

'Glowing Like Hot Coals,' They Moved At 1,000 Miles

Miami Pilots Spot 8 Saucers

By JOHN F. BONNER
Herald Staff Writer

Two Miami airlines pilots said Tuesday they saw 1,000-mile-an-hour flying saucers in formation over Chesapeake Bay.

They said eight of the "things" 100 feet in diameter and "glowing like hot coals" passed directly beneath their Pan American Airways DC4, wheeled sharply and zoomed out of sight.

First Officer William B. Nash, 35-year-old veteran of 10 years with Pan American, said he

and Fortenberry, 30, "watched the whole maneuver" for 10 or 12 seconds.

"We definitely saw them," Nash swore. "There is no doubt in our minds that we saw missiles of some kind operating under intelligent control."

"We feel, because of the way

the missiles acted and because of all the other reports that have been heard, that they must be from some extra-terrestrial source," he added.

Nash's report drew implied

support from a high Pan American official.

Santes Ceyanes, manager of Pan American's Miami overhaul base and acting operations manager here, said the flying saucers Nash and Fortenberry saw "obviously were not a figment of their imagination."

It was the second report this month of Miami airline pilots having spotted the mysterious saucers.

On July 6, four non-scheduled

airline pilots reported they saw a saucer hovering near the atomic energy plant at Richlands Wash.

The four were Capt. John Baldwin of Coral Gables, Capt. George Robertson and D. J. Shenkel of Miami and Steve Summers of Hialeah—all of them veteran airmen.

Nash said when his plane landed about midnight Monday, he and Fortenberry immediately reported the phenomenon to Pan American.



WILLIAM FORTENBERRY



WILLIAM NASH

...then the things made a sharp, 150-degree turn



Miami Herald article, July 16, 1952, reporting on the Nash/Fortenberry case. Right, illustration by Joe Kotula accompanying the October 1952 True article, "We Flew above Flying Saucers."

THE JULY 1952 NASH/ FORTENBERRY CASE REVISITED

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UFO/VEHICLE

VERY CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

BY MARK RODEGHIER

The CUFOS files contain thousands of sightings of UFOs by drivers (and passengers) of motor vehicles. In some of these events, the UFO shows an interest (usually not welcomed) in the vehicle or its occupants. UFOs have chased cars down the road, buzzed them, and swooped in front and forced cars to stop. In about 500 reports, the UFO has affected the operation of the vehicle, often causing its engine and other systems to fail. And then there are the UFOs that have struck vehicles.

Although much less common, some witnesses have reported their vehicle struck, and often damaged, by the UFO. Fortunately, only one motorist has been seriously injured in these events, perhaps because the UFOs have been relatively small. You can imagine what damage one of those 100-foot disks would cause if it hit a car with even a glancing blow.

I am prompted to write about this uncommon yet intriguing class of UFO cases because of a fairly recent event of this type that occurred in Michigan in 1998. Not only was the case investigated, a residue found on the car after the impact has been examined by a highly qualified analytical chemist. I'll report on the results of this investigation, and then discuss similar events to put the evidence in perspective.

THE MOUNT CLEMENS EVENT

It was November 27, 1998, as HS (she prefers anonymity), a woman about 70 years old, was driving east on 25 Mile Road near Mount Clemens, Michigan. Mount Clemens is a far northeastern suburb of Detroit, but the sighting location is somewhat north of there in a semirural locale on a secondary road with lots of open space. The time was between 7:00 and 7:30 p.m. (so it was dark), and HS was alone in her vehicle, a bright red 1992 Ford Escort station wagon. Weather records from the nearest station list the temperature as 45°F, with a few high, scattered clouds, and a wind at 8 knots from the southwest. No other cars were visible on the road.

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Suddenly, with no warning or sound, a basketball-size object appeared to her right, at about the tree line, and came rapidly toward the car at a 45-degree angle toward the ground. Figure 1 shows the drawing HS made of the object, which was white in color and quite bright, with some type of "fringe" around the outside. Needless to say, HS was immediately concerned and frightened, but had no time to take evasive action before the object hit her car at just above the right front window at the roofline.



Fig. 1. Witness drawing of UFO.

When the object hit there was a low thud, but the car's motion wasn't affected. HS didn't see how the UFO disappeared, and I can only assume she was relieved that she and the car had survived the crash. HS didn't stop to examine her car or to look for what hit her, but instead continued driving home.

Upon arriving at home, HS examined the Escort,



Fig. 2. Damage to the Ford Escort.

looking for damage. There was no dent on the right side where the object struck, but there was a cream-colored residue, just above the front window on the passenger side, at the spot where the object struck. This residue is barely visible in the photo in Figure 2 (see the CUFOS Web site at www.cufos.org for color versions of Figures 1 and 2), but was easily visible to the naked eye. It formed a streak about 12–13 inches in length and was not continuous but instead broken into distinct spots.

Initially, HS did nothing about this, nor did she tell anyone about the experience (she is widowed). She didn't contact a UFO investigator for many months, and, you will not be shocked to learn, nor did she contact her insurance company. One can envision how well that conversation would go:

HS: My car was involved in an accident and I'd like to file a claim.

Agent: Okay. Were you hit by another car?

HS: Uh . . . not exactly, but I was hit by *something*.

Agent: Did you get the name and address plus insurance information of the other driver?

HS: No, I didn't . . . couldn't.

Agent: Why not?

HS: You see, I don't really know what hit me. It just came down from the sky and hit the right side of my car. It was bright and white, and it left this cream-colored stuff that I need to get removed.

Agent: I see (long pause). Did you file a police report?

HS: (in a resigned manner) No, I didn't because I thought they wouldn't believe me.

Agent: Yes, I can agree with that.

And so it would go.

Fortunately, the residue on the car was quite stable, and it remained on the vehicle through over a year of rain and snowstorms. The impact was clearly of sufficient magnitude to bond the cream-colored material to the red paint on the car's body.

Finally working up her courage, HS contacted Harold Marquardt, a local MUFON investigator in the Detroit area, who then spoke at length with HS and, with some difficulty, took a sample of the residue from the car. This was not easy to do because of how well the two substances were bonded, and some red paint was taken off along with the material from the UFO.

Prosaic explanations were considered, but all ruled out. Ball lightning is unlikely both because the weather was not cloudy or stormy, but also because it is known not to leave a residue, unlike in this case. An object thrown at the car might leave a residue, of course, but it would hardly appear as intense white with a fringe around the outside as reported by HS. A lit firework thrown toward the car fits some of the facts, but not all. Fireworks are not basketball-sized except for commercial versions, and, if that size, would be both difficult to throw and have done more

damage to the car. Additionally, HS, who has seen plenty of fireworks in her day, says it didn't match any firework she has seen before. Finally, a meteorite can be ruled out because they don't, despite common belief, glow brightly near the ground, and if a meteorite had hit the vehicle it would have left a sizeable dent (as occurred in a handful of other such cases—see below).

ANALYSIS OF THE RESIDUE

The sample that Marquardt collected was sent to Phyllis Budinger, an analytical chemist with long experience in industry, who now operates an independent laboratory at her home near Cleveland. Budinger took infrared spectra of the sample and various microscopic photographs. The small amount of material available (less than 2 milligrams) made other types of analysis impossible, especially those that would have provided elemental, rather than molecular, composition. Budinger also contacted various sources to determine the standard composition of car finishes to be able to determine that what was being measured came from the unknown sample, not the car itself.

The spectral analysis was able to identify components of the car's finish, such as the epoxy resin used in the primer layer, and the methyl methacrylate/styrene/urethane polymer in the clear coat. The results of the analysis of the cream-colored substance show that it has prominent components of kaolin mineral (an aluminum silicate), a metal oxide, and a celluloidal material. The metal oxide definitely seems to be from the unknown object, not the car's finish. Although the metal oxide is not specifically identified, it has spectral bands closest to manganese oxide, which is not used in automobile paints or finishes. It is clearly not aluminum oxide, which is added to vehicle paints to give a shimmering appearance. This material has no obvious source in the environment or from the vehicle and thus seems to be from the UFO.

Chemically modified celluloidal material, such as cellulose acetate butyrate (CAB), is sometimes used as an additive in car finishes. However, the celluloidal material Budinger found was not CAB because it has not been chemically modified. Instead, its source could be from organic material, i.e., vegetation. The presence of a small amount of natural ester in the sample also supports this speculation.

The silicate (kaolinite mineral) could be used as an additive to give color to the metallic flakes of a car's finish, but it could also originate from some natural source, such as soil or dirt. Thus, the source of this material cannot be established with any certainty.

Additional findings provide strong evidence that the object was not hot. The paint components and celluloidal material have not been degraded, which would not be true if each were subjected to a heat source. Although contact with the car was brief, little, if any, heat was transferred to the paint at that moment. But the celluloidal material was

most likely transported on the object to the car, and this strongly implies that the object couldn't have been that hot. This conclusion is further supported by the fact that the metal oxide and silicate mineral are hydrated, which would not be true if they were subjected to high temperatures. This finding seems to rule out fireworks as a cause since even simple fireworks that can be legally purchased burn at a high temperature.

Intriguingly, the celluloidal material could have come from the object if it had landed or been concealed in vegetation before the crash. Plant material could have been deposited on it, and then carried to the car, where the bits of vegetation became mixed with the material from the object. This is consistent with the details of the case but remains conjecture; in any case, it doesn't help us determine the ultimate origin of the UFO.

In the final analysis, this case remains unidentified. Manganese oxide, the substance most likely to have come from the UFO, is not something that has been identified often, if ever, before in physical-trace cases (although manganese has in trace amounts). I will discuss how the Mount Clemens case compares to other UFO/vehicle crashes after first providing background on other non-UFO vehicle encounters.

METEORITES, BALL LIGHTNING, AND VEHICLES

UFOs are not the only objects reported to hit vehicles. An even more rare event is a meteorite impact on a vehicle. In recorded history, only three or so people were unlucky enough to have their car struck by a meteorite. No one was injured in these events.

A recent cosmic accident occurred in Peekskill, New York, on October 9, 1992, at 7:50 p.m. A fragment of the Draconid meteor stream struck a 1980 Chevrolet Malibu,

owned by Michelle Knapp. Knapp, who was home at the time, heard what sounded like a car crashing outside her house. Upon checking, she discovered a hole in the trunk of her car and a six-inch crater in her driveway. The meteorite was in the crater, along with pieces of the car. The meteorite, oval-shaped and about a foot in length, was streaked with red paint from the car (turnabout is fair play). The rock was still hot when Knapp examined it, and weighed about 30 pounds.

Unlike in UFO cases, where one frequently fears to even mention the event to the authorities, Knapp reported the fall, which garnered widespread publicity. She also made money on the deal, since she sold the meteorite and the vehicle for about \$69,000 (thus effectively winning a lottery in which one's chances are even lower than most state lotteries).

So (natural) objects from the sky can and do strike vehicles. Another unusual phenomenon is ball lightning. (I say unusual, not rare, because there have been thousands of reports, and some theories of ball lightning suggest that it should be produced regularly in thunderstorms.) Ball lightning is thought to be a glowing plasma of small size—under three feet in most cases—that occurs mostly during electrical storms, often right after a nearby lightning strike. It can last for over a minute and tends to move erratically. Physicists have a hard time explaining how it can form and maintain its coherence without strong magnetic fields that are difficult to generate and sustain on that scale.

The literature contains several reports of ball lightning striking moving vehicles, including trains. Here is an account from 1880, taken from *INFO Journal*, no. 32, November–December 1978, which reprinted it from the *Nashville (Tenn.) American* of July 15, 1880:

A singular occurrence happened at the Chattanooga Railroad last week. Conductor House's train was running through a terrific storm this side of Murfreesboro when the engineer saw a large ball of fire rushing down the steel rails toward the engine. As it passed under the locomotive he felt a sudden shock that seemed to jar the entire train. The fireman looked back to see whether any damage had been done to the train. Just at that moment there was a loud explosion opposite the ladies car and a telegraph pole was splintered from top to bottom.

Although it isn't clear whether the damage to the pole was caused by the ball of fire, ball lightning has been reported to explode violently in many cases. And it can certainly injure people who get too close.



Fig. 3. Michelle Knapp's mother in front of the Peekskill meteorite car.

