings'

explanation, despite much effort to discover the responsible party for the military tests.

NEW EVIDENCE

In April 1998 one of the authors (Ballester Olmos) sent a detailed report about these five cases to James Oberg, a space journalist who previously worked for NASA and who has written extensively on UFOs from a skeptical viewpoint.⁷ Two weeks later, our fax machine received a document with a laconic but expressive message:

"I have found a definite correlation with Poseidon missile launchings. I do not know yet the location of the submarines when they launched the missiles. Greetings for your persistence in this project. Thank you for urging me to look better." Attached there was a table prepared by Gunter Krebs providing data about Poseidon missile launches (see cover photo) matching the Canary UFO cases.

Once he discovered that NASA files did not have any references to rocket launchings on those dates, and knowing that the Soviets had already denied responsibility, Oberg had consulted Krebs, a German specialist in astronautics and space. Initially, he asked about British or French experimental rockets. In turn, Krebs consulted the database compiled by Jonathan McDowell—the most reliable data source, according to Oberg, about satellite launches—and obtained a tabulation showing remarkable and unmistakable coincidences in dates and hours with the Canary sightings.

McDowell is an astrophysicist working in the prestigious Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics at Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is one of the key experts in documenting orbital launchings and ballistic missile tests; he has amassed an extensive catalog of rocket and missile launches, compiling data from the files of space agencies in Europe and the United States. Specifically, he used data from *Eastern Range Launches 1950–1994 Chronological Summary* by Mark C. Cleary, a respected historian specializing in U.S. space launches from the missile test range located off the eastern coast of the U.S. in the North Atlantic.



Fig. 11. U.S. Navy submarine SSBN-617 Alexander Hamilton that launched the November 19, 1976, Poseidon missiles.

Case 1. November 22, 1974						
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
L098.086	2442373.50	1974 Nov 22		Poseidon SLBM	SSBN 658,ETR	USN
L098.087	2442373.50	1974 Nov 22		Poseidon SLBM	SSBN 658,ETR	USN
L098.088	2442373.50	1974 Nov 22		Poseidon SLBM	SSBN 658,ETR	USN
L098.089	2442373.50	1974 Nov 22		Poseidon SLBM	SSBN 658,ETR	USN
Case 2. June 22, 1976						
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
L098.119	2442952.34	1976 Jun 22	2016	Poseidon SLBM	SSBN 632,ETR	USN
L098.120	2442952.35	1976 Jun 22	2017	Poseidon SLBM	SSBN 632,ETR	USN
Case 3. November 19, 1976						
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
L098.127	2443102.21	1976 Nov 19	1707	Poseidon SLBM	SSBN 617,ETR	USN
L098.128	2443102.21	1976 Nov 19	1707	Poseidon SLBM	SSBN 617,ETR	USN
L098.129	2443102.30	1976 Nov 19	1908	Poseidon SLBM	SSBN 617,ETR	USN
L098.130	2443102.30	1976 Nov 19	1909	Poseidon SLBM	SSBN 617,ETR	USN
Case 4. March 24, 1977						
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
L098.138	2443227.37	1977 Mar 24	2047	Poseidon SLBM	SSBN 624,ETR	USN
L098.139	2443227.37	1977 Mar 24	2047	Poseidon SLBM	SSBN 624,ETR	USN
Case 5. March 5, 1979						
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
L098.171	2443938.28	1979 Mar 05	1847	Poseidon SLBM	SSBN 642,ETR	USN
L098.172	2443938.28	1979 Mar 05	1848	Poseidon SLBM	SSBN 642,ETR	USN
L098.173	2443938.34	1979 Mar 05	2007	Poseidon SLBM	SSBN 642,ETR	USN
L098.174	2443938.43	1979 Mar 05	2225	Poseidon SLBM	SSBN 642,ETR	USN

This listing was relevant to our inquiry.

The Krebs/McDowell/Cleary table above gave us a lot of information, but it was not exhaustive; later we will see why. We will present it chronologically, comparing it with the data from the Canary sightings and making pertinent comments.

But first, we should explain the meaning of each column:

(1) ID launch number is a sequential control number. In the five dates of interest there were a total of 16 launches.

(2) Julian date is a calendar system used by astronomers and scientists working in space sciences.

(3) Gregorian (common) calendar date (year, month and day).

(4) Greenwich Mean Time (Zulu time) of the launching.

(5) Vehicle launched (missile type). In all instances, it was a Poseidon C-3 SLBM (Sea Launch Ballistic Missile).

(6) Launching platform (submarine). In all instances, these were SSBN (Strategic Submarine Ballistic Nuclear) submarines, of the Lafayette class. A three-digit number identifies the submarine. In our cases they were the SSBN 658 (*Mariano G. Vallejo*), SSBN 632 (*Von Steuben*), SSBN 517 (*Alexander Hamilton*), SSBN 624 (*Woodrow Wilson*)

and SSBN 642 (*Kamehameha*). The letters ETR refer to the test field used: Eastern Test Range, as mentioned.

(7) The organization responsible for the launch. In all instances it was the United States Navy (USN).

Four missiles were launched on **November 22, 1974**, numbered 86 to 89. Unfortunately, the exact hour of the firings is not recorded. Nevertheless, this table provides proof that on this day, many hundred kilometers to the west of the Canary Islands, several ballistic missile tests were conducted, as we had predicted. Some of the launches must have been some minutes before 1930 GMT. The UFO sighting interval was from 1900 to 2030 GMT (7:00–8:30 p.m. Canary local time), with 1930 as the peak time.

Within a one-minute interval, two Poseidon missiles were launched, at 2016 and 2017 GMT on **June 22, 1976**. The Canary Islands sighting took place at 2130 GMT (general reporting time interval between 2115 and 2145 GMT), 13 minutes after the second launching, if we discount the one-hour discrepancy, perhaps due to an error in the database. We consulted Cleary on this 60-minute error and he informed us that he had also detected several errors in times and dates in some launchings, after comparison with data from his own Range Scheduling Department.

November 19, 1976, four shots were made, in two

series with a two-hour interval, numbered 127 and 128 at 1707 GMT, and 129 and 130 at 1908 and 1909 GMT (these last to be seen from the Canary Islands). In this instance, the correlation is perfect, the luminous phenomena were described between 1900 and 2000 GMT, with 1915 the time most mentioned.

Two missiles were launched at 2047 GMT on **March 24, 1977**, and their effects were observed from the Canary Islands after 2050 GMT up to 2115 GMT, once again a perfect correlation.

March 5, 1979, was the busiest day, with three series of launches. First, at 1847 and 1848 GMT, the Navy launched two missiles leaving iridescent trails that stratospheric winds deformed in a characteristic zigzag fashion. This was seen three quarters of an hour later from the Canary Islands, after 1930 GMT. The sighting time interval runs up to 2030 GMT, probably also including effects from the second launching at 2007 GMT. Once again, there is a beautiful correlation with the launch data. There was a third launching two hours later, yet it was not seen from the Spanish islands in the Atlantic.

Who knows how many of the total 170 intercontinental ballistic missiles that were launched, plus the preceding Polaris and the subsequent Trident, were also mistaken as UFOs in the Canary Islands, by ships at sea or from another places in terra firma?

The tables show that on several occasions there were more ballistic tests than those observed from the islands. This was probably, at least in some instances, caused by sunlight making it essentially impossible to observe the trail and other effects of a missile.

We made one last check. McDowell told us that the Eastern Test Range for the U.S. Navy spreads from Cape Canaveral to Ascension, an island in the Atlantic Ocean. According to the calculations made by Lt. Col. Munáiz, in an appendix to his military monograph about UFOs, the trajectory followed by the object in the March 5, 1979, case was southeast. We know that the range of this type of missile was about 4,600 kilometers. A straight line drawn south from an imaginary point 1,000 kilometers to the west of the Canary Islands, puts us precisely at the extreme of the U.S. test range: Ascension Island!

A TURBULENT ATLANTIC OCEAN

During the 1970s, the North Atlantic was repeatedly the site of unusual activity. There is a long list of similar sightings, witnessed by amazed sailors in those waters, who afterwards reported their experiences in professional bulletins. For instance, *The Marine Observer* is full of stories similar to the Canary incidents.⁸

Among them is the report from the *Adelaide Star* on September 25, 1972, when a big and luminous circular spot appeared above the horizon, increasing in size. The McDowell/Cleary records point to a Poseidon test launching from the submarine *George Bancroft* as the source.

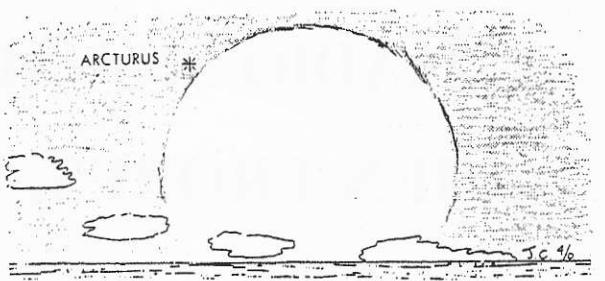


Fig. 12. September 25, 1972, sighting from the *Adelaide Star*, published in *The Marine Observer*.

Also, there were three amazing conical lights seen by the crew aboard the *Dart Atlantic* on April 11, 1978, emerging with a yellowish glow at the horizon and climbing at a tremendous speed until disappearing. That day, the U.S. nuclear submarine *Andrew Jackson* fired a volley of four missiles at one-minute intervals, as the records show.

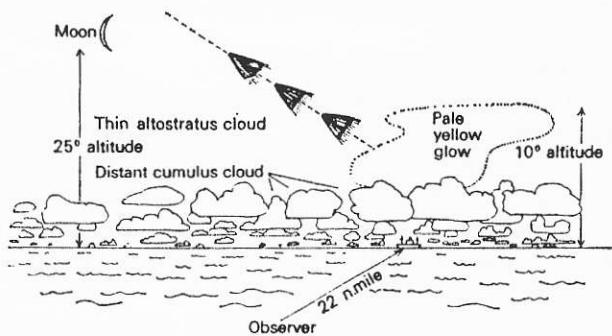


Fig. 13. April 11, 1978, sighting from the *Dart Atlantic*, published in *The Marine Observer*.

The prior cases are but a small sample of those appearing in professional maritime bulletins. Back in the Canary Islands, we must mention that during the 1970s there were other amazing phenomena in the archipelago, of a similar nature to those already described and whose correlation with the launching data compiled by McDowell and Cleary surprises us every day. The next-to-last surprise was the explanation for a strange case dated January 17, 1979, when two Belgian tourists saw and photographed from Tenerife an "enormous white mass, standing still in the blue sky" with a tremendous apparent size even though it seemed to be located very far away. Our excellent sources provided us with its origin: An FB-111 bomber flying over the Eastern Test Range had launched an SRAM missile.

EPILOGUE

Even though we now have indisputable evidence—we know the responsible nation, the type of missile used, and the submarines involved—a diehard skeptic could object that we are still ignorant of a relatively important detail: The exact location of the submarines within the testrange. While

(continued on page 26)

RADIO SIGNALS FROM SPACE, ALIEN PROBES, AND BETTY HILL

BY MICHAEL D. SWORDS

This article is built around three earlier articles, each remarkable in its own way. The core concerns odd radio signals that have seriously been considered, by persons outside the UFO research community, as possibly involving alien technology. Yet the SETI community, which supposedly is centrally interested in the concept of an alien signal, essentially ignores them.

These three articles are:

C. D. Jackson and Robert E. Hohmann, "An Historic Report on Life in Space: Tesla, Marconi, Todd," a paper presented at the American Rocket Society, 17th annual meeting, November 13–18, 1962, Los Angeles.

Oswald G. Villard Jr., Antony C. Fraser-Smith, and R. P. Cassam, "LDEs, Hoaxes, and the Cosmic Repeater Hypothesis," *QST* 55 (May 1971): 54–58.

Robert A. Freitas Jr., "Interstellar Probes: A New Approach to SETI," *Journal of the British Interplanetary Society* 33 (1980): 95–100.

This material is convoluted enough that I will take the papers one after the other rather than immediately fold the whole story together.

JACKSON AND HOHMANNS: 1962

Someone in lofty levels of the IBM Corporation had heard a talk by Walter R. G. Baker of the Syracuse University Research Corporation, who suggested it was prudent not to forget the advances of past geniuses just because those breakthroughs didn't find application at the time—sort of the engineering equivalent of Charles Fort's attitude about not sweeping odd scientific facts under the rug. This message came down through the IBM ranks to Jackson and Hohmann. They were interested in electrical inventors Nikola Tesla (1856–1943) and Guglielmo Marconi (1874–1937), and out of that came their paper.

Their article described Tesla's and Marconi's beliefs that each had acquired signals from outer space. Jackson and Hohmann were sympathetic to that view and spoke about it to the American Rocket Society. Even today, the claim

would probably be laughed at in proper academic circles. Why did they have the guts to go public with it in 1962?

It turns out that 1962 was in the midst of a period of leading-edge academic interest in the search for extraterrestrial intelligence. Prior to 1959, the topic was at best trivially speculative and at worst tainted with the stigma of flying saucers. But consider what happened in the next five years. In 1959, Giuseppe Cocconi and Phillip Morrison wrote their paradigm-changing article in *Nature* on "Searching for Interstellar Communications"; Freeman J. Dyson wrote "Search for Artificial Stellar Sources of Infrared Radiation" in *Science*; and Su-Shu Huang wrote "Occurrence of Life in the Universe" in *American Scientist*.

In 1960, Edward M. Purcell followed with a report out of Brookhaven National Labs on "Radioastronomy and Communication through Space." Then Robert W. Bussard showed how to fly there with "Galactic Matter and Interstellar Flight" in *Astronautica Acta*, and Ronald N. Bracewell suggested that they might already be here in the guise of probes ("Communications from Superior Galactic Communities" in *Nature*). Two CalTech scientists then reported that two galactic radio sources, labeled CTA21 and CTA102, looked possibly artificial.

In 1961, Frank Drake told the world that he'd looked for ET signals with "Project Ozma" (*Physics Today*). J. A. Webb contributed "Detection of Intelligent Signals from Space" at the Institute of Radio Engineers 7th National Communication Symposium, and Eugen Sanger told us, once again, that we earthlings could fly there if we had the will ("Nuclear Rockets for Space Flight," in *Astronautics Science Review*).

Then in 1962, the same year that Jackson and Hohmann did their work, Bernard M. Oliver offered "Radio Search for Distant Races" in *International Science and Technology*. Bracewell returned with "Radio Signals from Other Planets" (*Proceedings of the Institute of Radio Engineers*), Leslie C. Edie suggested coded messages in the DNA of viruses from space (seriously) in *Science*, and the Jet Propulsion Lab's Dwain F. Spencer and Leonard D. Jaffe wrote of the "Feasibility of Interstellar Travel" in JPL's *Technical Reports*. And the onslaught of these influential publications continued for the next year or so (while the UFOs, paradoxically, slept).

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So the two IBM scientists were not so far out on a forbidden limb as it might at first seem. In fact, they were in an excited flow of freethinking. What did they have to say? Let's take it piece by piece.

Tesla. In 1899, he was at his laboratory in Colorado Springs, driving monstrous surges of power into the Earth and also beaming energy outward from the 280-foot tower he'd built. He had instruments to record electromagnetic disturbances anywhere within a radius of 1,100 miles. It was an experiment of Frankensteinian proportions.

During the tests, Tesla began picking up odd data on his instruments. He was sure that this was a signal of some sort. The signals came

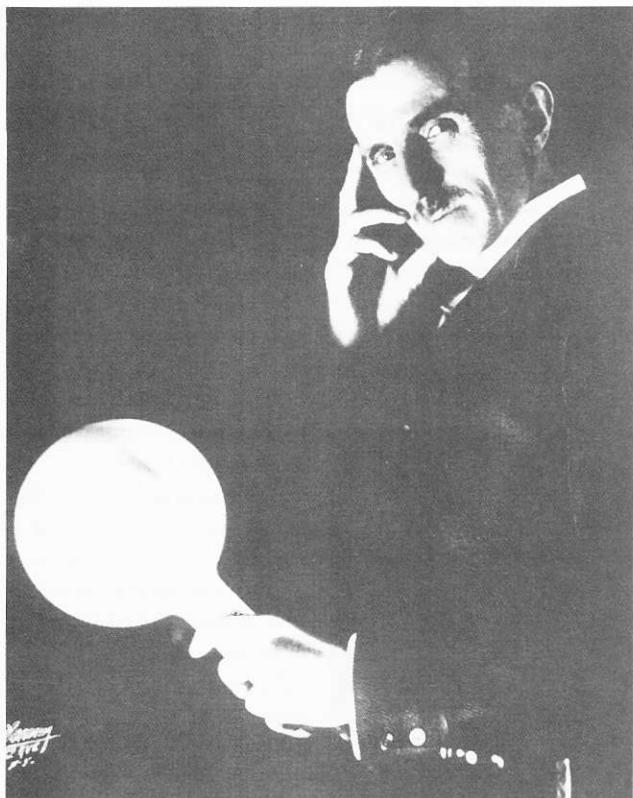
periodically, and with such a clear suggestion of number and order that they were not traceable to any cause then known to me. I was familiar . . . with such electrical disturbances as are produced by the sun, Aurora Borealis and earth currents, and I was as sure as I could be of any fact that these variations were due to none of these causes. The nature of my experiments precluded the possibility of the changes being produced by atmospheric disturbances. . . . Although I could not decipher their meaning, it was impossible for me to think of them as having been entirely accidental . . . a purpose was behind these signals. . . . they are the results of an attempt by some human beings, not of our world, to speak to us by signals. . . . I am absolutely certain that they are not caused by anything terrestrial.

After informing the world of these signals, he would neither discuss the devices he used nor the signals any further. But while this was occurring, the second genius in our story, Marconi, was astounding the world with his wireless transmission across the English Channel.

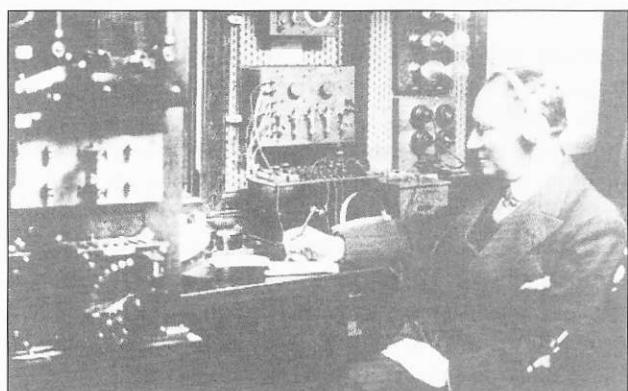
Marconi. In Newfoundland in 1901, he received the first radio signal sent across the Atlantic. People were wowed, Marconi became well-to-do and built a mobile laboratory on his yacht the *Electra*, so that he could work in privacy. As *Electra* sailed the Mediterranean in 1921, Marconi received a signal that he viewed as being of interplanetary origin. The London manager of the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company, J. C. H. MacBeth, reported this news:

The signals . . . registered high in the meter band, although the maximum length of earth-produced waves at the time was 14,000 meters. The theory that the waves were produced by electrical disturbances was disproved by the regularity of the pulses. Although the pulses apparently consisted of a code, the only signal similar to earth codes was one resembling the letter "V" in the Marconi Code. Marconi himself expressed the belief that the signal had originated . . . at some point in outer space.

This leads us to **David P. Todd**, who was a professor of astronomy at Amherst College in Massachusetts. Todd



Nikola Tesla



Marconi on the Electra

knew that Mars was to make a close approach to Earth in 1924. Somehow, he got the U.S. government to persuade other countries to turn off their high-powered transmitters to create brief radio silence periods in August of that year. Then he waited and recorded . . . extraterrestrial signals, in his opinion. (For more details, see *IUR*, 29:3, p. 20.)

All this is genuinely interesting, but apparently it was especially so to Jackson and Hohmann. They are not only sympathetic to the extraterrestrial reality of the signals, but they take them a step further. Marconi broadcast a signal (the letter "V" in Morse code) across the English Channel in



David P. Todd

1899. In 1921, aboard the *Electra*, he received his extraterrestrial data train, which included only one recognizable code—the letter “V”. In December 1901, his transatlantic signal was a repetition of the code for “S”. In 1924, David Todd received his signals, which included one “decipherable” code—the letter “S”.

Though consisting of only two data points, Jackson and Hohmann were impressed by this. They believed that the two signals had similar response times of about 22 years, and that perhaps the signal source was 11 light years away or so. They noted that Epsilon Eridani, a main-sequence star, is 10.7 light years distant, and went on to quote Drake’s new ideas on radio-message-sending civilizations. Tau Ceti

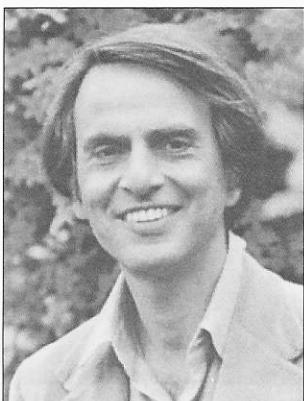
was a second candidate star at 11.8 light years.

Intriguing as it is, this paper was probably just a little too much for the conservative academics to swallow, and it faded away, rarely to be referred to by the new SETI community. And—curses! foiled again!—the UFOs were back. Whenever the UFOs are thick, it’s tough to be a vocal SETIan. One young SETI scientist who was a little too dense to understand this was Carl Sagan.

While the rest of his colleagues were anxiously pushing ET as far away from the solar system as possible, he was writing papers about how interstellar travel was not only possible but likely. To make matters worse, he began a relationship with Iosef S. Shklovskii, the imaginative Soviet SETI researcher, who believed that the two satellites of Mars were artificial ET-artifacts. In 1966, Sagan made the colossal tribal blunder (at the American Astronautical Society) of saying that ET had probably visited our solar system thousands of times in Earth’s history and could well have visited in historic times. It took years for him to recover his own aura of proper ET distance in the minds of the wheelhorses of astronomy and physics. For example, Ed Condon was extremely suspicious of him.