(continued on page 24)

ANGEL HAIR: AN AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE

BY KEITH BASTERFIELD

The term "angel hair" refers to a web-like substance that has been observed falling from the sky to the ground. It is reported to have the unusual property of disappearing within a short time of falling. On some occasions it is reported in the company of UFOs.

Reports of angel hair have been made throughout recorded history. Falls have been recorded in such diverse places as Naniwa (now Osaka), Japan, on October 1, 679 A.D.; Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1881; France in 1952 and 1954; and Australia on various dates.

However, what have come to be regarded as the classic cases were reported at Oloron and Gaillac in southern France. Legendary French researcher Aimé Michel in *The Truth about Flying Saucers* (Criterion, 1956) provided excellent accounts of these falls, which can be summarized as follows.

At 12:50 p.m. on a cloudless day, October 17, 1952, witnesses in Oloron reported a long, narrow, white-colored cylinder. In front of this cylinder were an estimated 30 featureless balls. These balls moved in pairs and traveled in a zig-zag fashion. Material fell from them and dropped to the ground, where for several hours it covered trees and the roofs of houses.

Ten days later, at 5:00 p.m., at Gaillac, about 100 people saw a long, plumed cylinder traveling slowly among about 20 saucers. After 20 minutes, the whole spectacle passed over the horizon. However, before it did, masses of white threads fell to earth. The material became gelatinous, sublimed, and disappeared.

WHAT OF THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE?

With the assistance of members of the Australian UFO

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Research Network, I compiled a catalog of 19 Australian cases dating from the years 1914–2000. Most of the case details came from the research I had conducted in the past. In addition, information on a number of cases kindly came from AUFORN members, particularly, Charmaine Ballam, Bill Chalker, and Brian Richards. Other details and comments came from researchers John Burford, Colin Paule, and Barry Taylor. What was seen?

1. *Date unknown, Kingsthorpe, Queensland (27° 29' S., 151° 49' E.).* What appeared to be a large amount of smallish pieces of tissue paper was seen high in the cloudless sky. However, several pieces came floating down. The witness examined them and found they were like lather off soap. They quickly melted in her hand.

2. *Winter 1914, mid-afternoon, for about 60 minutes, Mount Lyndhurst Station, far north of South Australia (30° 12' S., 138° 34' E.).* In mid-afternoon, on a steady light breeze from the southwest, an unusual substance floated by at a constant altitude. Some pieces, 15–22 cm long, fell to earth and dissolved in minutes, leaving no trace.

3. *October 1953, Victoria.* After a fall, a sample was recovered and made available for laboratory analysis. The examination revealed that the substance consisted of a nylon-like amorphous mass with traces of magnesium, calcium, boron, and silicon. Between 1953 and 1966, the original material, which was kept in an air-tight container, shrank from 7.5 cm to a mere 1 cm without residue.

4. *October 9, 1953, 1550 hours, Caulfield, Melbourne, Victoria (37° 53' S., 145° 03' E.).* A gray-white, cobweb-like filament was seen and retrieved. It became wrinkled and rapidly disintegrated until no trace of it was left. Another piece was recovered, but it also disappeared within an hour.

5. *May 12, 1954, 1600 hours, Shepparton, Victoria (36° 23' S., 145° 24' E.).* Silk-like threads were observed floating down from the sky. The witness gathered some of these filaments and, although they became wrinkled, they did not disintegrate. They were white in color, silky in formation, though harder in texture. It was odorless, warm to the touch like cotton, and different from cobwebs which, after a time, are sticky and gray. Analysis was conducted on

a sample. The substance did not dissolve in water. A test in a strong caustic soda solution caused the matter to disappear momentarily. It burned rapidly, leaving no smell or ash, unlike wool, cotton, silk, or cobwebs.

6. October 1955, Port Augusta, South Australia ($32^{\circ} 30' S.$, $137^{\circ} 46' E.$). White filaments were reported falling at the time of a UFO sighting.

7. July 10, 1956, Melbourne, Victoria ($37^{\circ} 49' S.$, $144^{\circ} 53' E.$). Countless numbers of thread fell on suburbs adjacent to the coast, but vanished within hours. Analysis was conducted on some threads, and they were said not to be wool, were not feathers, were not cotton, nor did they appear to be any known synthetic fiber.

8. August 5, 1961, 0820 hours, 55 minutes, Mount Hale Station, Western Australia ($26^{\circ} 02' S.$, $117^{\circ} 15' E.$). A total of 12 objects, appearing to be in pairs, traveled through the sky. A white substance fell from the objects to the ground. It appeared to be a fine mesh and crumbled very easily.

9. June 6, 1962, 1120 hours, Caroda, New South Wales ($30^{\circ} 01' S.$, $150^{\circ} 22' E.$). Six silent objects were seen at intervals in a cloudless sky. A trail of shiny, web-like filaments fell and gradually disintegrated as they drifted through the air. Witnesses said the threads were up to 1.5 m in length.

10. May 11, 1968, Brinkley, South Australia ($35^{\circ} 14' S.$, $139^{\circ} 13' E.$). A farmer noted strands of material of about 20 m length falling on his farm. He commented that it was similar to asbestos rope and as wide as a pencil.

11. May 11, 1968, Cheltenham, Adelaide, South Australia ($34^{\circ} 52' S.$, $138^{\circ} 30' E.$). Web-like "fine woven cotton" was seen on a lawn and draped over wires and a fence.

12. August 29, 1969, mid-afternoon, Grafton, New South Wales ($29^{\circ} 43' S.$, $152^{\circ} 56' E.$). UFO researcher Bill Chalker reported a fall of white filaments descending from the sky. On handling it, he noted that the material diminished in size, dissipated into nothing, and left no trace.

13. March 14, 1971, 1600 hours, Christies Beach, Adelaide, South Australia ($35^{\circ} 09' S.$, $138^{\circ} 28' E.$). Five silver objects were seen. Four of these were in a "box" formation, i.e. forming the corners of a square, and a fifth leading. Filaments were reported falling.

14. March 15, 1971, 1510 hours, 40 minutes, Maslin's Beach, South Australia ($35^{\circ} 15' S.$, $138^{\circ} 27' E.$). A number of silvery-white balls were seen in the sky. White "fairy floss" was noted on the ground. When picked up and handled, this tended to melt or disappear. It was extremely light and tenuous, and sometimes seemed to be made up of white strands, extremely thin.

15. November 28, 1972, 1400 hours, Glenelg, Adelaide, South Australia ($34^{\circ} 59' S.$, $138^{\circ} 30' E.$). A man saw lengths of glistening material wrapped around a signpost and on looking up saw more was falling from the sky. A small piece of the thickest section was collected but unfortunately the thin strands dissolved in his fingers.

16. May 19, 1973, Gawler, South Australia ($34^{\circ} 37' S.$, $138^{\circ} 44' E.$). Strange, nylon-like patterns were observed in the sky, which vaporized on touching when they descended. Looked like a "shower of nylon."

17. August 10, 1998, sometime between midday and 1:00 p.m., 90–120 minutes, Quirindi, southwest of Tamworth, New South Wales ($31^{\circ} 30' S.$, $150^{\circ} 41' E.$). A Mrs. Eunice Stansfield, 61, and a female friend, Noelene Mozetic, reported seeing a silver ball traveling quickly across the sky from east to west. Several other objects were then seen in the sky, reportedly up to 20 altogether. They were a bright metallic gray in color. Some moved quickly, while others were stationary at times. There was no noise at all. One of the larger objects was seen to be two spheres connected by a cylinder shape.

The objects maneuvered across the whole sky in complex patterns. When the spheres were maneuvering, a light whitish material could be seen streaming from them. This material formed into long, white strands that fell slowly downwards onto telephone wires and trees. There was no surface wind. Air temperature was cool.

The material fell in surrounding areas. The female friend collected a piece of it, a 30-cm strand from a bush. "... it was extremely light, whitish and strong, like cotton, requiring a good tug to break. It quickly 'dissolved' away to nothing when handled." A second piece was collected in a clean yogurt container.

A Telstra technician, Gary from Gunnedah, reported he was at Piallaway, 40 km north of Quirindi at 2:00 p.m. and saw masses of cobweb-like material falling around. The material evaporated upon handling.

The yogurt container was passed to Moira McGhee and then to Bill Chalker for analysis of the contents. The sample as received by Bill Chalker was approximately the size of a match head. The sample was placed in a freezer; no phase differences were noted. "The sealed container contents were then sampled through the intact gladwrap via an eppendorf syringe to sample any possible gas phase. None confirmed per comparison to ambient conditions & atmosphere."

A comparison of the Quirindi sample and known spider's web, using video microscopic imaging led to the conclusion that the Quirindi material was identical to the control sample of spider's web, "... including inclusions of coloured webbing, which often occurs."

However, Chalker noted that the container with the original white material in it was opened by the witness at a later stage to add some more of what she thought was the same material, but could have been ordinary spiders' web.

18. June 9, 1999, 1000 hours, 210–300 minutes, Esperance, Western Australia ($33^{\circ} 52' S.$, $121^{\circ} 53' E.$). A large amount of white material fell from the sky over a period of time on a windless day. It covered trees, paddocks, and power lines. Some threads were reported to have been 9–10 m in length. Reports came in from the north, east, and west from Gibson's Soak, Condonup, and Munglinup (33°

40° S., 120° 48' E., 80 km west of Esperance), covering a 10,000-square-kilometer area. The local paper ran the story and Esperance resident Marilyn Burnet collected a sample. Brian Richards in Perth had some of that sample analyzed spectrographically and with electron microscopy. Copper, aluminium, zinc, iron, sodium, manganese, silicon, and a number of other minerals were found in it.

Another witness was located 85 km east of Esperance, 15 km from the coastline. Long strands of white material settled on everything, with trees, fences, and pastures covered. No unusual objects were seen in the sky. There was no associated noise. The length of the strands was estimated as six meters. No material was picked up. The material disappeared overnight. The sky was cloudless, with temperature estimated as 17–18° C. No spiders were observed.

19. August 5, 2000, 1130 hours, 90 minutes, Old Noarlunga (35° 11' S., 138° 29' E.), and Aldinga, South Australia (35° 17' S., 138° 29' E.). A man spotted a silver disk in the sky, and called out his wife to look at it. Over the next 90 minutes they saw an additional three whitish balls and three things looking like a helicopter in shape, making a total of six to nine objects in all travelling west to east. The sky was completely cloudless at the time, with the temperature being mild. From the sighting of the first object there was a fall of material. The woman stated that it fell in large wads or strands. She used a stick to pick up some of the material which fell onto her house and TV antenna and gate post. The material was long, silver, cobweb-like in color and texture. Once touched with the stick it shriveled up and evaporated. No sound was heard.

There were other reports of material falling on the beach at Aldinga (10 km due south of Old Noarlunga) at the same time. One person at Aldinga reported seeing a bright light at the time of the fall and that as the material touched the sand or water it evaporated.

A report was also received from Moana (4 km southwest of Old Noarlunga). A man, living about 1 kilometer from the sea, noticed what he took to be a "light fog" that had drifted in from the sea. He then saw a "bright light" traveling through the fog. As it passed over his house, the angel hair started to fall. As soon as it touched his house roof, the lawn, and the front fence, it just "dissolved." He did try to grab some of it, but as soon as he touched it, the substance dissolved. Duration was about 10 minutes.

THE AUSTRALIAN DATA

I undertook a range of analyses of the data collected in the 19 local cases. One of the first things I noted was that although Australia stretches in latitude from approximately 10° south to 44° south, known cases of angel-hair cluster between 25° and 38° south. This clustering confirmed

an observation made by an early researcher named Sharp, who in 1964 reported that all the cases of angel hair in his global sample, occurred in the 27–47° north or south band.

In which seasons do falls occur? Interestingly, none at all were reported in the summer. Autumn saw six cases, winter months seven, and spring four.

In looking at the start times of falls, I saw that they all actually clustered between 8:20 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. local time. The phenomenon was certainly a daylight one.

Just out of curiosity, I listed the 10 cases where I had both the start time of the fall and the season and found an intriguing bit of data. The start of all winter falls occurred in the morning. (Quirindi was given actually as 12 noon.) The start of all spring and autumn falls occurred in the afternoon. I have never seen a mention of this oddity in any research yet published on angel hair. What it might mean, I have no idea.

In what settings do falls occur? Out of the 17 cases where locality is accurately known, 13 instances were in a rural setting, with just four in a suburban setting.

Reading Aimé Michel's version of the classic 1952 Oloron, France, case I saw that it occurred in a cloudless sky. I wondered whether this was true of the Australian sample? However, weather details had not been recorded in many of the case notes I had. I therefore obtained basic weather details from the South Australian branch of the Bureau of Meteorology. Interestingly, cloud cover was 2/8 or less in 11 out of the 15 cases. The sky was reported "cloudless" in 9 out of the 15 cases.

Weatherwise, I also wondered if the material could have been windblown, that is, would the direction that the fall came from be the same as the direction the wind was blowing from? There are seven cases where both data elements are known. Out of these, there are five cases where a wind was blowing; in four out of these five, the surface wind direction matched the fall direction.

Were UFOs reported in all cases? From the 19 cases the answer was positive in only eight. There were no reported UFOs in 11 events. What exactly was recalled? Table 1 summarizes this data.

Interestingly then, unlike most UFO observations, which

Table 1. Details of UFO Reports

Case name	No. of UFOs	Color	Shape	Noise
Pt. Augusta	?	?	?	?
Mt. Hale	12	Silver	Round	No
Caroda	6	Silver	Round	No
Grafton	1*	White	Elongated	No
Christies Beach	5	Silver	?	?
Maslin Beach	Multiple	Silver/white	Round	None mentioned
Quirindi	20	Silver/gray	Round	No
Old Noarlunga	7	Silver/white	Round	No

* Not observed by witness to fall.

Table 2. Properties of the Fall

Case name	Color	Length (cms)	Disappearance
Kingsthorpe	?	?	Melted in hand
Mt. Lyndhurst	?	15-22	Dissolved in minutes, leaving not a trace
Victoria	?	7.5	?
Melbourne	Gray-white	?	Rapidly disintegrated
Shepparton	Pure white	900	Wrinkled but did not disintegrate
Pt. Augusta	White	?	?
Melbourne	?	?	Vanished in a few hours
Mt. Hale	White	?	Crumbled and disappeared when handled
Caroda	Silver	150	Slowly disintegrated
Brinkley	?	1980	?
Cheltenham	?	?	?
Grafton	White	?	Dissipated into nothing
Christies Beach	?	?	?
Maslins Beach	White	?	Melted or disappeared when handled
Glenelg	White	?	Dissolved in hand
Gawler	?	?	Vaporized on touching
Quirindi	White	30	Dissolved away to nothing when handled
Esperance	White	450-600	?
Old Noarlunga	Silver	"Long"	Shriveled up and evaporated

are of single objects, many UFO/angel-hair events involve multiple objects as shown in the table.

At the start of this article, I mentioned that the term "angel hair" refers to a web-like substance, which has been observed falling from the sky to the ground. In the UFO literature it is reported to have the unusual property of "disappearing" within a short time of falling. What did I find from our Australian sample? Table 2 lists some properties of the local falls.

Falls of angel hair can cover vast amounts of distance. The 1956 Melbourne fall was said to have involved millions of threads covering several seaside suburbs. The Quirindi case also involved a fall 40 km away. In Esperance, falls were reported from both 80 km west and 85 km east of Esperance. The Old Noarlunga event saw observations from 10 km south and 4 km southwest.

There have been at least five reported analyses of material.

Victoria, 1953. Consisted of a nylon-like amorphous mass with traces of magnesium, calcium, boron, and silicon.

Shepparton, 1954. Microscopic examination revealed a mass of uniform fine threads. Some resemblance to white raw silk or even nylon. Did not dissolve in water. Burned rapidly leaving no smell or ash, unlike wool, cotton, silk, or cobwebs. Stretched easily at ends.

Melbourne, 1956. Tested with ethyl acetate, acetone, and lactophenol dye. Magnified 100 times. Burned and melted. Not wool, not derived from feathers, cotton, or any synthetic fiber.

Quirindi, 1998. Sample identical to spiders' web. However, question of contamination of sample with real cobweb was raised.

Esperance, 1999. Spectrographic and electron microscope studies. Found copper, aluminium, zinc, iron, sodium, manganese, silicon, and a number of other minerals

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

There have always only been two main competing hypotheses to explain angel hair. Firstly, some people believe that it is the residue of UFO propulsion methods. Others claim that the answer lies in falls of spiders' web. Many UFO researchers who have examined this topic have opted to accept the spider-web hypothesis. What are the pros and cons for this explanation, based upon the Australian data? The pros:

- Falls of angel hair occur during spring, winter, and autumn, which is the preferred time for falls of spiders' web.
- Angel hair falls are a day time phenomenon as are falls of spiders' web.

• Falls are predominantly in a rural setting, which would be expected for web.

• Falls are reported mainly on low-cloud or cloudless, calm days, exactly when spiders' web falls have been recorded.

• Where wind direction data is available, most direction of falls corresponds to the direction from which the wind was blowing at the time.

• The UFOs, where reported in association with angel-hair falls, are described as structureless, silver or white, and round in shape. This fits observations of clumps of spiders' web floating through the sky.

• The length of angel-hair threads corresponds to known lengths of spiders' web.

• Falls of angel hair cover vast areas of ground at times. Observed falls of spiders' web have also covered large areas.

The cons:

• Spiders' web does not sublime and disappear when handled. However, it is not always clear from the literature over what period of time this process occurred.

• Only one of the five known analyses of angel-hair falls fits spiders' web. Interestingly, three of the analyses are almost 50 years old, and it is one of the two most recent falls that supports the web hypothesis.

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WAS THERE A SECOND ESTIMATE OF THE SITUATION?

BY MICHAEL HALL

All ufologists worth their salt are acquainted with the *Estimate of the Situation*. Aeronautical engineer Alfred Loedding drafted that now-famous report during the summer of 1948 when he was the civilian project monitor of the first Wright Field-based investigation into UFOs known as Project Sign. Estimate briefings were generally a rather routine type of Air Force Intelligence report.

Loedding's estimate proved anything but typical. In its pages he and his colleagues theorized that a portion of the then-popular flying saucer sightings *may* represent intelligently controlled interplanetary spacecraft and called for an "alert" to be issued at all U.S. military bases.¹ Supported by other key Sign team members,² their reasoning was simple:

1. At least ten percent of the sightings represented credible reports of unidentified flying objects over U.S. air space.
2. No indication existed that these sightings represented a domestic project.
3. It was unlikely the reported objects were of Soviet origin, although that was a possibility, which made the reports all that much more important to study.³

The Estimate has never been released and supposedly was not seriously considered by the higher brass, although numerous reliable sources have described the report.

However, evidence has surfaced recently that there was a second Estimate-type report with no less than a saucer crash to go along with it. During the writing of *Captain Edward J. Ruppelt, Summer of the Saucers—1952*, Wendy Connors and I encountered some intriguing hints. Unfortunately, the story is still a big mystery, but one that is gradually unfolding.

Actually, some evidence has been in print for years but ignored. A quick historiography is in order because the

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literature comprising these old stories is difficult to obtain.

Capt. Edward J. Ruppelt's behind-the-scenes account of the 1952 UFO wave, *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*, is the most widely read book on the early days of UFOs. Ruppelt provided background in that work with tantalizing details about the original Estimate and the first investigations into flying-saucer sightings.

Retired Marine Maj. Donald E. Keyhoe wrote another classic book on the 1952 sightings titled *Flying Saucers from Outer Space*. Keyhoe had established himself as a respected writer who had become intensely interested in UFOs, whereas Ruppelt had been the head of the Air Force's Project Blue Book in 1952.

Ruppelt's book and personal papers provide tremendous detail about that period but give no hints about either a saucer crash or a second Estimate-type draft. Keyhoe's book, however, does speak to the latter. Surprisingly, researchers have long overlooked this reference, which Keyhoe makes only once in the very last chapter:

Only one thing was missing—an Air Force report that the saucers came from space. . . .

". . . I've got a hunch there's a secret report with that conclusion. . . . I'm going to ask [Al] Chop about this before he leaves for the coast." . . .

When I saw Al, I told him what I'd heard about the briefing.

"Doesn't this prove there's a secret report?" I asked.

Al was silent so long I gave up.

"I can't violate security," he said finally, "even if I am out of the service. But I can tell you this. Last fall [1952] there was a detailed analysis of all the evidence. I can say that because it wasn't classified when I saw it. After ruling out all other explanations, it came to a definite conclusion. I can't tell you what that conclusion was—but now it's probably top secret."⁴

There are other references to a second, 1952-era UFO study analogous to Project Sign's Estimate.

The best source comes from syndicated aviation columnist Robert S. Allen in September of that year.

ROBERT ALLEN REPORTS

Washington—The Air Force has a breathtaking report on "flying saucers."

The study, prepared by noted scientists and Air Force experts, expresses the belief that some of the mysterious flying objects are genuine and that they originate from "sources outside of this planet."

That is, these devices are interplanetary aircraft of some kind. The Air Force document contains two other sensational findings:

In some instances, flying objects that have been sighted were actually secret US missiles undergoing tests. Russia is profoundly mystified and worried by "flying saucers" and strongly suspects they are a new US weapon. The Kremlin now has four different investigations underway in an effort to discover the identity and source of the strange devices.

The Air Force study is based on more than 1,800 sightings in the past five years.⁵

There is a third, highly credible source for this story—none other than Capt. William B. Nash, a career airline pilot and a respected member of the community of UFO researchers. He is also noted as a witness of one of the best early sightings that took place during the great 1952 wave (see pp. 20–23).

It was just after sundown on Monday, July 14, 1952, when Nash and First Officer William H. Fortenberry were piloting a Pan American Airway DC-4 on a routine flight from New York to Miami.⁶ Around 8:12 p.m. EST they spotted ahead and to the right of their plane what they described as six "glowing, red-orange flying saucers" zipping over Chesapeake Bay in a narrow echelon formation at supersonic speed. Two more saucers then joined the formation before all disappeared at tremendous speed. Both were veteran flyers, Nash with 10,000 hours as a Navy transport pilot and 10 years total experience with Pan American.

Nash continued for several more decades as an airline captain with a spotless record and retained an active interest in UFOs. He personally interviewed anyone he could over the years who had experienced similar sightings and eventually served as a board member of Keyhoe's National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena.

He even made occasional presentations on the subject. His first public talk took place at a Greater Miami Aviation Association luncheon on March 23, 1954, at the Seven Seas Restaurant in Miami. Actually, Nash had only been asked at the last minute to serve as a substitute speaker by his friend Norman Bean, a popular UFO speaker and technical director from WTVJ television. During this impromptu 30-minute address, Nash offered his assessment of the Air Force's handling of UFO investigations. He stated that he felt the Air Force had concluded that UFOs were a real phenomenon, but they feared creating a state of panic by admitting as much.

Although there were only a few people in attendance, Nash's speech did receive some newspaper coverage. Soon, the Air Force issued an official denial, claiming that there was no evidence linking UFOs to an extraterrestrial source. This statement only served to give Nash national press attention. Ironically, Nash never directly came to any such conclusion in his speech. He did nevertheless have *private* suspicions about the existence of a formal Air Force report on the origin of UFOs that may have been based on physical evidence, which he believed to be stored at Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio. Nash detailed those theories in an April 18, 1954, letter to a friend of his, Capt. W. J. Hull:

. . . heaven only knows how it got so spread around or why, exactly one month later [after the speech], the Air Force took the trouble to issue an official denial. My little old answer to a man's question couldn't have gotten to many people, but the AF certainly brought it before millions of people. . . . there are many things which make me believe that it is true that the AF has something at Wright Field. I'll tell you a few. . . . when Bill Fortenberry and I were interviewed by the AF interrogators the morning after the [1952 Nash/Fortenberry] sighting, they put us in separate rooms. Before the interview, we had agreed to ask the men if there was any truth behind the rumor that the AF had one or more saucers at Wright Field. Bill remembered to ask, in his room. One of the investigators told him, "Yes, it is true."