The subject of genuine ET-response signals did not die during this period because of interest, in radio circles, in the phenomenon known as “long delayed echoes” (LDEs). The signals were repeated from transmissions that had been sent moments before, or even many minutes before. The 22-year delay that Jackson and Hohmann wrote about is not an example of an LDE. An LDE can be as short as a few seconds but as long as a couple of days. One Japanese measurement was four days late. Surely, the category of LDE is some kind of mixed bag of differing phenomena.

Short-wave transmitters first noticed LDEs in the 1920s. People began to try to explain them, and although they had some luck with the extremely short ones, the lengthier LDEs



Carl Sagan, 1980



Oswald Villard (left), Antony Fraser-Smith

have never been satisfactorily explained. Oswald Villard at Stanford University wrote “Long-Delayed Echoes: Radio’s Flying Saucer Effect” in *QST* in May 1969. Hidden just beneath the smile was the thought that maybe these signals were being picked up by an extraterrestrial probe, possibly automated, which then rebroadcast them back to us. Nonsense, right? Some people weren’t so sure.

VILLARD, FRASER-SMITH, CASSAM: 1971

Possibly due to reading that 1969 paper, possibly due to Bracewell’s ideas about visiting alien probes, or maybe even owing to the recent UFO hullabaloo of the late 1960s flap and the Colorado Project, the Office of Naval Research and the Advanced Research Projects Agency approved a contract to study the LDEs. The project wasn’t simply open-ended. The organizations wanted Villard and the Stanford Radioscience Laboratory to write a report on whether the “Cosmic Repeater Hypothesis” had any validity in explaining LDEs. The Cosmic Repeater was viewed as meaning an alien probe (a “Bracewell probe” as they were now called).

After protecting their backsides with the proper conservative talk, discussing hallucinations and hoaxes, the authors go on to discuss the Cosmic Repeater:

Consideration of the very large number of stars in the sky has led to a belief among astronomers that conscious life of the general type which has originated on earth is probably not unique in the universe, and may well have also evolved elsewhere. However, consideration of distance and probabilities leads to the view that if another “earth” exists somewhere, it is so far away that—unless there are physical laws which we don’t now understand—personal visits would require so much transit time as to be out of the question.

On the other hand “visiting” by probes seems to be a possibility. Assuming that other civilizations share the same curiosity and the same willingness to support scientific research that we do, they could—in principle, at least—send out spacecraft which would be put into orbit around likely stars or preferably planets, to await some sign of civilized activity. Having found same in the form of Hertzian waves, the probe would presum-

ably report that fact back to its senders, while at the same time attempting to alert the discoverees to its presence. . . . The probe, it may be assumed, will not know in advance exactly what form of electromagnetic communications to expect. Therefore, what more effective way to perform the alerting function, than to repeat back to whomever might be listening, some fraction of a transmission that had just been sent?

The alternative of sending—blind—some kind of an attention-attracting transmission is clearly inefficient; consider the amazingly strong static-like signals from Jupiter. Our high-frequency receiver technology had progressed to the point where these signals could have been heard, say, as early as 1925. But their nature and Jovian origin was not established until roughly 35 years later.

The suggestion was accordingly made in 1961, by radio astronomy Professor R. N. Bracewell of Stanford University, that interrogations by cosmic probes might have the appearance of LDEs.

Those who have seen the movie or read the novel, *2001*, will recognize an analogous theme: instead of a repeater, the “probe” in that case was a radio transmitter.

Their report was sent to all the armed services, DOD, NASA, MITRE, Rand, Battelle, Arecibo, NSA, DIA, and many others. We are happy to know that the Air Force got 33 copies.

The SETIans trudged on unconcerned. NASA published its billion-dollar dream study for Project Cyclops the same year. In 1972, Boston University held a symposium entitled “Life Beyond Earth and the Mind of Man.” The subject was communication and the results of contact with extraterrestrials. A slightly less naïve Carl Sagan said: “It is now OK to talk about life elsewhere or intelligent life elsewhere, whereas a decade or two ago it was not OK.” And it was especially not okay to speak about life elsewhere unless that elsewhere was a very long distance off (as Sagan himself had found out).

The year 1972 was not really much different vis-à-vis the academic paradigm-setters than 1962 on that account.

Still, Bracewell, the SETI maverick, persisted. In *The Galactic Club* (1974), he dedicated Chapter 8 to the simple proposition: Why would you limit yourself to the intermittent long-time delayed deficiencies of radio messages if you could send a messenger? Back into the discussion came the alien probe and its repetitions of radio signals (LDEs).

Ronald Bracewell

Bracewell thought that

looking for and communicating with such a probe was a better way of letting “them” know that we were ready to join the Galactic Club. The fact that science fiction writer Duncan Lunan wrote, that same year, the book *Man and the Stars: Contact and Communication with Other Intelligence*, based upon the idea that he had already decoded space signals and knew where visiting aliens (or their technology) were from, could not have helped Bracewell’s attempt to get his idea taken seriously, in public at least.

As the 1970s pushed on, the SETI crowd got academia into lockstep about radio signals. There were lots of ET civilizations out there—way out there—but there are no probes, no signals yet, and, for goodness sake, nothing that sounded like a UFO. Although the SETIans seem to have a limitless tolerance for “no anything” (very much including their own “no data”), others had less patience (and rigidity). One of the best was and is Robert Freitas.

FREITAS: 1980

He is one of the few persons who can be considered a member of the SETI community who is willing to read everything, actually think about it, and remember what has been done. Especially, he read Bracewell. And he read about LDEs. In 1980 he wrote the article “Interstellar Probes: A New Approach to SETI,” in the noncrusty, out of the academic mainstream, *Journal of the British Interplanetary Society*, the place to go if you can’t stand the intellectual claustrophobia of typical science journals. (Note that they recently published a paper about UFOs by Deardorff, Haisch, Maccabee, and Puthoff.) Referring to Bracewell probes and LDEs, Freitas questioned the restricted categories of things funded by the in-group of SETI:

The imbalance of funding and effort appears to derive from the natural techno-chauvinistic perspectives held by many radioastronomers doing research in this field. Since mankind now has the technical expertise to send out radio messages, the traditional argument goes, then must not ETs as well find radio the optimum medium for interstellar communication? Beacon searches frequently are justified on the grounds that such signals are all we are capable of looking for at this time. Fortunately, this simply is not the case.

He proceeds to make economic, political, and sociological guesses about what a space-exploring advanced civilization would be all about and concludes, “Probes are better” (than radio beams). At this point he is doubtless on the verge of being persona non grata at any SETI party, but at



Robert Freitas

least he ensures us that he does *not* countenance UFOs. He, therefore, becomes the awkward guest who will not leave, whereas we ufologists will never be allowed in by the Right Thinking bouncer in the first place.

He goes on to propose a balanced (including funding) approach to SETI. He briefly lists two dozen SETI approaches. These include exploration of moons, asteroids, and planets for alien artifacts, transmitters, landed probes—not *UFOs*, though, *nope, not them*. Nine of the strategies are of this type.

Another group of seven methods is to look closely at the Earth-Moon gravity-well libration points for parked alien artifacts, probes, etc., but *not UFOs, no way*. And there is one strategy for “looking for evidence of incoming fusion-braking rockets, solar sails, interstellar ramjet plumes, laser push-beam backlighting, or relic corner reflectors” (and, of course, hope like hell that they don’t have any *UFOs* on board!).

I rather like Robert Freitas. He’s doing what he can to turn SETI into a sensible research program. It’s too bad that the intellectual climate is so stultifying. What I also notice throughout this whole story is this: Wherever there comes a bit of data, it points to (a) extraterrestrial intelligence as a real possibility, and usually (b) close by. Seventeen of Freitas’s ideas involve searches in the solar system, about 10 of which are right on top of us (Moon distance or less). Why not add one more approach—UFO research? Oh, sorry. Lost my head for a moment there.

JACKSON AND HOHmann, PART TWO

In the first part of this article I presented the straight-up SETI-based part of the Jackson and Hohmann story (which allowed the whole signals-from-space issue to flow in a fairly uncluttered manner), but I should now integrate the UFO side. Let’s return, then, to our two heroes.

Robert E. Hohmann was a scientific and engineering writer at IBM’s facility in Kingston, New York. Sometime, apparently in the 1950s, he met fellow employee C. D. Jackson, and they discovered they had mutual interests. Jackson was a senior IBM engineer who worked in Alabama. They were both interested in space flight, SETI, and UFOs. They were described by author John Fuller as “deeply involved in work on the space program.” New York is the proper place for a science writer to be located. And, although I have to guess, the only reasonable place in Alabama for a spaceflight engineer was Huntsville. So Jackson was most likely surrounded by Redstone rockets, news of Russian satellites, and the likes of Wernher von Braun in his daily work.

When Hohmann and Jackson tuned into one another’s interests, they jointly attended Astronautics Society and American Rocket Society meetings. The two knew about NICAP and respected Donald Keyhoe’s work. I would be willing to wager that one or both subscribed to NICAP’s *UFO Investigator*. I make this conjecture because they



Betty and Barney Hill

wrote to Keyhoe to request a luncheon meeting with him in early October 1961, while they were preparing their paper for the Rocket Society meeting the next year.

There are several things that could have drawn them to the UFO phenomenon. In 1955, Hermann Oberth came to the United States and worked with Wernher von Braun in Huntsville for three years. Both previous to and after his years in Huntsville, Oberth had given talks and written papers in which he expressed the opinion that the flying disks were of extraterrestrial origin, and that the two most likely stars from which they might originate were Tau Ceti and Epsilon Eridani. There are the two stars chosen later (in 1959) by Su-Shu Huang as the most likely extraterrestrial habitations, and by Frank Drake to eavesdrop on in Project Ozma. They were also, you will recall, the two stars that Hohmann and Jackson found to be at the proper distance for their 11-light year turn-around signals.

In 1956, Capt. W. J. Hull and his copilot had an in-flight UFO encounter nearly over Huntsville (at Mobile), which received lots of attention. In early 1959, another spectacular aircraft encounter occurred over Pennsylvania (the Killian/Dee affair), which prompted a Huntsville missile expert to say at an engineering society meeting: “I know they are not from here, and they are not coming from Russia. We in this civilization are not that advanced yet.”

And in 1961, another Huntsville engineer suggested that we should send interstellar probes to the nearest stars, whereupon the probe was instructed to jam their radio signals. Why? To bring attention to itself and whatever message we would wish to communicate. In other words, he was suggesting a Bracewell probe radio-responder (*à la* the Cosmic Repeater hypothesis) in reverse.

Clearly, Huntsville was fairly boiling over with extraterrestrial ideas. And if Hohmann and Jackson were reading Keyhoe and NICAP, they were getting things like “Yale professor says aliens may be observing us,” or “Signals from unknown satellite picked up at Lockheed tracking station,” or “Akron-Canton satellite tracking group spots UFO fol-

lowing Vanguard." With all this rolling around in their minds, Hohmann and Jackson ran into Betty and Barney Hill! How did *that* happen?