I had forgotten to ask. However, when all of the investigators and Bill and I were in one room, I remembered and did ask the question. A Major Sharp [USAF Wing Intelligence officer Maj. John H. Sharpe of the 7th District Office of Special Investigations] was the only interrogator in uniform. They all opened their mouths to answer the question, and quickly, Major Sharp looked at them, not me, said very quickly, "NO!" It appeared that he was telling them to shut up rather than addressing the answer to me.

In New York, when I was taking the Interplanetary side against three non-believers on a WJZ half hour TV panel discussion, (my opponents were Professor Lloyd Motz, Dr. of Astronomy, Barnard College, Professor Richard Youte, Dr. of Psychology, Columbia University and Mr. Frank Foster, Chief Meteorologist, Hayden Planetarium), I was thirsty (probably from nervousness) before the program, and stepped out of the studio to find a fountain. A man who had been peering through the glass door stopped me and asked what I thought of the Saucers. I replied immediately that I thought they were interplanetary. He said "You're right!" not, I think you're right or any other qualifying statement. I asked him about a fountain and he walked with me directing me on a complicated route to the nearest fountain, so obviously he knew the

studios. From his voice, he might have been a commentator. He would not identify himself, but said he had just returned from Washington, and had been given the whole story. (This was the beginning of Aug/52.) He said that the "Wright Field Story" was true, and that the AF had recently operated a radio found in a saucer and caused the flurry of sightings over Washington where it was operated. He said he couldn't tell me more, because he, and a LIFE reporter and another reporter who had been with them had been given the story on the basis that they'd release it only when notified. Evidently they were never notified. Robert S. Allen writes me that he's never been able to get at the report again that he was allowed to read, which the AF was, about the fall of 52, going to release to the public. An Air Force Major told Norman Bean that it was true that there was a saucer at Wright Field, but that if Norman quoted him, he'd deny it. Several reports came to Norman quite innocently about GI's who saw the thing on a flat-car, but this is a vague one.

Here's a beauty. A wealthy friend of mine in Miami has a salesman whose wife, once a WAC, worked under intelligence at Wright Patterson Field as a radio operator and decoder of *all* information. I heard her tell this story in a straight-forward manner, which I find difficult to doubt. In the fall of 1952, she received a signal for a red and white alert, which you probably know is an AIRCRAFT ATTACK warning alert. They were on this alert for two weeks. At the end of the two weeks she found out that they had called the alert because a flying saucer had been found after landing (she believes near Columbus, the biggest supply depot), and the thing had been brought to Wright Field. They had called the alert because, from what they found in the Saucer (she didn't know what) they thought it had relayed valuable information back to an enemy and an attack was coming up. Everyone was excited about it there, and she talked to the photographers (Army Photographer) who went in to photograph it, and she saw one picture which a photographer named Joe brought to her. It was taken from an angle, she said, "As though you stood on a chair and took a forward downward view of it." She said it had no wings, was round, silvery, but couldn't guess its size except to say that, "It didn't look too big, but I had nothing to compare it with." This girl had a child, and a fine home, and has cancer so badly that she isn't expected to live more than a year. I don't think she is lying. Then, of course, is the mysterious case of the man who claimed to have seen a saucer in Mexico, near Mexico City, which had fallen. He changed his whole story later and said he was just joking—he was not noted as that kind of a person.⁷

There is no reasonable explanation for the accounts of recovered flying saucers at Wright Field. There are, how-

ever, four reasonable theories as to the nature of a second Estimate-type Air Force report or position paper on UFOs. The first is obvious. There may have indeed been a 1952-era top-level assessment of the UFO situation that has never been declassified.

Secondly, accounts of such a report could simply have been referring to the study that Air Force Intelligence officer and Blue Book liaison Maj. Dewey Fournet drafted that fall. Ruppelt wrote about Fournet's study in his memoirs and personal papers.⁸ He detailed how Fournet presented his paper to the January 1953 CIA-sponsored Robertson Panel workshop on UFOs. But Fournet's thesis was based only on a technical analysis of the motions associated with UFO sightings.⁹ Unfortunately, it has never been released to the public.

A third explanation may concern a study by the Battelle Memorial Institute, a highly secretive think tank in Columbus, Ohio. We know that by 1952 Air Force Intelligence had sought scientific help on the UFO problem from a preexisting contract with Battelle. Designated Project No. 9974 and administered through Air Force contract No. AF-33 (038)-4044, it was already code-named Project Stork. Stork assisted in the evaluation of intelligence data provided by Air Intelligence and encompassed 83 separate projects or studies involving 104 employees.¹⁰ Technically speaking, this and all contracts between the Air Force and Battelle were "officially" handled via a contract termed Gold Eagle. Project Stork had been set up with the primary purpose to evaluate the Soviet Union as a military threat. When UFO analysis was tacked on as just one of its many duties, that part of the study became referred to as P-47S.

P-47S formally began on March 31, 1952, and was nicknamed by some junior officers at Air Tech Intelligence as Little Stork. Three scientists were initially assigned to UFO studies at Battelle, but almost all of this work involved compiling IBM punch cards based on data forwarded from Blue Book files.¹¹ Their approach focused on developing a computer analysis of UFO data in the belief that it would provide some answers to the nature of the reported phenomena. It is doubtful, however, that Robert Allen could have referred to the Battelle study because not only was it highly secretive, but its report was not even ready for the Robertson Panel discussions in January 1953. In fact, the final analysis by Battelle was still several years off, and when it became public, the data proved of little worth.¹²

The fourth option, which a number of ufologists have suggested, is that this mysterious 1952 report was simply a reference to Loedding's original Estimate from 1948. The theory goes that during the fall of 1952 when other earlier documents were leaked, the early Estimate may have also been privately shown around. The people who would have seen it may not have realized it dated back to 1948. The only problem with that theory is that the original Estimate, according to Ruppelt, did not analyze the large

number of sightings quoted by Robert Allen.

Most believe Ruppelt's 1956 book to be the first documented account revealing the existence of that now famous original Estimate. Not true. Ironically, it was Alfred Loedding himself who alluded to it two years earlier, but no one paid any attention when he gave a revealing interview to the *Trenton (N.J.) Sunday Times-Advertiser*:

Loedding contends that he was never given the funds or the manpower to handle the job properly. "We couldn't begin to answer the correspondence. After some months, however, we had assembled a considerable volume of first hand reports. I traveled all over the country on 24-hour call to talk with persons who claimed they had seen the phenomena. There were a number of officers and civilian department heads, both at Wright Field and in Washington, who decided there was nothing to 'Flying Saucers' long before we started our investigation. There were others, like general Donald Put [sic] at Wright Field, who insisted that everyone keep an open mind. I don't see how anyone could ignore all of the competent sightings that were turned in. We had more than 100 reports from airline pilots, test pilots and officers and others." "I always wished that certain officers would have confronted the burly tech sergeant who saw the phenomena in Alabama and told him that what he really saw was the planet Venus. I didn't have that kind of physical courage the day I talked with him."

Loedding was sent with his final report to one of the country's leading scientists who was asked to give a decision on the nature of flying saucers.

The celebrated scientist glanced at the lengthy report, according to Loedding, and concluded the same day that flying saucers are a figment of the imagination. "Shortly thereafter I was informed that my stock in Washington had hit an all time low. The Air Force issued a news release to the effect that flying saucers are weather balloons or something and hoped, I suppose, that the matter would end there," said Loedding.

What does he think flying saucers are? Loedding says he doesn't know, but he thinks man has much to learn about them. "Some of them might be space ships. I don't think they are a Soviet invention. Actually I suspect that they may be a kind of space animal, a form of life protected by rays which we know nothing of and obtain fuel from space in [a] way that we do not comprehend I don't know. I only know that we should attempt to learn what they are," concluded Loedding.¹³

All that can definitely be said is that by 1952 there were some military officials who believed in the "interplanetary" explanation for UFOs, just as there were back in 1948. The following 1952 FBI memo proves as much but does not indicate the details behind their reasoning:

SYNOPSIS: Air Intelligence advised of another credible and unexplainable sighting of flying saucers. Air Intelligence still feels flying saucers are optical illusions or atmospherical phenomena but some military officials are seriously considering the possibility of interplanetary ships.

BACKGROUND: You will recall that Air Intelligence has previously kept the Bureau advised regarding developments pertaining to Air Intelligence research on the flying saucer problem. Air Intelligence has previously advised that all research pertaining to this problem is handled by the Air Technical Intelligence Center located at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Dayton, Ohio; that approximately 90 per cent of the reported sightings of flying saucers can be discounted as products of the imagination and as explainable objects such as weather balloons, etc., but that a small percentage of extremely creditable sightings have been unexplainable.

DETAILS: Colonel C. M. Young, Executive Officer to Major General John A. Samford, Director of Intelligence, Air Force, advised on October 23, 1952, that another recent extremely credible sighting had been reported to Air Intelligence. A Navy photographer [Delbert C. Newhouse], while traveling across the United States in his own car, saw a number of objects in the sky which appeared to be flying saucers. He took approximately thirty-five feet of motion-picture film of these objects. He voluntarily submitted the film to Air Intelligence who had it studied by the Air Technical Intelligence Center. Experts at the Air Technical Intelligence Center have advised that, after careful study, there were as many as twelve to sixteen flying objects recorded on this film; that the possibility of weather balloons, clouds or other explainable objects has been completely ruled out; and that they are at a complete loss to explain this most recent credible sighting. The Air Technical Intelligence Center experts pointed out that they could not be optical illusions in as much as optical illusions could not be recorded on film.

"Colonel Young advised that Air Intelligence still feels that the so-called flying saucers are either optical illusions or atmospherical phenomena. He pointed out, however, that some military officials are seriously considering the possibility of interplanetary ships."

ACTION: None. This is for your information.¹⁴

Arch UFO debunker and Harvard astronomer Donald H. Menzel confirmed as much in a January 1962 letter to Nash. Menzel, who once worked as a Naval Intelligence consultant, also had some (unwelcome) contact with the Air Force and Ed Ruppelt's Blue Book project in 1952. Menzel reminisced about those times to Nash, stating that the UFO project, in his view, was not then as biased

towards sightings as had been subsequently assumed by ufologists. On the contrary, he recalled an unnamed group within Intelligence/Blue Book that became extremely taken with the wave of reports during the summer of 1952. Of course, Menzel was expressing this negatively because he saw any serious attention to the sightings as a waste of time. Only later did he commend the Air Force when they assigned more skeptical Project Blue Book chiefs like Capt. George Gregory.¹⁵

We know some of those earlier figures who, in Menzel's words, had become so taken with the subject. Ruppelt's own book and personal papers state that Air Force Intelligence Assistant for Production Brig. Gen. William M. Garland took an avid interest in UFO sightings. Ruppelt described him as a "moderately confirmed believer" and learned that Garland had once seen a UFO while stationed in Sacramento, California, sometime around 1950.¹⁶ While on the staff of Pentagon Air Force Intelligence in 1951, Garland had been one of the few officers open-minded on the flying saucers issue. He had even helped clear the way for a widely read article on UFOs by *Life* magazine that came out in the spring of 1952.

By 1952, Garland was an unofficial liaison or watchdog over Project Blue Book as the number two man at Air Force Intelligence Headquarters in Washington. In the fall, Garland was assigned as commander of the Air Technical Intelligence Center at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base that was the parent organization for Project Blue Book. Before leaving the Air Force for a job at Rand in 1953, he took a serious hands-on interest in the project.¹⁷

We know of others in positions of power in 1952 who expressed concerns about UFOs. For example, Ruppelt alluded a number of times to certain unnamed and very high-ranking military officials. He states both in his book and personal papers that these individuals were as convinced of the extraterrestrial origin of the phenomenon as those who worked on Project Sign. Ruppelt also spoke of an anonymous group of scientists:

... The only other people outside Project Blue Book who have studied the complete case . . . were a group who, due to their associations with the government, had complete access to our files. And these people were not pulp writers or wide eyed fanatics, they were scientists—rocket experts, nuclear physicists, and intelligence experts. They had banded together to study our UFO reports because they were convinced that some of the UFOs that were being reported were interplanetary spaceships. . . .¹⁸

Thus, unfortunately, as in so many branches of research in ufology we have useful information but lack the complete story. Perhaps these leads presented in this article will fill gaps for some other researchers trying to unlock the flying saucer stories from those early days.

Special thanks to Wendy Connors, Col. Howard McCoy's son John, and the dedicated work of Tom Tulien

and Jan Aldrich, which helped make this research paper possible.

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1. J. Allen Hynek, *The Hynek UFO Report* (New York: Dell, 1977), pp. 13–14; and FOIA request I-NAIC-97-053, WPAFB, Dayton, Ohio.
2. Edward J. Ruppelt's unedited manuscript to *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*, courtesy of Michael D. Swords.
3. In the fall of 1948, a warning to American military facilities was issued that stressed an alertness to any unidentified flying object. The alert read: "This Headquarters has instructed all major Air Commands, both in the ZI and Overseas, to be particularly alerted at this time for sightings of unidentified aerial objects and to generally comply with the requests contained in subject TWX. This Headquarters has also requested the cooperation of the Departments of the Army and the Navy, and the Coast Guard, in instructing their installations along the same lines."—FOIA request I-NAIC-97-053, WPAFB, Dayton, Ohio.
4. Donald E. Keyhoe, *Flying Saucers from Outer Space* (New York: Henry Holt, 1953), pp. 246–247.
5. *Berkeley (Calif.) Gazette*, September 26, 1952.
6. Head pilot Capt. Fred V. Koepke was not a witness to the event; he was aft, doing paperwork at the time.
7. Letter to Captain W. J. Hull, from Capt. William B. Nash, April 18, 1954, in Nash's personal files.
8. Edward J. Ruppelt, *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1956), pp. 171–180. Also, Ruppelt's unedited manuscript of the same book and Ruppelt's personal papers, File R105 and Card Box 2, all courtesy of Michael D. Swords.
9. Letter to Michael Hall from Dewey Fournet, August 16, 1999.
10. *History of Air Technical Intelligence Center, 1 January 1953–30 June 1953*, publication T52-8026, Air Technical Intelligence Center, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, 1953. (This document courtesy of Rob Young, historian of the National Air Intelligence Center, 1999.)
11. *History of Air Technical Intelligence Center*.
12. On October 25, 1955, Secretary of the Air Force Donald Quarles authorized the public release of *Special Report No. 14*. It summarized Blue Book investigative data that had been analyzed by the Battelle Institute. Overall, the report stated that only 9% of the sightings studied remained classified as unidentified. Moreover, the report became used by the military to claim that their scientific study had produced no evidence that UFOs were anything other than misinterpretations of known occurrences. The report drew public criticism because many of the more popular cases recently publicized by UFO authors like Keyhoe were not surveyed. Blue Book veteran

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THE TRIVIALIST

BY JEROME CLARK

Shockingly Close to the Truth! Confessions of a Grave-Robbing Ufologist, by James W. Moseley and Karl T. Pflock. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2002. 371p.

Toward the end of this usually breezy memoir of a UFO career not quite like anybody else's, James W. Moseley furrows his brow for a moment and gropes for some statement of larger meaning before, disappointingly, settling on, "All along, cleverly couched in mirth and mischievous mayhem, I have had a serious purpose all too often missed or ignored by others: Encourage others to *think* in new ways and to question their unproved assumptions."

Oh, please. Anyone who has been led to think and question via guidance from Moseley's collected works is somebody who needs to get his nose out of the current issue of *Saucer Smear* and to read an actual book by an actual thinker. From the evidence of his published work, the bulk of it preserved in the pages of *Saucer News* (1954–1968), its successor *Smear* (1976–present), and *Shockingly Close to the Truth!* (written with ufologist Karl T. Pflock, in—for all but a few pages—Moseley's voice), Moseley has spent the past five decades engaged in as little thinking about UFOs as his brain can be lulled into. As I wrote in my profile of him in *The UFO Encyclopedia*, "Over the years he has entertained just about every view it is possible to hold about UFOs, without ever managing to say anything especially interesting or memorable about any of them." The new book is more of the same.

Which is, I hasten to add, no particular criticism. Not everybody has to be serious, and the UFO world has its share of individuals who claim to be serious when all they are is out to lunch. Neither serious nor out to lunch, Moseley has made one undeniable contribution to actual UFO research, his mid-1950s exposé of contactee George Adamski (happily, the legendary but long out-of-print

October 1957 issue of *Saucer News* dedicated to same is reproduced as a *Shockingly* appendix). If it is not the final word that Moseley thinks it is, it is still useful and still valuable—not exactly startling, of course, in its finding that Adamski was fibbing, but nonetheless revelatory in its reconstruction of one of saucerianism's¹ major hoaxes.

Aside from that interlude early in his career and the rare excursion into ufological field work since (as in his interesting perspective on the controversial Gulf Breeze

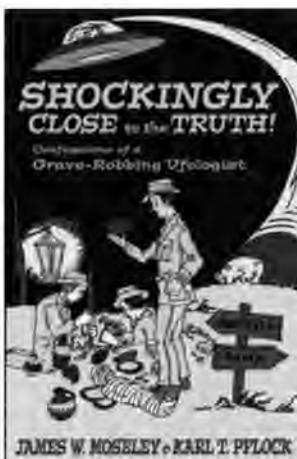
episode in Chapter 15), Moseley has functioned as entertainer or, when that isn't working, pot-stirrer. Well-edited and lively, *Saucer News* is still eminently readable and informative, evoking a lost 1950s world of fringe characters and pursuits. More focused UFO researchers—meaning those who sought to document sightings, not the saucer craze they generated—were making a point of keeping this sort of stuff out of the record.

Saucer News did run occasional pieces by sober ufologists, but few of them amounted to much, and even now readers of the magazine's now-yellowed pages are most likely to turn to coverage of the hilarious likes of Lee Childers, aka Prince Neosom, in one

identity a Detroit baker and devourer of comic books, in the other a member of the royal family of the planet Tythan.² On the other hand, less pleasantly, there were even then Moseley's pointless and incessant feuds, real and otherwise (the long-running pretend one with his real-life good friend Gray Barker). A low point was a specious attack on Donald Keyhoe by Moseley sidekick Michael G. Mann³—significantly, unmentioned in the present book. But at its finest, as it often was, *Saucer News* was a whole lot of mostly good-natured fun.

Saucer Smear has some of that—it can be very funny indeed—but it's just as often irritating and, at its worst, mean-spirited, a platform for Moseley's growing list of grudges and resentments and his dreary manner of reducing every issue or debate in ufology to its component personalities. One sometimes gets the impression of a man who has stayed too long at the fair.

Still, one is grateful for *Shockingly* for its effort to



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preserve memories and events of which future social historians will make more sense than Moseley has been able to. Obviously, he has the right to lead his life as he sees fit, and to make of it what he will. At the same time, since he has never shown the slightest hesitation to criticize others, let us trust that he will receive criticism of himself in the same good humor he expects others to take his of them. If there is much to like in *Shockingly* (for example, the illuminating pages 80–84 and the delightful Chapter 7), there is also much to dispute.

THE CLUB

One reads, for example, of Moseley's real interest—"the people-and-personalities side of ufology," in his words—with a dollop of skepticism, which only multiplies into more dollops as he continues, "To me, this is much more entertaining (and maybe even more important) than UFOs themselves, especially when I can stir things up a bit. Those drawn to saucers, believers and skeptics alike, always have been a remarkable bunch of characters. Many are highly credulous, easy targets for practical jokes and highly susceptible to kook theories and tales of conspiracy, cover-up, and assorted weirdness."

Of course, this sort of defense of a book's *raison d'être* is understandable, even if less than persuasive. The assertion that persons with a sympathetic interest in UFOs are uniquely gullible, or even uniquely colorful, is hardly original; except for the equal-opportunity slap at "skeptics," it is sheer debunker boilerplate, a cliché by now so exhausted that the reader is all but comatose by the end of the third sentence. Moseley insists that he is no debunker, though anyone who has followed his career will have no trouble discerning why he is every debunker's favorite UFO personality or why, for that matter, Prometheus—CSICOP's house publisher in all but name—should be pleased to release this insider's account underscoring the fact. Moseley's obsessions—to which, again, he is entitled—have the effect of rendering ufology trivial to outsiders' eyes and making even its most intellectually restrained participants look like dolts who can't tell a hoax from a hole in their socks.

Having interacted with ufologists since the early 1960s and having lived among my fellow humans for the decade and a half preceding that, I think I can state the following with reasonable confidence: Over the years what has most struck me about ufologists (I'll get to saucerians later) is not their remarkableness or their credulity, but their ordinariness.

One suspects that Moseley's social world has so long centered on UFO personalities that he has failed to notice that many of his fellow humans, who have no detectable interest in UFOs, can also be credulous, paranoid, easily fooled, or just plain weird. It's a hypothesis easily tested. Just point yourself in the direction of the nearest watering hole, plunk yourself on a barstool, and listen. Or check out

polls which unsettlingly document how many ostensibly normal people believe we never went to the moon, or that the CIA engineered JFK's assassination. Or spend time in a university English department where trendy, reality-un tainted academic and ideological discourse reigns supreme. And let's not get started on the moonshine that routinely passes for political discourse, or the dubious truths of Freudian psychoanalysis still clung to by well-credentialed folk who ought to know better. Let's also note that compared to some of our fellow citizens, hardly any ufologists are actually scary, and none of those—or, for that matter, any of the rest—exercise power.

Let us not flatter ourselves: We are no more remarkable than anybody else. We are, in the good sense and the bad, a pretty ordinary bunch of people, no more or less foolish than most. That banal reality regularly provides fodder for newspaper reporters covering ufological gatherings, at which they are always surprised to find that UFO people are indistinguishable from their neighbors. Nonetheless, the stereotype, without which Moseley and Pflock would not have landed a book contract, is entrenched and endures. Yet, after all is said and done, ufology is just another club in a nation of members.

Some years ago I fell into conversation with a woman who raises sled dogs with her husband in northern Minnesota. The two of them had spent years inside the tiny subculture of sled-dog raisers, and the woman also entertained, on the side, an interest in UFOs. She observed that ufologists behave exactly like sled-dog people. I suspect that their conduct is also like that of stamp collectors or bird watchers or sociologists or blues scholars or physicists. In other words, they behave like normal human beings who, in the normal human fashion, sometimes think and act dumbly, sometimes drive each other crazy and squabble, sometimes believe what they shouldn't, and sometimes, yes, conduct themselves sensibly and even nobly. Every single human being, including every single human being who has given all but no thought to ufology's concerns, harbors at least one silly belief which, if exposed, would open him or her to ridicule. Henry H. Bauer, who writes as wisely as anyone on science's difficult relationship with anomalies, expresses it best: "Foolish ideas do not make a fool—if they did, we could all rightly be called fools."

CREDULITY AND MAGIC

Moseley, who uses the word freely, never gets around to defining exactly what the adjective "credulous" means in a ufological context. We all agree that the phenomenon exists—I would define as credulous, for example, anyone who believes that George Adamski actually met Venusians, or that paranormal beings are communicating authentic truths through channeling—but obvious, untaxing exceptions like these aside, the concept is often enough a slippery one, deserving of more thoughtful consideration

than Moseley affords it, which is none. Are UFO-dismissive astronomers who believe firmly in the ubiquity of extraterrestrial civilizations, on the basis of zero empirical evidence, credulous? The UFO literature contains a striking number of cases over which intelligent, thoughtful, informed individuals honorably disagree and in which credulity is not an issue. And at least those ufologists who take the extraterrestrial hypothesis seriously, unlike the astronomers who mock them for doing so, derive their ideas from a body of evidence which so far seems impervious to prosaic accounting.

At various points in the book, Moseley, scoffing at nuts-and-bolts ufologists, champions what he good-humoredly calls the "3½ D theory," which translated amounts to "UFOs are magic." UFOs, he says, "very well may be beyond proof," without explaining why he has come to a conclusion which, given the virtually nonexistent resources addressed to the UFO question (and the suggestive results that emerged on those infrequent occasions when they were), seems premature, to put it charitably. He also contends, "I think it's *possible* [his emphasis] UFOs come from other planets, but it's much more likely that, whatever they are, they are a permanent part of Earth's environment." Notice the already inexplicable probability claim "more likely" is not mouthful enough; it's "*much* more likely." The sentence disorients the reader with its vacuousness. To the extent that it offers up a thought sufficiently baked to answer to anything empirical, it is worth remarking, though only barely, that evidence of a UFO phenomenon before 1800 is notably scarce.⁴

More important, Moseley clearly has given no more cogitation than the vague reflection above to the question of what a 3½ D-magical UFO phenomenon might be like. It would surely be *very* strange, and it would do things that would make no sense to Moseley or any of the rest of us cosmically provincial humans. It would, in fact, appear absurd. Yet "absurd" is the adjective he employs to *reject* UFO cases.