Betty and Barney had their abduction experience on the evening of September 18–19, 1961. She read a Keyhoe book (the same one that got Oberth started, by the way) and wrote him with a shadow of their tale on September 26. On October 4 or 5, Hohmann and Jackson came to Washington for the 12th International Astronautical Congress and lunched with Keyhoe. Their heads were full of ET-enthusiasm and he showed them Betty's letter. As the experience was described as a CE3 (in today's terminology), they were intrigued. Keyhoe promised to keep them informed.

Walter Webb was given the case and called Betty on October 19. Two days later he was in New Hampshire on the job, and by October 26 he had written a lengthy report to NICAP. Keyhoe let Hohmann and Jackson know the status of the investigation, after which they contacted Webb and soon get to read his report. They were wowed and wrote to Betty on November 3, mentioning their UFO interests and their belief that Oberth's views on UFOs were correct. They scheduled a meeting for late November.

Jackson and Hohmann saw Betty and Barney on November 25. The Hills found the two men to be very likable and maintained correspondence with them for several years. During the discussion, Hohmann and Jackson specifically mentioned the star Tau Ceti as a candidate alien home base. Several years later, when Betty went under hypnosis and reconstructed a star map, which she felt she saw inside the craft, it had no star names associated with it. Betty tried on her own to figure which stars match the map and believed that she may have succeeded. Her fit does *not* include Tau Ceti. When Marjorie Fish later reconstructed the star map more empirically, lo and behold, one of the stars *was* Tau Ceti. I wonder what Hohmann and Jackson would have thought of that?

The discussion had two other intriguing aspects that struck the Hills. One was important—vitally so. The other was just mysterious. Significantly, Hohmann and Jackson's questioning brought out the fact that the Hills' episode had missing time, which led to the whole abduction drama later unlocked by the hypnosis sessions of Dr. Simon. And the rest is History, with a capital H.

The mysterious point is that Hohmann and Jackson were very interested in whether there were nitrates and nitrate-containing chemicals in the car. This came up more than once. They said, as the Hills recollected a few years later, that the question had something to do with rural UFO cases and several persons having nitrates or fertilizers involved. This made no sense to Barney and Betty, who had no special scientific training, but frankly, it makes no sense to me with my chemistry and biochemistry degrees. What in the world did Hohmann and Jackson think they knew, and what were they fishing for?

Any overt nosing around for chemicals sounds like a probe for a toxic syndrome of some kind, to me. Nitrates are

toxic but not usually as some quick, acute attack (at least the common inorganic nitrate salts which might be inhaled at low levels in dust, for example). *Fertilizers* have rarely been accused of danger except when they overload the water supply and cause "dead zones" (like we are now experiencing in the Gulf of Mexico due to run-off from the Mississippi River). *Pesticides* have often been accused of acute effects, especially if they are some of the organophosphates (like the insecticide Parathion, which has a single nitrate group attached to a larger organic molecule). But even if our IBM guys lumped "pesticide" and "fertilizer" together, it's way too early for them to know about the effect of organophosphates on the central nervous system, I think.

So what were they looking for? I don't know, of course. My primary hypothesis is that they didn't either, but had heard something rumored. But I have a wild idea, which takes a lot of liberal interpretation, so much so that I'm sure I'm wrong, but let's toss it on the table anyway.

Here's what you have to give me: (a) the nitrates business made so little sense to Betty and Barney that they couldn't clearly recall it in detail four or five years later when Fuller asked about it; (b) Betty, our wonderful synthesizer of bits and pieces in search of a solution, added "fertilizer" into the story, and with that, farmers; (c) what Hohmann and Jackson were *really* asking about were nitrates found in or around the car.

Why would they ask *that*? These guys are spacecraft propulsion aficionados, so they just might have been wondering what would happen if you turned on a big spacecraft engine right near the ground. What would it do to the air? Would it, especially if it were electromagnetic, activate air molecules, particularly nitrogen? Activated nitrogen would then combine with oxygen to form a suite of nitrogen oxides, most of which would react with water to produce nitric acid, and, ultimately, nitrates.

And, since you're humoring me: The nitric acid (though very dilute) might explain the high acidity areas that chemist Phyllis Budinger recently found when she analyzed the damaged, stained areas on Betty's dress from the experience. And, could Hohmann and Jackson have been wondering whether nitrous oxide ("laughing gas") could have contributed to Barney's laughing hysteria as he ran back to the car to get away?

Maybe even more interesting to them, could the activated nitrogen have produced a powdery mist of dinitrogen pentoxide, which is a white solid until it gets to a fairly warm temperature (30° C.), when it combines with water to create an acidic solution that can give mild burns at dilute concentrations. Hmm. Shades of Delphos, Kansas? Or even Angel hair?

Well, I appreciate your indulgence. All this reminds me that on November 8, 1961, an object flew over a farm in Chadron, Nebraska, and left a film of very fine fibers, which then disappeared. It was a "filmy deposit on Goff Farm," the newsclip reported. Had to have been a coincidence, of course. ♦

MYSTERY CLOUDS AND THE UFO CONNECTION

BY HERBERT S. TAYLOR

The following account is entirely in the words of the reporting witness. June 25, 1998, Cleveland, Ohio:

I was in the basement of our home, it was afternoon, about 2 p.m., when I heard frantic calling from the backyard from my wife and kids. I rushed up and out into the yard where the kids were pointing straight up. I looked up to see what I considered balloons, I'm saying at least eight. They moved from straight overhead to a large, very large cloud. From overhead to the cloud's position would be 45 degrees. The children were screaming men in black repeatedly (it occurs to me now they didn't see it as balloons). As the spheres, or balls, which were extremely white, reached the cloud they separated equally to each side and entered one by one. During this I held my hand up to this cloud that was at 45 degrees, and its width was wider than my hand at arm's length. The balls were the size of my fingernails. It made me consider that if one of those things were near us it would have been the size of our two-car garage. Then after realizing the balls seemed to pause and enter the cloud one by one, I found a different interest to see what would happen next. Balloons I thought would act randomly, so we all waited for them to exit the cloud at some time somewhere. We watched the cloud and followed it to the horizon as far as we could possibly see, but they never emerged. Also, the cloud seemed to have accelerated once the balls got inside. It had an eastward heading. (National UFO Reporting Center)

Mystery clouds and unidentified objects! This intriguing report is typical of many that comprise this particular phenomenon. Unidentified objects (usually discoid in shape) are seen to enter or exit the peculiar cloud, with those entering rarely seen to emerge from it. Because of the nature of these sightings, there is in my view good reason to assume

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that they represent Cloud Cigar events (see my articles in *IUR* on satellite objects, Spring and Summer 2004), with the primary object entirely enveloped in a gaseous or vaporous cloud. This conjecture is further supported by the fact that there are sightings where the primary object has been seen either to emerge from the cloud or totally immerse itself in it.

Why the cloud? Is it perhaps a form of camouflage? Or, instead, maybe an atmospheric reaction to a particular type of propulsion system? While either possibility (or both) might be the answer, the truth is that we simply don't know. Both of these possibilities suggest that an intelligence of some type is involved (as opposed to an unknown natural atmospheric phenomenon), though at the present time the nature of that intelligence remains mysterious.

Important to note is the fact that mystery cloud reports are not solely characterized by either the release, absorption, or both, of secondary objects. There are those where a large object (either of the cigar or discoid variety) is seen to either enter or leave one of these odd clouds. These events, too, are part of the Cloud/UFO connection. Additionally, there are reports of equally strange clouds where no associated UFO(s) is involved. Whether or not these are connected to the UFO phenomenon remains uncertain, but in any event they are not part of the present discussion.

Could there be a prosaic explanation for these Cloud/UFO reports? Might perhaps ordinary clouds (e.g., cumulus clouds) seen under unusual lighting conditions play a major role in these events? When one considers the overall rather bizarre nature of these occurrences, this possibility would appear to be most unlikely. What about more unusual cloud types, such as lenticular and noctilucent clouds? These clouds are quite high in the atmosphere, which makes viewing conditions unfavorable (and lenticular clouds typically occur only in mountainous terrain). Nor do they have a shape that matches that reported in these sightings. Other possible explanations, such as aircraft contrails, ball lightning, and meteoritic ionization trails, are even more unlikely.

Let's now take a look at some of the more impressive reports that clearly illustrate what the Cloud/UFO connection is all about.

ONE FROM THE PAST

On the evening of a late winter day in 1847, a rather extraordinary event occurred in Highbury, Greater London, England, 100 years before Kenneth Arnold. The account appeared in "Meteoric Stones," *Littell's Living Age* 56, no. 717 (February 20, 1858): 503, which was itself an extract from the *British Quarterly Review*. We have UFO researcher Rod Brock to thank for providing us with an interesting account. The details were provided by an unnamed woman, one of two witnesses to this fascinating event.

On the evening of Friday, March 19, [1847], A. and I left Albion road, [Holloway], about half-past eight. Not any stars were then visible, but when we were in Highbury-place, A. called my attention to what we thought a fire-balloon ascending slowly. It was in the west, a little inclining to the south. As it passed on slowly to the west, its intense brilliance convinced me that it was not an earthly thing. When it appeared to be over Hampstead (but as high in the heavens as the sun is at six o'clock in the evening when the days are longest) it shot forth several fiery coruscations, and whilst we were gazing at it broke into an *intensely* radiant cloud: this cloud sailed on slowly, and we never took our eyes off it. At this time the stars were shining. When we were in the gravel path opposite to Highbury-terrace, the cloud was higher in the heavens and more to the west. It cast a most brilliant light on the houses there, brighter than moonlight, and unlike any light I ever saw. It appeared of a blue tint on the bricks, but there was no *blue* light in the cloud itself. Suddenly, over the radiant cloud appeared another cloud *still* more brilliant, but I now felt so awe-struck, that I cannot say precisely how long they hung one over the other before the most wonderful sight happened. Perhaps they remained so for two or three minutes, when from the upper cloud a small fiery ball (about the size that the largest planets appear to the naked eye) dropped into the lower cloud, and was instantly absorbed. Soon after, another similar ball dropped from the upper to the lower cloud and then a ball apparently four or five times the size of the two preceding, fell from one cloud to the other, in the same wonderful way. Shortly after this both clouds disappeared, apparently absorbed in the heavens, though I did see a few particles of the brilliant clouds floating about for a minute or so. Presently the moon appeared, considerably to the northward of the place where the clouds had hung. We then saw the bright light across the heavens, which you told me was zodiacal light, which lasted for more than an hour.

THE DRURY AFFAIR

This very intriguing cloud report has the unique distinction of being the only known incident of this type where much of

what transpired was captured on film. It is also mired in some controversy, particularly as concerns the handling and disposition of the film by the authorities. Attempts by some to explain the event as a missile firing have failed to shed any further light about what occurred on August 23, 1953, at Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. The primary witness was Mr. T. P. Drury of the Department of Civil Aviation at Melbourne, Australia, who at the time of this event was Director of Civil Aviation in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, stationed at Port Moresby. He had flown 32 types of aircraft and had made a specialty of meteorological phenomena. Drury provided a detailed account of what occurred that fateful day.