LINDA WARS

His coverage of the Linda Cortile case (pages 304–309) catches Moseley in a moment of particular unreflectiveness. The case is, he informs us, "absurd" and thus only evidence of the perfidy, gullibility, or fill-in-your-favorite-undesirable-quality of the hated Budd Hopkins (whom Moseley more than once identifies, insultingly and emptily, as "abduction guru"), who is the incident's most prominent investigator and the author of a book on it.⁵ In a perverse way, one wishes that it were only his detestation of Hopkins that is clouding his thoughts, since the only imaginable alternative is that he has failed to grasp the manifest cognitive dissonance inherent in arguing in one breath that (1) UFOs are far stranger than we could ever imagine and, in the next, that (2) if somebody reports them

acting that way, the story is (a) preposterous and therefore (b) a hoax.

By any standard the Cortile case is, as Greg Sandow wrote five years ago (*IUR*, Spring 1997, pp. 18–23, and Summer 1997, pp. 3–10, 35–36), "the most unbelievable story ever vouched for by a major UFO investigator."⁶ Mindbogglingly complex, resistant to easy summary, it involves a 3 a.m. abduction, allegedly seen by others, of a woman (known in the literature as Linda Cortile) from a Lower East Side Manhattan apartment, and the supposed abductions of others, including a prominent international figure sometimes (though not always) said to be then-UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar, plus complex and equally bizarre sequel events. It is, as advertised, unbelievable, which is not, however, the last word. The problem with it is that *any* explanation, positive (it happened) or negative (it was a hoax), is beset with difficulties. The latter, for example, necessarily posits what amounts to a conspiracy theory. There are witnesses, who to all appearances are sincere and with nothing to gain, who vouch for key aspects. But the evidence never rises above the suggestive into the realm of the compelling. It is just enough, but no more, to keep the case open and to frustrate the would-be debunker.⁷

The Cortile case, in short, goes everywhere and nowhere. If you can't believe that any such thing could ever happen, you will have to take it as an article of faith that it is a hoax perpetrated by unidentified persons for unclear reasons, and you will go on with your life secure in that conviction. But even if you think that such an occurrence is at least a faint theoretical possibility, you will almost certainly also conclude that the case is unproved, probably unprovable, and in common with the skeptic, you will go on to live your life as if this thing never happened. If you think about the case at all, it will probably be passingly, as in "wasn't that weird?" or "what was *that* all about?"

Yet for some, tolerance of ambiguity, in other words the concession that knowledge extends not far enough to get us to certain truth, is impossible. Three individuals wrote and widely disseminated a document, based on what was described as an investigation of the case, that purported to show that Linda Cortile⁸ was a hoaxter and that Hopkins and other corrupt ufologists (including me) were obstructing the truth. One of the individuals phoned me one evening and, after helpfully informing me that I live in a "delusional world," added that he was turning my name over to the police. As the document made the rounds, I had the dubious pleasure of seeing myself, as I wrote at the time, "attacked by persons who do not know me but who nonetheless have attributed to me beliefs I do not hold and acts I have not committed." Hopkins was at the receiving end of even wilder charges. Finally, forced to defend ourselves against the escalating lunacy—by which time we were as angry as our accusers—we devoted most of an issue of *IUR* (March/April 1993) to the controversy. This was not one of ufology's prouder moments—for any of us.

Most of us don't *enjoy* feuds, which are not to be confused with debates.

It is, of course, precisely this sort of episode in which, by his own admission, Moseley, feudist extraordinaire, revels. This is where he "can stir things up a bit," in his euphemistic phrase. *Saucer Smear* played the affair for all (actually, much more than) it was worth, running—I am told; I have not read the issues in question—furious personal attacks on me, apparently for the crime of being friendly with Hopkins. In his account, naturally, Hopkins is the villain, his (and our) anger and distress over what we (and not just we) saw as slanders, character assassination, and sloppy work are mere "fulminations." The debunking trio, in *Shockingly*'s highly selective telling of the story, are the innocent victims whose only crime was being honest and objective. In fact, the wretched rhetorical and behavioral (and ultimately irrelevant) excess aside, the trio were wrong on the facts that mattered, as Greg Sandow, who pursued his own independent inquiries into the case, has documented beyond anyone's so-far-demonstrated ability to refute. Nonetheless, the oblivious or indifferent Moseley repeats them with no hint of critical reservation, right down to the repeatedly discredited canard that Linda's story echoes the plot of a 1989 science-fiction novel.⁹

OVER THE EDGE

If what Moseley (with Pflock) writes of the Linda case contributes nothing new to a dimming—and, one hopes, soon-to-be forgotten—dispute, *Shockingly* opens up an infinitely more serious matter. An extraordinary charge, surely the gravest ever leveled against a UFO personality, appears in print for the first time.

In the 1950s, George Hunt Williamson, contactee, fringe archaeologist, and ancient-astronaut theorist, was a saucer celebrity. He came into prominence as one of the six "witnesses" to his friend George Adamski's first meeting with the Venusian Orthon in the California desert on November 20, 1952. Arguably the most colorful figure of the early UFO age, Williamson went on to write a series of books, lecture widely, channel messages from Space Brothers, and at their urging spend time in remote regions of Peru conducting archaeological digs as he awaited imminent apocalypse and mass saucer landings. He also had an association with the notorious William Dudley Pelley, whom Moseley accurately identifies as a "fascist mystic," and flirted, and sometimes embraced, anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.¹⁰ In the early 1960s he dropped out of sight. When he died in Long Beach, California, in January 1986, most who heard the news were surprised to learn that he had been alive that long.

During his active career Williamson was a particular target of Moseley's wrath, the subject of sometimes interesting "exposes." Moseley, who like Williamson had spent time in Peru (thus the "grave-robbing"—smuggling of native Peruvian artifacts—of *Shockingly*'s subtitle), har-

bored a particular loathing for Williamson, bewilderingly but characteristically undiminished over the decades. The vendetta was conducted both in print (where *Saucer News* amusingly laid bare Williamson's considerably inflated academic resume¹¹) and in private, where Moseley has gleefully trafficked in lurid yarns—unbelieved by me—concerning supposed Williamson misbehavior of various sorts. A particularly beloved one, with which Moseley has regaled many over the years, appears in print here (on page 137) for the first time:

At some point during this mystical Peruvian idyll, Williamson's wife [Betty] was killed in a highly suspicious accident, falling hundreds of feet to her death at the bottom of an Andean cliff. While the Peruvian authorities couldn't prove it, they strongly suspected Williamson of foul play, and they "suggested" it would be wise for him to leave the country with some dispatch.

I am quoting rather than paraphrasing these words so that there can be no question of what Moseley is saying here: Williamson murdered his wife.

Yet in an October 3, 1993, letter Moseley referred to the alleged murder as no more than a "fascinating rumor." Not a fact, mind you, just entertaining gossip. Recently, when I asked Moseley what the source was, it was no faceless rumor. Now it was Yonah Fortner, who "mixed with high Peruvian government officials. . . . Yonah's truthfulness in some (other) instances was not the greatest. Yet, I have no reason to doubt him on the point in question."¹²

Wrong. This was hardly the only tall tale Fortner passed on to the—let us resist the temptation to call in the c-word and instead go with "receptive"—Moseley. Almost entirely forgotten today, Fortner, who wrote under the pseudonym Y. N. ibn Aharon, contributed regularly to *Saucer News*. In *Shockingly*, Moseley laments his present-day obscurity and credits him with "a very scholarly but dreadfully obscure series of articles called 'Extraterrestrialism as an Historical Doctrine.' . . . In a very real sense, it could be said that Yonah pioneered the ancient astronauts idea later so profitably exploited by Erich von Däniken."

Even today, as these words make clear, Moseley has yet to grasp that "Extraterrestrialism" was almost certainly an elaborate prank, based on allegedly ancient Middle Eastern manuscripts whose presence in this universe Fortner could not demonstrate (all were conveniently obscure and inaccessible¹³) and of which no reputable authority consulted on the matter had ever heard.

As much as Williamson, Fortner conjured up an alternative-reality set of professional credentials. A favorite was that he was the youngest Sephardic rabbi in the United States. Asked for verification, the Sephardic Jewish Community of America insisted that it had never heard of him. When a "bibliography" of his sources was shown

REPORT OF THE DEATH OF AN AMERICAN CITIZEN

Lima, Peru, September 30, 1958
(Place and date)

Name in full	Betty J. WILLIAMSON	Occupation	Housewife
Native or naturalized	Born at Chicago, Illinois	Last known address in the United States	Prescott, Arizona
Date of death	August 11, 1958	Age	32
Place of death	Clinica Good Hope, Malecón Alta 956, Miraflores, Lima, Peru	(Address) (Number and street) or (Bureau or hotel)	(City) (Country)
Cause of death	Certified by attending physician, Dr. Emilio Weiss, to have been heart failure due to acute rheumatic fever and malnutrition.	(Indicate authority for statement)	
Disposition of the remains	Buried at the Cementerio Presbiterio "Matías Maestro", Quartel S. Lucio, No. 54, Línea F.		
Local law as to disinterring remains	Unembalmed remains may be disinterred after two years.		
Disposition of the effects	In custody of mother, Mrs. Neva May Bettler		
Person or official responsible for custody of effects and accounting therefor	Mother		
Informed by telegram:			
NAME	ADDRESS	RELATIONSHIP	DATE SENT
Copy of this report sent to:			
NAME	ADDRESS	RELATIONSHIP	DATE SENT
Mrs. Neva May Bettler	401 W. 7th, Jasper, Indiana	Mother	9-30-58
Mr. George L. Williamson	c/o The Hon. Sirnley Le Poer French, 64 Port St., London S.W. 1, England	Husband	9-30-58
Mrs. Ruth Balles	Osage Beach, Missouri	Sister	9-30-58
Traveling or residing abroad with relatives or friends as follows:			
NAME	ADDRESS	RELATIONSHIP	
Other known relatives (not given above):			
NAME	ADDRESS	RELATIONSHIP	

This information and data concerning an inventory of the effects, accounts, etc., have been placed under File 234 in the correspondence of this office.

Remarks: Death certificate issued by Municipality of Miraflores, Lima, Peru showing date, time and place of death as stated above and as indicated on Page No. 233 of Book No. 54 of the death records of the Municipality for the year 1958; retained in Embassy files. Deceased was the bearer. (Continue on reverse if necessary.) (see reverse)

[Initials]
No fee prescribed.

Carrie G. Tappas, Jr.
Vice Consul
of the United States of America

446-64515

of U.S. passport No. 859425 issued by the Department of State on February 24, 1956, including her son, Mark Frederick Williamson. Passport was amended to make Mark bearer of the passport and returned to deceased's mother who returned to U.S. with him on September 6, 1958.

to Abraham Berger, the chief of the Jewish Division of the New York Public Library, Berger could only express bafflement. "It just makes no sense to me," he said in a letter to ufologist Alexander D. Mebane.

Betty Williamson died of natural causes on August 11, 1958, in the Clinic of Good Hope in Lima, Peru. Her body was turned over to her mother, and she was buried in the city's Presbyterian cemetery. A U.S. State Department "Report on the Death of an American Citizen," dated September 30 (above), cites the testimony of Mrs. Williamson's attending physician, who determined that her death was occasioned by "heart failure due to acute rheumatic fever and malnutrition."

Far from standing at the edge of an Andean cliff cackling like a B-movie villain as his wife plunged to her doom, George Hunt Williamson was not even in Peru when Betty died. He had left earlier on an international lecture tour and learned of her passing on his arrival in London.¹⁴ After the European tour, he and Betty planned to conduct a lecture series in the United States. Williamson had even written a draft of an advertising flyer which indicates that his wife was to speak on how a diet of "natural foods" had

cured her rheumatic fever. Tragically, the natural foods failed to provide her with basic nutrition and apparently only hastened her death.¹⁵

I have no idea how many people will read Moseley and Pflock's malicious fantasy. It is safe to say, however, that in no time at all it will be a "fact," rehashed in just about everything written about him, that Williamson pushed his wife off a cliff. A character-exterminating accusation against an innocent man has been made on the basis of nothing beyond a "rumor"—though I have uncovered no evidence that anybody but Moseley himself ever circulated it—and the testimony of a source of certifiable noncredibility. No effort was made, by either the authors or their publisher, to seek verification for a charge that is as vile as it is bogus.

THE COSMOS AND THE MAIN CHANCE

The source of Moseley's consuming antipathy to Williamson is something of a mystery. Nothing in the public record—certainly nothing in this book—sheds light on it. One wonders if its origins lie in events in Peru about which, so far at least, Moseley has not been forthcoming. He swears he never crossed paths with Williamson in Peru, and we can take him at his word while still speculating about how two American adventurers, with matching but conflicting egos and ambitions, might have rubbed each other the wrong way. Curiously, however, Williamson's private correspondence has little to say about Moseley, whom he evidently found less interesting than Moseley found him.

In any event, Moseley will tolerate no tolerance for Williamson from others. Michael Swords and I get slammed on page 138 for our softness on the subject. He cites an *IUR* article¹⁶ in which Swords remarked, "Williamson was basically an honest man. . . . I am led to conclude that he actually believed all the stuff—the wild, amazing, impossible-to-believe stuff—that he wrote about. . . . Williamson is not easy to explain and cannot be deposited into some conveniently labeled box." Moseley triumphantly announces, "Here we see The Problem of Ufology nicely boxed up, personified and in black and white."

Actually, here we see The Problem of James W. Moseley. In his personality-centered ufology, those Moseley despises he transforms into inhuman caricatures of whom only one truth—the most negative one imaginable—applies. Therefore, in the instance in question, Williamson can only be scam artist, liar, and killer.

Well, we know he wasn't a killer. We also know that by his own account, Moseley met Williamson only once, during his investigation of Adamski, and in his view Williamson answered his questions honestly.¹⁷ Beyond that, "I barely knew him, and read only his first book, 'The Saucers Speak,' coauthored with Al Bailey."¹⁸

Thanks to Moseley and Mann, we also know that
(continued on page 29)

THE 1952 NASH/FORTENBERRY SIGHTING REVISITED

BY THOMAS TULIEN

Following the UFO History Workshop held in Chicago May 29–June 1, 1999, and the subsequent formation of the Sign Historical Group, it became clear that significant oral commentaries relating to UFOs were not being recorded. Since I had some expertise conducting interviews and was versed in the technology, I was inspired to form the Sign Oral History Project (SOHP) in order to preserve information that may otherwise be lost and ultimately make it available for scholarly study. Many individuals who have personal knowledge of some aspect of UFO history—witnesses, Air Force project officials and personnel, scientists involved in government-funded research, investigators and individuals involved in the social aspects of the phenomenon—have never been interviewed about facts and perspectives that only they can provide.

Time is running out. The initial progress of the project has been excellent and we have managed to collect over 70 videotaped interviews with the help of many colleagues.

ORAL HISTORY AS SOURCE MATERIAL

Central to the issue is the maxim that *oral history must be based firmly on research*. This is a critical point and speaks directly to the evidentiary value of oral history. Many critical essays have been written addressing the fear that the ease of tape recording will mean a downgrading both of source material and what is made from it for future scholars. The late Barbara Tuchman charged that oral history gathers trash and trivia with all the discrimination of a vacuum cleaner. Of course, one researcher's trash is another's gold. Nevertheless, her critique is not without substance, because standards have been slow to develop.

Oral history is in many ways similar to oral tradition (unwritten knowledge passed on through successive generations), since it can introduce error or falsification and requires comparative evaluation for veracity. If human memory is a selective record, then recollections (not

concurrent to the subject or event) are even more selective and the evidentiary value decreases towards abstraction. However, some researchers (including myself) find oral evidence reliable for a unique event that leaves a powerful and sometimes life-altering impression on the interviewee.

The memoir that emerges is a new kind of historical document. The fact that the document is mutually created contributes to both the strength and weakness inherent in oral-history memoirs. Nevertheless, with *caveat emptor* in mind, the problems of evaluating spoken testimony are not so different from those inherent in the use of other primary sources. To be most effective, oral history must be well-grounded in analysis and a thorough knowledge and understanding of all available and pertinent sources, if it is to produce the best and most reliable oral documentation.

The following article was inspired by a recent SOHP interview with Bill Nash at his home in Florida on January 4, 2002. Many readers will be familiar with Capt. Nash's July 14, 1952, UFO sighting, which remains an exceptional report despite the fact that it lasted only 12 seconds. Still, he was the right observer at the right time, and left an indelible mark on the history of the UFO phenomenon.

Meeting Bill Nash made me realize why this particular sighting is still regarded as one of the "classics." Aside from the exceptional qualifications of both pilots, the genuine compassion and strength of character Nash revealed in the course of the interview was clearly evident. Documents seldom convey the way that people thought, but interviews can provide a unique opportunity to assess character. I must admit that in this case I have been unashamedly seduced.

THE NASH/FORTENBERRY SIGHTING

On the evening of July 14, 1952, a Pan American World Airways DC-4 was on a routine flight, ferrying from New York to Miami with 10 passengers and a crew of three consisting of Capt. Fred V. Koepke, First Officer William B. Nash, and Second Officer William H. Fortenberry.

The sun had set one hour before, although the coastline was still visible and the night was clear and almost

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entirely dark. With the aircraft set on automatic pilot, cruising at 8,000 feet over the Chesapeake Bay approaching Norfolk, Virginia, they were due to overfly the VRF radio range station in six minutes and make a position report. Since this was Fortenberry's first run on this course, Nash, in the left pilot's seat, was orienting Fortenberry by pointing out landmarks and the distant lights of cities along the route.

Nash had just pointed out Newport News, ahead and to the right of the plane, when unexpectedly a red-orange brilliance appeared near the ground, beyond and slightly east of the city. The brilliance seemed to have appeared suddenly and both pilots witnessed the startling appearance at practically the same moment. In the excitement someone blurted out, "What the hell is that?"

Capt. Nash later described their initial observations:

Almost immediately we perceived that it consisted of six bright objects streaking toward us at tremendous speed, and obviously well below us. They had the fiery aspect of hot coals, but of much greater glow—perhaps twenty times more brilliant than any of the scattered ground lights over which they passed or the city lights to the right. Their shape was clearly outlined and evidently circular; the edges were well defined, not phosphorescent or fuzzy in the least. The red-orange color was uniform over the upper surface of each craft.

Within the few seconds that it took the six objects to come half the distance from where we had first seen them, we could observe that they were holding a narrow echelon formation—a stepped-up line tilted slightly to our right, with the leader at the lowest point and each following craft slightly higher. At about the halfway point, the leader appeared to attempt a sudden slowing. We received this impression because the second and third wavered slightly and seemed almost to overrun the leader, so that for a brief moment during the remainder of their approach the positions of these three varied. It looked very much as if an element of "human" or "intelligence" error had been introduced, in so far as the following two did not react soon enough when the leader began to slow down and so almost overran him.

What occurred next utterly astonished the pilots. The procession shot forward like a stream of tracer bullets, out over the Chesapeake Bay to within a half-mile of the plane. Realizing that the line was going to pass under the nose of the plane and to the right of the copilot, Nash quickly unfastened his seat belt so that he could move to the window on that side. During this interval, Nash briefly lost sight of the objects, though Fortenberry kept them in view below the plane. Both would later recollect:

All together, they flipped on edge, the sides to the left of us going up and the glowing surface facing right.



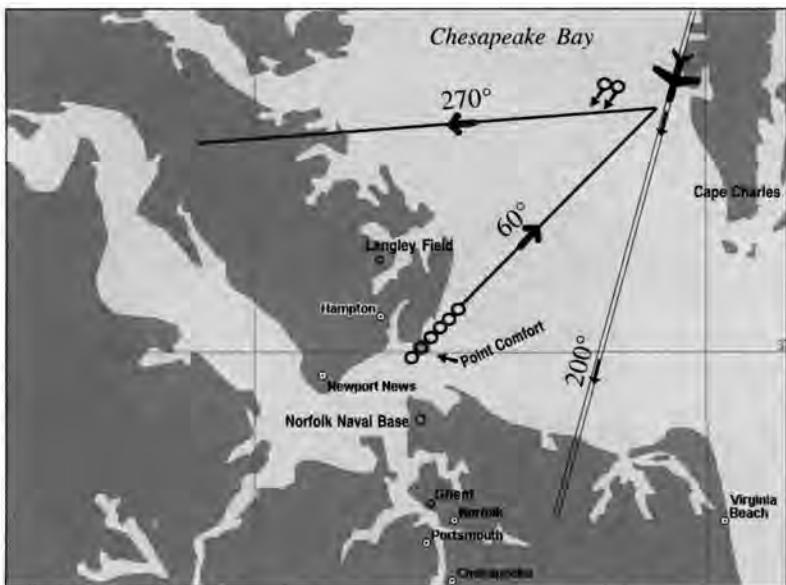
Captain William B. Nash. Photo by Tom Tulian, ©2002.

Though the bottom surfaces did not become clearly visible, we had the impression that they were unlighted. The exposed edges, also unlighted, appeared to be about 15 feet thick, and the top surface, at least, seemed flat. In shape and proportion, they were much like coins. While all were in the edgewise position, the last five slid over and past the leader so that the echelon was now tail-foremost, so to speak, the top or last craft now being nearest to our position.

This shift had taken only a second and was completed by the time Nash reached the window. Both pilots then observed the discs flip back from on-edge to the flat position and the entire line dart off to the west in a direction that formed a sharp angle with their initial course, holding the new formation. The pilots had noticed that the objects seemed to dim slightly just prior to the abrupt angular turn and had brightened considerably after making it. Attempting to describe the objects' extreme actions, Nash proposed, "The only descriptive comparison we can offer is a ball ricocheting off a wall."

An instant later, two more identical objects darted out past the right wing, from behind and under the airplane at the same altitude as the others and quickly fell in behind the receding procession. They observed that these two seemed to glow considerably brighter than the others, as though applying power to catch up. As they stared after them dumbfounded, suddenly the lights of all of the objects blinked out, only to reappear a moment later, maintaining low altitude out across the blackness of the bay, until about 10 miles beyond Newport News when they began climbing in a graceful arc that carried them well above the plane's altitude. Sweeping upward they randomly blinked out and finally vanished in the dark night sky. Describing the disappearance of the objects some years later, Nash wrote:

As they climbed, they oscillated up and down behind one another in a irregular fashion, as though they were extremely sensitive to control. In doing this, they went



Map of Newport News area, showing places mentioned in the text.

vertically past one another, bobbing up and down, (just as the front three went horizontally past one another, as the initial six approached us. This appeared to be an intelligence error, "lousing up the formation")—they disappeared by blinking out in a mixed-up fashion, in no particular order.

Their bewildered initial reaction is best affirmed in the words of Nash:

We stared after them, dumbfounded and probably open-mouthed. We looked around at the sky, half expecting something else to appear, though nothing did. There were flying saucers, and we had seen them. What we had witnessed was so stunning and incredible that we could readily believe that if either of us had seen it alone, he would have hesitated to report it. But here we were, face to face. We couldn't both be mistaken about such a striking spectacle.

The time was 8:12 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. As the reality of their experience dawned on them, the first question that came to mind was whether anybody else onboard had seen the spectacle. Fortenberry went through the small forward passenger compartment, where the captain was intent on paper work. In the main cabin, a cautious inquiry whether anyone had seen anything unusual produced no results.

Back in the cockpit, the pilots radioed Norfolk and gave their position according to schedule, and upon receiving confirmation added a second message to be forwarded to the military: "Two pilots of this flight observed eight unidentified objects vicinity Langley Field; estimate speed in excess of 1,000 m.p.h.; altitude estimated 2,000 feet." At this point, Koepke came forward and took control of the DC-4 while Nash and Fortenberry went to work reconstructing the sighting.