I was standing on the coast road overlooking the flying boat base at Port Moresby with my wife and children. It was about 11 a.m. The weather was perfectly clear and cloudless. Even the summits of the Owen Stanley Range were clear, which is unusual. I was engaged in taking a movie photo of a native boy spearing a fish. I was not looking at the sky. My wife noticed a wisp of cloud suddenly appear in the blue sky from nowhere and start to build up rapidly into a white puff. She called out to draw my attention to it. I watched it rapidly build up into a thick white mass of cumulus. There were no other clouds in the sky and there seemed nothing to account for it. Being very interested in meteorological phenomena, I decided to take a film of it. So I rotated the turret of my French-made movie camera to bring the telephoto lens into position, and started to film the cloud.

Suddenly an object like a silver dart shot out of the cloud. It was elongated in shape like a bullet. It subtended about one inch at arm's length. It was metallic and flashed in the sun. It was very clear-cut, sharp in front but apparently truncated behind. Though the tail may have been hidden by the vapor trail. No wings or fins were visible. It shot out of the cloud upwards at an angle of about 45 degrees. It was traveling at an immense speed at least five times as fast as a jet plane traveling at the speed of sound.

It never slackened speed or changed direction, but simply faded upwards into the blue and its vapor faded after it. It was gone in a few seconds. The vapor trail was very clear-cut, dense, white and billowing. It is visible in the remaining portion of the film still in my possession. [Mr. Drury claims that when the film was returned to him after being sent to America and other countries, the best frames had been cut out, and the remainder shows only the cloud and the vapor trail.]

In spite of the supersonic speed and the comparative nearness of the object, there was no sound whatever.

I was greatly concerned about the appearance of such an extraordinary aircraft in the sky, and, without telling anyone, I drove straight to Jackson Airport, and checked with the Air Traffic Control. There were no unusual aircraft out, only a DC-3 and the usual D.D.4 expected from Australia, and possibly a small aircraft or two.

I then reported the sighting to the R.A.A.F., but they were unable to account for it. Later, I sent them the film, which was sent all around the world, but no one could explain the object and it was pronounced "Unknown"....

This report is carried in Blue Book files as "Insufficient Data." (*A.P.R.O. Bulletin*, July 1961; Thomas M. Olsen, ed., *The Reference for Outstanding UFO Sighting Reports*, 1966; Australian UFO researcher Bill Chalker)

ODD CLOUDS IN TEXAS AND CONNECTICUT

In August 1973, something very strange was seen over San Antonio, Texas. This comes through vividly in the words of the primary witness.

It was a warm summer night in August (somewhere between the 3rd and 6th) 1973, when my 4 children and I were out in our yard watching the stars in the sky.

The sky was so unusually clear. Soon two very perfect cumulus clouds moved into our view above us. Really perfect clouds, like a Disney drawing. There were many other clouds far away on the horizon. But these clouds were separated by ample spaces of black, star-splattered sky, and were very close to us. As we were observing this beautiful sight, a huge, perfectly round, very huge sphere started slowly inching its way out of the topside of the cloud on our left. It had a green glow to it like a radium numbered watch. I thought it was the moon until my oldest child pointed out that the moon was to the west, and as I remember it was not a full moon.

Before long there was lightning in those clouds. But it never went to the ground. After a while the lightning started going back and forth between those two clouds, across the star-splattered space between the clouds, and all the while that sphere was slipping out of that cloud till it was almost completely out. Glowing steadily, not a flicker but that steady greenish glow. I thought it might be a weather balloon until that very active lightning that was dancing from cloud to cloud struck the sphere and red sparks flew out in all directions at the point of contact. Then the sphere started retreating back into the cloud where it came from, and it took as much time to retreat as it took to emerge before, till it disappeared back into that cloud completely.

All this took about 35 to 40 minutes to happen. But the strangest thing that I can remember is that those clouds stopped moving in the sky until the whole episode played out. Then the clouds moved on. I told my brother, who was in the Air Force at the time, and he made such fun of me, I never talked about it again . . . What did we see? (National UFO Reporting Center)

In October 1973, a rather puzzling event took place in the Connecticut sky. The testimony of the reporting witness leaves no doubt as to the weird nature of what transpired. It

occurred on approximately October 10 in Niantic, at about 7:00 p.m.

My father, mother, sister and I had just finished dinner. When my sister, who left the table first, went to the front of the house, yelled suddenly "Mom, Dad—look out over the lake." When we heard that, we rose from the table and looked out the kitchen windows. We observed two saucer-shaped objects over the boat landing area, which was located approximately one-quarter of a mile away. They had a light green aura. My sister and I ran out behind the house and up the hill to observe from a better vantage point. When we turned back around to look at the objects, we noticed a third object over the water of the lake, which appeared to be approximately three hundred to three hundred and fifty yards away. Its appearance was that of a sphere of approximately ten yards in diameter that was glowing from within with an intense, pure, bright white light which reflected off the water and tree tops. The third craft moved slowly in a southeasterly direction at approximately five miles per hour, crossing from the water onto the land and above the trees. Meanwhile, our attention was recaptured by the two saucer-shaped objects. While my sister and I were observing the craft and concentrating on them intently, I noticed that cloud-like formations appeared flanking the objects. Both craft then seemed to move within the cloud-like formations. One of the objects and its accompanying cloud-like formation faded from sight over a period of approximately five to seven seconds. The other cloud-like formation was at this point still visible. Shortly after the first cloud disappeared, the remaining vessel emerged halfway from the cloud-like formation, as if to be playing "peek-a-boo." Then I suddenly felt a shiver throughout my entire body, and began wondering where the first craft had disappeared to, and if it were behind me. I turned to look and there was nothing there. That was when I realized that I was dealing with something beyond my experience! We both ran back down the hill and into the house. When we looked back out the window, there was nothing there. (National UFO Reporting Center)

AND ONE FROM INDIA

To illustrate that this aspect of the UFO phenomenon is global in nature, we can consider a very puzzling event that occurred April 20, 1980, over Hyderabad, India. The witness testimony speaks for itself.

It was a hot Indian summer evening. My girlfriend, her two brothers and I had come back to her home about 8:30 p.m. after swimming at the club pool. We joined her parents and an older sister on their front lawn drinking lemonade. Her dad was a retired Lt. Col. from the Indian army and a Japanese prisoner of war. At about 9:00 p.m. one of her brothers points out, "Look at

that funny shaped cloud forming." We all looked up and over their house at an angle of about 45 degrees a church bell shaped cloud was forming. It would have been about 2-3000 feet altitude and lit by the city lights. There was no other cloud in the sky. We would have been looking south and the final size of the bell shaped cloud would have been 3-4 cm across at arms length. The domestic airport would have been southwest and as the crow flies about 10 km away. It did not move or appear to be affected by high winds as clouds are. We all soon carried on with our conversation till a few minutes later the brother breaks in saying, "look what the cloud is doing now." We all look up again and just below the bell shaped cloud three smaller clouds form, all bell shaped, evenly spaced, and about half the size of the original. They formed an equilateral triangle shape in the sky. Soon the three smaller clouds merged with the large one, formed a bright orange ball bright enough to throw a shadow off the roof near us. It shot off at great speed downwards towards the airport with no sound, and when it seemed above the airport to us it accelerated upwards splitting into four smaller orange balls of light vanishing into the night sky. We were all spellbound. We were sure it was a UFO.

The duration of this sighting was 15 minutes. The local newspaper reported the event the following morning with the headline "Strange Lights seen over City," suggesting that many others witnessed this strange aerial sight. However, the following day the same paper reported, "Army said they were testing new rockets." This attempted explanation is rather dubious considering that it would be most unlikely that the military would be testing new rockets over a major city. (National UFO Reporting Center)

OTHER REPORTS DULY NOTED

July 30, 1952, Alexandria, Indiana, 1:10 p.m. Stated Mrs. George Vaught: "I saw a strange-looking cloud, and called my two teen-age daughters, Laura and Phyllis, and Mrs. Laura Oliver to the yard. While we were looking up in the sky we saw six strange, flat-like objects streak across the cloud, merge together and then disappear. They looked like aluminum. The whole thing happened in a minute. It was a strange sight and there was no sound." (*Alexandria Times-Tribune*, July 31, 1952)

June 17, 1953, Galveston, Texas, 7:30 a.m. Stated the reporting witness: "It had been my habit before I opened my place of business each morning to do my early morning fishing. This one particular morning I had just finished my fishing, [so] it was time to leave. As I walked up the stairway of the seawall I noticed a group of people looking upward. I glanced upward and saw this huge Cigar shaped craft. It had apparently come in off the Gulf of Mexico. The size I estimate to be approximately 300 feet long. It was extremely low. I estimate it to be no higher than 150 feet. It had no

windows, made no noise, no apparent means of propulsion, no type of emission. It moved very slowly. One of the people in the crowd nudged me and said, 'Am I seeing what I think I am seeing?' After which I replied, 'yes you are.' This craft moved about a block away, made its own cloud, and disappeared. The weather was a perfectly clear day." (National UFO Reporting Center)

March 16, 1967, Belvidere, New Jersey. Witness Beryl Dux:

[In] the evening . . . I went outside at about 7:00 o'clock. I noticed two white vertical objects which I thought were strange looking clouds. I called my sister Olive . . . to look. She came immediately. As we watched, suddenly an object glowing dull orange came out of the white object on the right. It was spinning rapidly and coming straight down, growing much larger in appearance. We were badly frightened and ran inside. However, we did see the object go back and seem to vanish into the white object from which it came. We watched from inside and gradually the white object on the right appeared to merge with the white object on the left and both seemed to vanish gradually.

Approximately October 25, 1988, Miami, Florida. "My wife and I [were] on our balcony terrace. She was 22 and I was 31. Around five in the morning. The sky was clear. No clouds except only one small dark cloud in the center of the sky. Then appear 3 lights in our vision focus (I mean behind buildings) . . . from west to east, with erratic movement. They were not airplanes. No sound. Very fast pace, and erratic up and down movements. Two of the lights were rounded, and the third was like a cigarette. The three lights were yellow. The rare thing was the three went behind the only cloud in the sky, and then disappeared. I mean, the lights did not go out from that cloud. We stand there for about 30 more minutes to see if the lights go out, but the lights never go out from that cloud in the center of the sky." (National UFO Reporting Center)

Approximately October 15, 1992, Lubbock, Texas, 6:00 p.m. "We noticed a single cloud in the sky. The cloud disappeared, and the cigar shaped object could be seen. The object moved close enough to see windows on the object. The color seemed to be a little grey, and I didn't see any lights. It had no wings, but could move rather fast. The fog/cloud started to reappear again, and the object disappeared. We watched the object about 20 minutes before it disappeared. The next day I called the nearest Air Force Base to report it. They made me feel like I was crazy reporting this." (National UFO Reporting Center)

June 3, 1993, in-flight north of Los Angeles, California, about 6:00 p.m. "15 minutes into a flight from LAX as a passenger at dusk, we had just leveled out above the clouds about 30,000 feet, and though the sun was setting, the sky above the clouds was clear and bright. Movement caught my eye and I turned to look behind me (I have wide peripheral

(continued on page 26)

JUST FOR FUN: THE TRIVIAL STUFF THAT LEGENDS ARE MADE OF

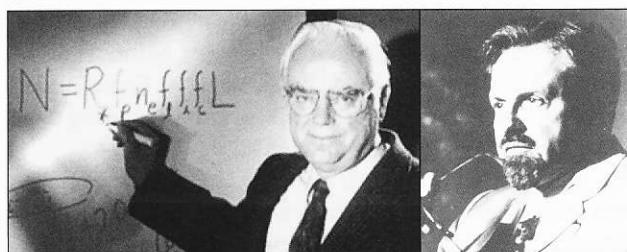
BY MICHAEL D. SWORDS

Let's see how good a legend starter you are. See if you can match the famous personages in the list below (1–10) with the real (trivial?) facts in the second list (A–J).

1. Isaac Asimov: Famous science fiction writer and UFO skeptic.
2. Edward Condon: Head of the Colorado UFO project.
3. Frank Drake: Developed the Drake Equation of SETI fame.
4. J. Allen Hynek: Our mysterious godfather.
5. Donald Menzel #1: Leading scientific skeptic.
6. Donald Menzel #2: Head of Harvard astronomy.
7. H. P. Robertson: Led the infamous Robertson Panel.
8. Gene Roddenberry: Inventor of *Star Trek*.
9. Carl Sagan: Billions and billions of skeptical remarks.
10. Winfield Salisbury: Menzel's colleague in many of his scientific money-making schemes.

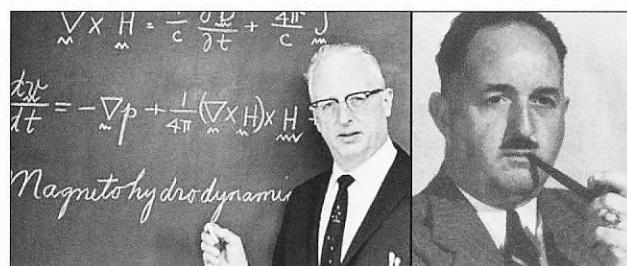


Isaac Asimov, Gene Roddenberry, Ed Condon

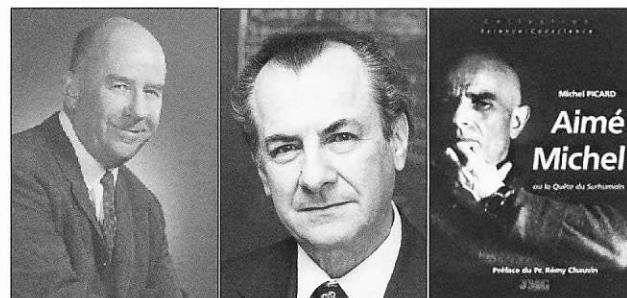


Frank Drake, J. Allen Hynek

Michael D. Swords is professor emeritus of the Environmental Institute, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo.



Donald Menzel, H. P. Robertson



Winfield Salisbury, Gérard de Vaucouleurs, Aimé Michel

A. With famous astronomer Gérard deVaucouleurs, he secretly visited Aimé Michel in France to discuss the hoard of CE3 cases in the 1954 wave.

B. Was the roommate of Edward Condon when they were on a security-related scientific study mission to Europe, pre-WWII. Condon gave a eulogy at his funeral.

C. Was in the hills outside White Sands Military Reservation central base when a certain object crashed near Roswell, New Mexico.

D. In a private conversation with David Jacobs, Michael Swords, and Marcello Truzzi, he said to Jacobs: "This phenomenon that you're studying [UFO abductions], I don't believe that it's extraterrestrial, but it is certainly worthy of research."

E. Was the head of the National Bureau of Standards, the prime metals and materials test facility in the U.S., when a little ol' thing crashed by Roswell.

F. Wrote to Allen Hynek: "The current issue of *Astronomy* [Terence Dickinson on the Betty Hill star map] seems to supply me with something I have been demanding—something other than eyewitness testimony. It has

shaken me up considerably."

G. After WWII, he worked for the Army Air Force as an aircraft crash investigator during the time period when a little ol' thing crashed near Roswell.

H. Was over drinking with H. P. Robertson at a party at a California physicist's home, when Robertson got a little tipsy, excused himself, and drove down the road into an accident, from which he later died.

I. Despite continual skeptical remarks, he showed an

intense interest in UFO reports throughout his career, often sneaking out anonymously to do field research on cases near him.

J. Was chief scientist at the VARO Corporation when they received the strangely marked-up copy of Morris Jessup's *The Case for the UFO* from the U.S. Navy. VARO decided to publish a limited edition of it, and thus began the whole Carlos Allende and Philadelphia Experiment saga.

Answers on page 26! ♦

BOOK REVIEW

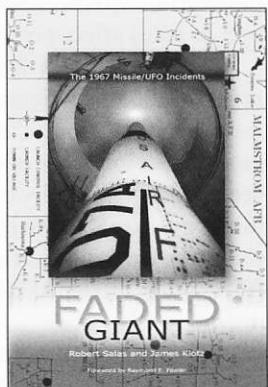
Robert Salas and James Klotz, *Faded Giant*. North Charleston, S.C.: BookSurge, 2005. 153p. \$17.99.

We need more books like this in ufology, ones that report on important cases with undeniable physical effects. In this instance, those physical effects involve the failure of up to 20 Minuteman ICBM missiles in Montana in March 1967 near Malmstrom Air Force Base. The U.S. Air Force investigated the incident, but its conclusions, if any, remain classified.

Minuteman missiles, along with submarine-launched ballistic missiles, were the front line of our policy of mutually assured destruction (MAD) vis-à-vis the Soviets. These missile installations were heavily secured and controlled and operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Any operational problems that occurred were serious business.

Robert Salas, the lead author, served as a missile launch officer in the Minuteman program. He was a participant in the events he and veteran ufologist James Klotz describe in this book. Salas offers insight and reports details that would be impossible without being on the inside. The two also did extensive original research, conducted FOIA requests for documents, and located some of the surviving airmen and civilians involved in the events.

Briefly, on the night of March 16, 1967, several UFOs were seen in the vicinity of Minuteman missile silos in central Montana. Salas was at a Launch Control Facility, where the status of several missiles was continuously monitored. As the sightings were reported, very quickly about 10 missiles went into a "no go" condition, unable to be fired. Inexplicably, the missiles, at widely separated locations, had shut down; it was quickly determined that the cause was not a power failure or some other obvious or known problem. Then, either the next morning, or shortly afterwards (memories differ on this), another 10 or so missiles failed at the time of other UFO sightings, again in central Montana but at different silos.



This was, indeed, serious business. Salas and others were debriefed and told that the incident was to be considered highly classified. The UFO angle, though, was not much mentioned, and neither Salas nor other crew members recalled being asked about the UFO sightings, which he rightly finds odd. There was a clear intent on the part of higher ups to not include UFOs with the shutdowns, despite the obvious coincidence of sightings near and over the missile silos when the failures occurred.

The Air Force asked the Boeing Company, the principal support contractor for the Minuteman system, to conduct an investigation. Although Salas and Klotz have been unable to obtain the official report prepared on the incidents, they did acquire official unit histories that are quite detailed and contain many important technical details. In summary, after months of investigation, the team was unable to explain what caused the shutdowns, although they did determine where the fault occurred.

As the team was preparing its final report, they were told by an Air Force representative *not* to submit a final engineering report, and therefore not to have their work reviewed by the relevant offices in the Air Force. This was highly unusual, even more so because the Air Force had expressed grave concern over the shutdowns immediately afterwards. The clear implication is that the Air Force did not want these final details on the record about this crucial UFO incident that could directly affect national security.

The Air Force had previous experience with Minuteman missiles and UFOs. Only seven months earlier, in neighboring North Dakota, several UFOs were seen at Minuteman installations near Minot AFB. Although missiles were not affected in these events, communications were disrupted between a Launch Control Facility and the Command Post, and with a mobile Security Alert Team. And later, in the mid-1970s, the Air Force would have additional cause for concern when UFOs were seen over a number of Strategic Air Command bases and missile installations in several northern states, including sites by Malmstrom AFB again.

Surprisingly (or perhaps not, given what we know about the government and UFO sightings), Salas and his fellow crew members were never told about the results of the investigation into the missile shutdowns. Thus, it is unclear

(continued on page 27)

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND UFOs

BY MARK RODEGHIER

There has been much interest over the years in whether belief in UFOs could somehow be construed as, fundamentally, a type of religious belief—not, however, much interest among those of us actually studying UFOs, but instead much speculation by skeptics, debunkers, and some social scientists who consider UFO beliefs to be unwarranted and unsupported by the evidence.

If an opinion can't be justified by data, then it remains just that, an opinion, as opposed to a statement of fact. For example, it is a fact, not my opinion, that there has been about the same number of highway deaths in the United States for the past 10 years, as this type of information is very carefully recorded (see www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/TSFAnn/2003HTMLTSF/TSF2003.htm for a detailed report). If, instead, I claim that increased seat belt use has been the major cause of the relatively constant number of deaths (because otherwise deaths should have risen, all things being equal, since the number of vehicles on the road has increased), that is my opinion or belief. Although I might have evidence based on various research studies, it will remain a belief until there is some definitive evidence (which is difficult to come by in such matters since there are many factors that influence deaths in accidents).

Applying this same reasoning to the UFO phenomenon, I know that there are unexplained UFO sightings that have been well investigated and that are truly mysterious and puzzling. That is simply a fact, to my mind and that of many others who are familiar with the UFO evidence. If I then assert that some UFOs were constructed by intelligent beings from another planet, I am now stating a belief, since this second statement cannot be supported nearly as solidly as the first. Many of my colleagues hold the latter belief (I do on alternate Wednesdays), and there is nothing wrong or inappropriate about having a belief about the ultimate origin of some unexplained UFO sightings. First, it is a reasonable deduction based on some of the evidence. Second, science advances, whatever the textbooks claim, based on scientists acting on beliefs they cannot yet support with data.

What causes people to believe certain things, beyond any evidence that may be available? Or what causes people

to pay selective attention to some categories of evidence, while ignoring other categories? These are interesting questions that impinge on all areas of life, of both practical and theoretical importance. Social psychologists and sociologists have studied such questions endlessly and have much knowledge on the subject. One special area of interest for the latter group is how demographic factors (such as gender, age, or race) affect people's attitudes.

A general factor that can be a powerful predictor of many attitudes is religion, measured with such concepts as religious affiliation (Catholic, Jew, Buddhist, etc.), religious behavior (how often one prays or attends religious services), and intensity of religious beliefs. We know these things are associated with beliefs about abortion, gay marriage, and even political choices, among many other things. But are they related to UFO beliefs or those about extraterrestrial intelligence?

That is a question that has occupied the minds of several scholars and also some skeptics. These skeptics think that belief in UFOs is a substitute for religious belief and, therefore, belief in UFOs is a form of religion. As an aside, they don't usually make the same critique of SETI researchers, even though many of that crowd expects some form of salvation from humanity's woes when (if?) we make contact with extraterrestrials. (I can tell you, as a realist, that I certainly don't expect any such thing, whether we detect a signal from ET or they land here on Earth; see Spielberg's *War of the Worlds* if you have any doubts.)

Among those scholars with an interest in religion and unconventional attitudes, William Sims Bainbridge stands out for his prolific work, his wide-ranging interests, and his knowledge of religion. He is one of the foremost scholars of religion and publishes regularly in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, the leading journal in the field. He has studied science fiction and its fans, and he has edited a volume on the New Age, as unconventional attitudes began to be labeled in the 1970s. In this article, I will report on his most recent research in this area, his findings on UFO beliefs and religion (see the article "After the New Age," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 43:3 (2004), 381–394).



Bainbridge

Mark Rodeghier is scientific director of the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies.

DO YOU BELIEVE IN UFOs?

There is no such thing as a general “belief in UFOs,” no matter how simplistically some people wish to treat the matter. When I am asked this question in radio and TV interviews, my response is that the study of UFOs is a *science* and doesn’t involve belief any more than does geology or psychology. I know (not believe) that there is an unexplained, puzzling UFO phenomenon, and I even know some things about it (that most sightings happen at night, that more triangular-shaped objects are seen now rather than disks, or that disk-shaped objects are more likely than others to be involved in cases of vehicle interference). So, no, I don’t *believe* in UFOs.

But there is another fundamental reason why it is inappropriate to ask about belief in UFOs, as such. That seemingly uncomplicated phrasing actually masks a complex set of potential attitudes, none of which are adequately captured by “belief in UFOs.” In other words, asking the question this way obscures more than it clarifies. We can see this by thinking about the various attitudes someone may have about the UFO phenomenon: These include:

- Some UFO sightings are unexplained.
- Some UFO sightings are caused by phenomena unknown to current science.
- Some UFO sightings are caused by ET spaceships.
- Some people are actually abducted by extraterrestrials.
- The U.S. government knows more about UFOs than it has admitted publicly.
- The U.S. government has a crashed UFO in its possession.

These six statements are clearly only a partial listing of possible beliefs about the UFO phenomenon, and many other variants have been used in previous national surveys (see the article “Evolution of Public Opinion on UFOs,” by Robert J. Durant, *IUR*, November/December 1993). Placed in this context, it is not difficult to see the problem with flatly asking people whether they believe in UFOs.

To be fair, when asked the generic “believe in UFOs” question, the intent is often clear: Do you believe that some UFOs are alien spacecraft? Some of us may also have in mind time travelers, extrdimensional beings, or something more bizarre, but most people think ET spacecraft.

I’ve taken this short digression before discussing Bainbridge’s article because it is important to put his work in the proper context. He asked only one question about UFOs and one about extraterrestrial intelligence, so his results formally apply to only those questions.

RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE ON UFO ATTITUDES

How might religion, broadly defined, affect attitudes about the UFO phenomenon? From past research and theory on unconventional beliefs (astrology, Transcendental Meditation, ESP, etc.), Bainbridge develops two opposing hypoth-

eses. First, he says that being involved in standard religions will reduce, or discourage, involvement in what he calls “para-religion” because conventional religion competes with these unconventional beliefs. One must be careful in judging such things to not rely on anecdotal evidence. There are board members of CUFOS, volunteers, and others I know in the field who hold strong religious beliefs. For them, religion can hardly be discouraging a positive attitude about UFOs. The hypothesis is instead based on aggregate results and is statistical in nature: All things being equal, those involved with conventional religion will be less likely to have unconventional beliefs. In my judgment, while this may possibly be true, his evidence justifying the hypothesis is rather weak (but my intent is not to critique his hypotheses, just his findings).

Bainbridge has a second hypothesis, the reverse of the first. As he writes, “Some secular critics of religion would say that both religious faith and the New Age depend on belief in the supernatural. Put more neutrally, both assume a universe in which the world is organized around features of the human personality . . . such as . . . a mystical connection between the self and the cosmos.” Based on this, he proposes that conventional religion may encourage para-religious belief because it supports supernatural assumptions about the nature of mankind and the universe.

Maybe so, but when did attitudes about UFOs rely on supernatural assumptions? I won’t deny that some people see supernatural and mystical elements to the UFO phenomenon, but I don’t believe they are in the majority. And certainly, when I think about UFOs, supernaturalism doesn’t enter the picture. Believing that there are forces beyond our ordinary physical universe, whether it be God or something else, is a variant of supernaturalism. But if UFOs are part and parcel of our universe, just more advanced than us, they are hardly supernatural (although their actions may *seem* supernatural, like disappearing instantly, or passing through walls, as reported in abduction cases).

If you agree with this reasoning, then the conjecture that conventional religion supports a belief in UFOs seems unlikely. And that leaves us with the first hypothesis, that conventional religion discourages UFO belief and involvement. However, since I think the evidence for this is also weak, it becomes difficult to make any predictions about how the two will be related.

Before we turn to Bainbridge’s results, I should remind us that UFO debunkers who come from the position of secular humanism (many in CSICOP are of that persuasion) would take a different position than either ufologists or Bainbridge. They see UFO beliefs and religious beliefs as a manifestation of the same underlying need for meaning in life. You can believe in salvation from God or from UFO beings, but essentially, they argue, it is the same urge that leads to either or both beliefs. Debunkers don’t worry too much about the details or proof of this claim; nor do they try to carefully figure out why many people believe in *both* God and UFOs.

THE RESPONDENTS

Everyone is turning to the Internet, and social scientists are no different. More and more surveys are being done on the Internet, by both university and business researchers, because it costs less, can be done more quickly, and allows more control over how a person completes a questionnaire. Those are all good reasons, but there is a tradeoff. It is hard to get a truly random and representative sample of a population, unless you have a comprehensive list of e-mail addresses. This means that a survey may be quick, cheap, and interesting, but its results may not generalize well beyond those who completed the questionnaire. Still, the temptation to use the Internet is irresistible.

Survey2001 is an example of such a study. It was a worldwide study, sponsored by the National Geographic Society and the National Science Foundation, to learn many things about people, their backgrounds, likes and dislikes, and behaviors. The data can be used for exploratory research to begin an investigation of various hypotheses, and that is exactly what Bainbridge did with his New Age items. There were almost 4,000 English-language respondents who answered the questions about New Age beliefs in Survey2001, and they form the subpopulation for Bainbridge's study. It is worth noting that these people came from a variety of countries, not only the United States.

UFO AND ET BELIEFS

As I noted, Bainbridge asked just two questions (out of 20 total) about UFOs and ETI. They are written as statements to which one can agree or disagree. They were:

Some UFOs (Unidentified Flying Objects) are probably spaceships from other worlds.

Intelligent life probably does not exist on any planet but our own.

He asked two other questions that some might find relevant to the UFO debate, but which I won't use in this article:

Scientifically advanced civilizations, such as Atlantis, probably existed on Earth thousands of years ago.

Perpetual motion machines, anti-gravity devices, and time travel machines are physically impossible.

That last question demonstrates just how easy it is for an experienced social scientist to write a really terrible question. The question is "double-barreled" because it asks about more than one thing. Thus, if you think time travel is possible, but not the other two concepts, you will be confused about how to respond.

People could respond to the questions on a five-point scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Bainbridge found that 22.2% of the respondents said they "agree" or "strongly agree" that UFOs could be spaceships; only 10.4% agreed or strongly agreed that intelligent life probably does not exist elsewhere (note this question was

worded negatively). I'm not surprised by responses to the ET question—most people everywhere think that intelligent life elsewhere must exist—but I am puzzled about the response to the UFO question. We know from past polls that the percentage of people in the U.S. who think UFOs could be alien spaceships is higher than 22%, so why the low support here? Although Bainbridge didn't report on how many respondents came from the U.S. versus other countries, I suspect that this lower percentage is caused by including people from several countries, with widely varying knowledge of the UFO phenomenon and subsequent beliefs about the subject. This adds a further note of caution to our study of his results.

DOES BELIEF MATTER?

Bainbridge had available three measures of religious behavior. One question asked, "How often do you attend religious services?" A second asked, "Within your religious or spiritual tradition, how often do you pray or meditate?" This second item was designed to tap behavior that did not require involvement with organized religion. A third question tried to measure subjective religiousness by asking, "How would you describe yourself?" with responses ranging from "extremely religious" to "extremely nonreligious."

Do any of these three types of religious behavior relate to UFO and ET beliefs? The short answer: No, not much. Bainbridge used a correlation coefficient to make his tests. It has values close to 0 when there is no association between the responses to two questions, and values close to 1 or -1 when there is either a strong positive, or negative, association.

Religious attendance. Religious attendance is essentially uncorrelated to all types of New Age beliefs (ESP, astrology, etc.). Specifically, frequency of attendance has a low negative correlation to belief that some UFOs are spaceships (-.10). While this does support the first hypothesis—that conventional religion will discourage such beliefs—it isn't very strong evidence. Interestingly, agreeing that intelligent life probably doesn't exist elsewhere is *positively* correlated with attendance (.23), and this is the highest correlation of any item.

While we can quibble about what constitutes a "New Age" item, we would be hard pressed to justify a belief in intelligent extraterrestrials as far out or out of the mainstream. Most scientists would agree with this statement, so the association with religious attendance doesn't really provide any support, pro or con, against Bainbridge's two hypotheses. But it is an intriguing finding, and Bainbridge speculates that perhaps "the existence of extraterrestrial civilization[s] would tend to refute biblical notions of the origins of the Earth and its people. Another possibility is . . . that conservative religions tend to be xenophobic, rejecting outsiders in general."

I would agree that these are two possible reasons for the finding, but another is that those who regularly attend religious services differ from those that don't in ways that

Bainbridge didn't measure, and it is those differences that cause the positive association. For example, maybe people who are more frequent churchgoers are more likely to be female, or are older, and these factors are the more influential on belief. If there is one thing I focus on repeatedly in the workshops I teach on statistical analysis, it is that the social world is a complex place with many factors working at once (something that is just common sense, after all). So if you study something with simple models—one thing affects another thing—you can't really say much about *why* these two things are related, or not. (For those who know something about statistics, he didn't control for other relevant variables or construct multivariate models.)

Prayer or meditation. The associations between the New Age items and the frequency of prayer or meditation are slightly positive, but still quite low. The correlation with the UFO item is only .07, which offers the barest possible support for the second of Bainbridge's hypotheses. The correlation with ET belief remains positive, but is now only .13, so those who pray more often are slightly more likely to agree that there isn't intelligent life elsewhere.

Bainbridge then looks at only those respondents who never attend a religious service—the unchurched. Within this subset, the correlation between frequency of prayer and UFO belief is a bit larger, .17. This offers more support for the second hypothesis that religion helps to support a belief in the New Age (although, as I explained just above, I rather think that other forces are at work here). Intriguingly, the correlation between ET belief and frequency of prayer goes close to 0 (actual value of $-.04$) among the unchurched.

The association with the other New Age items becomes greater (on the order of .20 or .30), which means that frequency of prayer is positive correlated with New Age beliefs for those who don't attend religious services. I will let you ponder the meaning of this finding, but simply mention that the association with UFO belief is one of the smallest in magnitude among this group.

Bainbridge had several additional findings, such as how religious denomination is related to New Age beliefs. For example, Catholics are generally more open to such beliefs, including those about aliens, than other religions. And atheists are more negative about all aspects of the New Age than any member of a religion, the nonreligious, or agnostics. He also discovered that those who describe themselves as moderately religious are more likely to believe in such things as ESP and astrology, compared to the extremely religious or nonreligious. He then has this to say:

It becomes harder to dismiss the New Age as peripheral to our culture if it is the moderates in the middle of the road who are attracted to it. It may involve fringe beliefs, but at least as measured by church attendance and subjective religiousness, it is not the fringe people who believe in it.

To that I can only say, Amen.

A DATA POSTSCRIPT

Other social scientists have looked at the relationship between religion and New Age beliefs, but curiously Bainbridge doesn't cite much of this literature. One active investigator has been Erich Goode, a professor of sociology. In one article, published in the *Skeptical Inquirer* ("Two Paranormalisms or Two and a Half? An Empirical Exploration," January/February 2000, pp. 29–35), he reported on a study he did linking religious beliefs and New Age beliefs. Like many academics, his respondents were students at the university, so as with Bainbridge, but for a different reason, his results may not generalize well to all adults.

Goode asked the students about UFOs, ESP, and astrology, among other things. His UFO question was close in meaning to that of Bainbridge: "Many of the unidentified flying objects (UFOs) that have been reported are really space vehicles flown by intelligent beings from another planet." Thus, it is fair and useful to compare the results from the two studies. He also asked them about whether angels exist, whether there is a heaven where good people are eternally rewarded, whether the Devil exists as a physical being, and whether God created everything in six days roughly 10,000 years ago.

He used a three-point scale for all the questions, with responses of "agree," "not sure," and "disagree." This scale difference can complicate comparisons, but we will plunge ahead.

Only 19.0% of the students agreed with the UFO statement. Although this is low, it is very close to the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the similar UFO statement Bainbridge employed. By contrast, 43.6% of the students agreed that angels exist, 54.4% that heaven exists, 35.6% that God created the world as described in the Bible, and only 14.9% agreed that the Devil actually exists. (I suspect this percentage is so low because the question asks whether the Devil is a "physical being"; you can believe in the Devil but think he/she/it is supernatural.)

So in Goode's study we have not measures of religious behavior but religious attitudes, or at least those associated with Christianity. And do these items have the same relationship to UFO belief as Bainbridge found? I calculated an appropriate correlation coefficient from Goode's tables (Spearman's rho, for the statistically minded), and found the following correlations between UFO belief and religious attitude (I didn't use the Devil question because of its wording):

Angels exist: .10

Heaven exists: .08

God created the world as in the Bible: $-.09$.

So just like Bainbridge, Goode found contradictory and weak relationships that could be used to support either of Bainbridge's hypotheses. I could certainly suggest post hoc

(continued on page 27)

CANARY ISLANDS—continued from page 9

this is true, we cannot locate this last bit of detail because the data are still classified, as both Jonathan McDowell and Mark Cleary explained to us. The United States may still today test strategic armaments in the same area, so the precise location of any submarines carrying out tests must still be kept secret. However, lacking this detail does not undercut our explanation.

Our research has conclusively proven that ballistic weaponry from the U.S. Navy was tested in areas in the Atlantic Ocean, far away from Spanish or Portuguese island territories, where sensational optical effects were observed in places such as the Canary Islands and Madeira. Our finding explains several major UFO episodes in the history of Spanish ufology.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors wish to express their gratitude for the invaluable collaboration received from Manuel Borraz, Mark Cleary, Gunter Krebs, S. North, Jonathan McDowell, Lt. Col. E. Rocamora, J. Plana, and P. Redón. And to Luis R. González for a superb translation.

FOOTNOTES

1. Ricardo Campo Pérez, *Luces en el cielo: Todo lo que siempre quiso saber sobre los ovnis* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Editorial Benchomó, 2003).
2. Vicente-Juan Ballester Olmos, *Expedientes insólitos: El fenómeno OVNI y los archivos de Defensa* (Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 1995).
3. Antonio Munáiz Ferro-Sastre, *Método para la investigación de fenómenos aeroespaciales* (Madrid: 37th Staff Course, Escuela Superior del Aire, 1981).
4. Vicente-Juan Ballester Olmos and Miguel Guasp, *Los OVNI y la Ciencia* (Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 1989).
5. Manuel Borraz, *Los gigantes de Gáldar y los avistamientos canarios* (Santander: Fundación Anomalía, 1992).
6. Ricardo Campo Pérez, "El OVNI de la discordia,"

ANSWERS TO QUIZ—on pages 20–21

- 1-F
2-E
3-I
4-A
5-C
6-H
7-B
8-G
9-D
10-J



Gene Roddenberry as a young aviator



Edward Condon (left) and H.P. Robertson at Princeton, spring 1931

Enigmas, May 1996, pp. 78–84.

7. James E. Oberg, *UFOs and Outer Space Mysteries* (Norfolk, Va.: Donning, 1982).

8. "Unidentified Phenomena," *The Marine Observer*, July 1973, April 1977, January 1978, and April 1979. ♦

MYSTERY CLOUDS—continued from page 19

vision) and it seemed a small lintel [?] shaped cloud was moving in the opposite direction (south) of the plane. I mentally checked whether the plane's velocity caused me to think it was moving if at all [and] it wasn't, but then it made a westerly turn and started on the same northerly trajectory as my plane above the mass of clouds below. There were two column shaped clouds that formed a kind of gate, and I watched the small moving cloud approach them and told myself, 'If this flying cloud goes between those columns, I'll know I'm not crazy.' It did and began to gain on us. At that point I turned around to see if anybody else was seeing this except me, but nobody in the sparsely occupied plane was looking. I watched it fly between the columns and as it approached to a point in a perfect line with my shoulder DIVE into the cloud mass below at approximately a 30 degree angle and disappeared." (National UFO Reporting Center)

November 6, 1998, Bothell, Washington, about 7 a.m.
"First spotted a thin (flat) horizontal cloud that began to tilt and descend. Then a large thicker (taller) horizontal cloud also tilted to the left, but the leading portion no longer looked like a cloud, but cylindrical and dark (not sunlit by the rising sun). Two small clouds came out of a separate larger cloud. Binoculars showed them to be oval in shape with distinct edges—NOT clouds. The second cylindrical one now down past mountains. Another oval one came out of the same cloud the earlier ones had. All objects SLOWLY descending past Cascades. Jets flew in from the south, about 1 or 2 at a time. Jets in the area past 9:30. All objects were lit by the sun as clouds are." (National UFO Reporting Center)

My purpose in writing this article is to establish the bona fides of the mystery cloud/UFO connection as a valid component of the UFO phenomenon. Satellite objects, cloud cigars, and many of the mystery clouds are all certainly different aspects of the same vitally important component of the core UFO phenomenon. I believe it to be central to resolving with finality what this enduring mystery is all about.

Author's note: Because of various misspellings and other grammatical errors found in some of the witness accounts (particularly some of those from the National UFO Reporting Center), I have taken the liberty of correcting the most egregious ones in order to make for clearer reading. However, in absolutely no instance whatsoever have I altered the actual meaning or words of the witness accounts. ♦

RELIGION AND UFOS—*continued from page 25*

reasons for these results, along the lines of how the last question, which is based on a literal interpretation of the Bible, is associated with more fundamental Christian sects, who also are anti-UFO, but there's no compelling reason to do so.

Instead, what I'm struck by as I review the work of Bainbridge and Goode is how small the relationship is between a belief in UFOs as alien spaceships and religious behaviors or attitudes. I can't see that *any* relationship between these two is supported by the data above. Nor does it appear that both beliefs are caused by some other factor (like a need for salvation), because that would require they be more positively correlated.

Each of us has his or her own views about these matters, and perhaps you thought there would be a relationship. And maybe in your own personal beliefs, you do connect religion and the UFO phenomenon. But on the whole, based on my experience and knowledge of UFO beliefs, and my reading of past studies on attitudes about UFOs, I'm not surprised. Academics and skeptics (and they are often one in the same) keep trying to find reasons to link UFO beliefs to other (irrational) factors. And generally, they keep failing. UFO beliefs, no matter how defined, stand on their own, it seems, and aren't easily explained by various social variables. ♦

BOOK REVIEW—*continued from page 21*

whether any changes in operations or equipment were made as a result of the incidents. (Salas remained in his position for about two years.)

One would hope that the Air Force did consider what might be done to prevent future similar episodes, but you can feel a bit of sympathy for them in figuring out exactly what that might be. How do you protect Minuteman missiles against the actions, inadvertent or not, of UFOs that operate via unknown means and have unmeasured effects? Maybe you just hope it doesn't happen again.

The book is not without its flaws. There is no table of contents, and no index (distressingly common today). Chapter 4 discusses the presumed nondisclosure policy of the U.S. government, but doesn't add anything important to consideration of the Minuteman incidents. Conversely, Chapter 5 reviews other UFO events with national security implications, but the choice of cases to present here is debatable, especially the Big Sur incident from June 1964, which has been hotly contested. (See, for example, Kingston A. George, "The Big Sur 'UFO': An Identified Flying Object," in *The UFO Invasion*, edited by Kendrick Frazier, Barry Karr, and Joe Nickell, 1997.)

These are relatively minor quibbles, as the core of this book makes a solid presentation of a compelling and troubling UFO event. I don't quibble with the secrecy blanket placed over it by the Air Force. This was not your run-of-the-mill military UFO sighting, and the Air Force certainly was

not going to admit, during the Cold War, that UFOs disabled our ICBMs. The Malmstrom shutdowns are another example of how the most significant military UFO reports were handled, whatever the government claimed then and now. —Mark Rodeghier. ♦

LETTER

ADVICE TO INVESTIGATORS

To the editor:

I read the article "An Abductee's Life" by the pseudonymous Tom Rymer in *IUR*, Volume 29, Number 3. I am not an abduction researcher and don't consider myself qualified for the role, but from time to time I have found myself, rather reluctantly, listening to stories told by abductees. It would have been unethical, I suppose, for me not to have done so.

I do not recall having previously read anything that has so accurately conveyed the feel of this experience as it is encountered by the investigator. For anyone who has listened first hand to the accounts of abductees, many resonances can be heard within Mr. Rymer's article.

I commend him for doing an excellent job of expressing just how difficult this subject is—both from the perspective of the abductees themselves and the UFO researcher trying to understand it.

I would recommend that anyone contemplating becoming involved with this aspect of UFO research read Mr. Rymer's article first. It may help them to better understand that, whatever else they may think they will be dealing with, they most certainly will deal with human beings who must remain the investigator's primary concern. Even if you are not a UFO expert, that is how those seeking your help perceive you.

And even if you can do nothing else for them, you must at least "do no harm."

I cannot help but agree with Mr. Rymer's concluding remark: "If I were to offer advice to someone contemplating looking more deeply into his or her own experiences, I'd urge caution." This is very much the advice that I have found myself giving. It applies equally to all UFO experts—perhaps even more so.

William E. Diggs
Woodstock, Illinois



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