With a Dalton Mark 7 computer they determined the objects' angle of approach and the same for the angle of departure. The difference between the two was about 30 degrees; therefore, the objects had made a 150-degree change of course almost instantaneously.

They were able to accurately determine their position visually and by reference to their position to the VHF range at Norfolk. The objects first appeared beyond and to the east of Newport News, came toward the DC-4 in a straight line, changed direction beneath the plane, departed in a straight line to the west passing a suburban edge of Newport News, and seemed to travel out over a dark area before they began to climb steeply into the night sky. They determined that Newport News was 25 miles away and added the additional 10 and 30 miles that they estimated the

objects had traveled in each direction, arriving at a total distance of 90 miles. To be conservative, they decided to use 50 miles, since they had seen them travel at least that distance. Determining the duration of the sighting was not so straightforward. Wanting to be accurate, they reenacted the exact sequence of events seven times, and using the panel stopwatch clocks determined that the time period did not exceed 12 seconds each time. Again, to be conservative they adopted 15 seconds in the final computation, which meant that the objects were flying at the rate of 200 miles per minute, or 12,000 miles per hour.

They estimated that the objects were slightly more than a mile below the plane, or about 2,000 feet above ground level, and by mentally comparing their appearance with the wingspread of a DC-3 at that distance, judged the size to be approximately 100 feet in diameter and 15 feet thick. Determinations of distance, size, and speed are always open to question by the fact that the objects observed were unidentified. However, this particular incident was unusual in the sense that the pilots observed the objects between the ground and the plane. Most sightings occur against an empty sky without any standard of comparison to known objects or distance, but in this case the plane's altitude of 8,000 feet established a finite distance for reference. Nash later qualified his ability to estimate the altitude of the objects in a letter to astrophysicist Donald H. Menzel:

We both had flown many thousands of hours at either 7000 or 8000 feet, because these altitudes were high enough to avoid most turbulence but not so high as to starve us for oxygen. Hence, a sort-of "instinct-judgment" about the height of objects gradually developed. If after 10,000 hours of flying at the same altitude a pilot cannot judge if something (even an unfamiliar something) is halfway between his plane

and the ground, and split that in half again, he best quit. Our judgment, after seeing these things travel nearly a hundred miles, and observing them both from a distance and almost directly beneath us, was that they were holding 2000 feet for most of the observed time.

Furthermore, both Nash and Fortenberry had served in the Navy during the war in which Nash flew patrol bombers for the Naval Air Transport Service patrolling between the African and South American coastlines in search of German submarines. Fortenberry served in the U.S. Navy's air experimental wing for two years and was well aware of aeronautical developments for the time. In naval training, both pilots had received intensive instruction in aircraft identification and had learned to identify every ship in the German navy.

While Nash and Fortenberry were still discussing the matter, the lights of a northbound airliner came into view on a course about 1,000 feet above. Ordinarily the head-on approach of two airliners at 500 mph seems fairly rapid. But in this instance, compared to the streaking speed of the discs, the oncoming plane seemed to be standing still. If anything could have increased the effect of the night's experience, it was just such a commonplace event.

They landed at Miami International Airport shortly after midnight. Upon entering the operations office, they found a copy of the message they had transmitted to the military through Norfolk, with an addition: "Advise crew five jets were in area at the time." This didn't exactly apply, since the things they had seen were eight in number, and they were dead sure they were not jets.

At 7:00 a.m., Air Force investigators telephoned and an appointment was set for an interview later that morning. USAF Wing Intelligence officer Maj. John H. Sharpe and four officers from the 7th District Office of Special Investigations met Nash and Fortenberry at the airport. In separate rooms, the pilots were questioned for one hour and 45 minutes and following that, for a half-hour together. The pilots were duly impressed with the skill and thoroughness of their interrogators. Questions had been prepared in advance and posed individually to the two pilots in order to evaluate their recall. Map overlays were compared and they had a complete weather report for the area, which coincided with the previous night's flight plan. It gave 3/8 cirrus clouds at about 20,000 feet, no inversion, and a sharply clear night with probably some unstable air. Visibility was unusually good. Following the interview, the investigators advised the pilots that they had already received seven additional reports from persons who had witnessed similar incidents within 30 minutes in the same area. The best was from a naval Lieut. Commander and his wife who described a formation of red discs traveling at high speed and making immediate directional changes without a turning radius. The pilots were surprised when they were told that their particular experience was by no means unique.

None of these reports appear in the official Blue Book files, though three reports requested by ATIC in August 1952 describe multiple objects cavorting over Washington, D.C., at 9:00 on the morning of the sighting. Fortunately, NICAP retained copies of some of the confirmatory reports for the evening of July 14, which were published in the Norfolk newspapers. Although none of the reports appear to describe the identical maneuvers that the pilots witnessed, a couple are sufficiently similar to be taken as reasonable corroborations. For example, one witness stated in the July 17 *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot* that

... she and a friend were sitting on a bench in Stockley Gardens [in the Ghent section of Norfolk] when they saw what appeared to be flying saucers "circling overhead and then going north."

She said they saw seven or eight altogether "the first three white and the others were yellow and red."

In a July 20 letter to the editor, a naval officer from the light cruiser *Roanoke*, apparently the same witness mentioned to Nash and Fortenberry during the OSI investigation, reported that he had seen eight red lights in the direction of Point Comfort in Hampton that proceeded in a straight line and then disappeared. He saw the objects at about 8:55 p.m. Eastern Daylight Saving Time, approximately 15 minutes before the pilot's sighting, as he was driving inside the Norfolk Naval Operations Base for a 9:00 appointment.

Especially interesting is that as a result of the press coverage of the Pan American pilots' sighting the following day, Paul R. Hill, an aerodynamicist at the NASA-Langley facility, decided to watch the sky for UFOs on the evening of July 16. Expecting "conformance to pattern," he parked at the waterfront a little before 8:00 and soon observed two amber-colored objects approach from the south and turn west, taking them directly overhead. At this point, the objects curiously appeared to be alternatively jumping forward of each other slightly. Then, after passing the zenith, they made an astounding maneuver. They began to revolve around a common center, and after a few revolutions, switched to the vertical plane. Within a few more seconds, two similar objects joined the first pair before all four headed south. Hill later wrote:

Up to that point I had been just a fascinated spectator. Now they had convinced me. At that moment, I realized that here were visitors from another world. There is a lot of truth in the old saying, "It's different when it happens to you." It was within my line of business to know that no Earthcraft could remotely approach those maneuvers.

This sighting prompted Hill to a life of collecting and analyzing UFO reports for physical properties and propulsion possibilities in an attempt to make technological sense of the unconventional objects. The study was even-

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UFO/VEHICLE—continued from page 5

An example of this comes from an encounter that occurred on April 24, 1966, in Fleming, New York, about 30 miles southwest of Syracuse. Marvin and Viola Swartwood were driving home through a rainstorm that evening when a "brilliant, flashing ball of fire appeared three feet above the front of their car," slightly on the right side. Mr. Swartwood reported that the ball was so bright it lit up the surroundings like daylight. The ball fell onto their car with a loud snap, then vanished.

Mrs. Swartwood was sitting on the right side of the car, closest to the phenomenon, with her right arm on the door rest and her fingers near the vent window (the regular windows were completely rolled up). As the ball hit the car, she felt a shock in her neck and an impulse running down her right arm. The couple immediately drove to the sheriff's office, and after speaking to authorities, went to the local hospital because the right side of Mrs. Swartwood's body was partially paralyzed.

Doctors at the hospital confirmed her symptoms, and noted that her condition was the same as if she had been subjected to an electrical shock. The last newspaper account in our file, a few days after the event, happily reports that Mrs. Swartwood's condition was improving.

There was no damage to the car, nor was there any

damage to the surroundings, which were searched by the police. Nor were there any reports of normal lightning in the vicinity.

The above accounts of encounters between vehicles and meteorites and ball lightning prove that vehicles can have accidents with natural phenomenon. But what about with UFOs? Is the Mount Clemens case unique or not? I turn to that topic next.

UFO/VEHICLE CRASHES

A careful, though not complete, search of the CUFOS files and published literature has located about a dozen prior events where a UFO smashed into a car. The earliest such event occurred in 1947, with the majority occurring in the 1960s and 1970s (which is also when the bulk of other types of physical trace cases happened). Almost all these reports come from North America, specifically the United States, which may be readily explained by the greater number of vehicles and miles driven in this country compared to the rest of the world (at least until recently).

The reports have not been spread randomly across the United States, for whatever reason. Instead, two took place in Ohio, two in Minnesota, and two in North Carolina. Few have occurred in the western states. Almost all have occurred at night, like the Mount Clemens event, but that,

after all, is when UFOs normally are seen. Eight of the cases happened in the summer months of June, July, and August, and only one crash occurred in the months before June. Not every case was investigated in depth, but one of them, the Val Johnson case in Minnesota, is one of the best-investigated cases in UFO history.

The UFO has usually been reported as quite small, about two to three feet in diameter, typically oval-shaped. If glowing, it is white.

In most of the cases, the vehicles were damaged, although the damage was by and large confined to the exterior of the vehicle, so all the vehicles were driveable. Most commonly, the windshield was cracked, the car's paint was scratched, or there was a dent in the car's body. In one case, from Greensboro, North Carolina, on August 26, 1969, an orange substance was left on the damaged area. One very much wonders whether any of the witnesses did try to file an insurance claim for the car repair, but investigators have not recorded this information.

These cases aren't meteorite strikes because no fragments of a rock were found. They weren't caused by ball lightning because of the extent of the damage. Even when exploding, as we saw in the Swartwood case, ball lightning doesn't usually damage a vehicle's exterior. And these cases didn't occur during electrical storms.

A good example of a UFO/vehicle encounter is the case from Millerton, New York (a town on the Connecticut border) from July 17, 1967. This account is taken from the book *UFOs over the Americas* (New York: Signet, 1968) by Coral and Jim Lorenzen.

Mrs. Emma Funk of Millerton, New York, was driving on Route 22 north of town at 11:25 p.m. . . . when a black, shiny object about the size of a baseball flew into the beams of her headlights. It proceeded

Fireball hits auto; woman paralyzed

Mystery bothers officials

By RICHARD G. CASE

Viola Swartwood may never know what happened to her last night. The 65-year-old Cayuga County woman is a patient at the Memorial Hospital. Her doctor says the right side of her body is partially paralyzed. Mrs. Swartwood's condition seems to be improving but she is still in bed to cause. Charles Ryan might have easier job if he knew why his patient is in the hospital. He says he doesn't know, either.

Marvin Swartwood, Viola's husband, told the Cayuga County Sheriff's Department his car was hit by what appeared to be a "ball of fire" as he and his wife drove through the hamlet of Fleming about 8 p.m. Sunday.

Killing Hard
The incident can be reconstructed from police reports and interviews. The Swartwoods were heading toward their home in Fleming, in the hilly farmland between Owasco and Cayuga lakes. Swartwood was driving, his wife is by his side, her right arm is in a cast. His fingers near the wheel. Both car windows are rolled tight. It was raining hard.

The object appeared near the intersection of Routes 34 and 8.

Swartwood saw what seemed to him to be a fireball hovering only three feet over the front of the car, slightly to the right. It flashed brilliantly.

Lit Up Inside Car

"It was like daylight," he said. George Wright, used of the Herald-Journal's Auburn bureau, "It lit up the whole inside of the car."

Swartwood said the ball fell and appeared to strike the car. There was a "loud snap." Then the object vanished.

"I heard a crackle and I laid the car down," he said. Dr.

Swartwood saw the fireball fall and appeared to strike the car. There was a "loud snap." Then the object vanished.

Swartwood drove away immediately and headed for the sheriff's office. He described what had happened.

Deputy Sheriff David Milder was one of the investigators. Milder, with Swartwood and his wife, alighted. Mrs. Swartwood "appeared to be in a state of shock." Officers did go over the car for marks and faulty wiring.

No Marks on Car

"We found no marks on the car," Milder said. "The wiring was intact."

The officers recommended that Mrs. Swartwood be taken to the hospital. Doctors at Auburn Memorial said they found no marks on her body. The use of the right side of her body.

(Continued on Page 5, Col. 2)

was impaired, however, as if by an electrical shock.

Dr. Ryan says he can find no cause for the problem "I wish I could help you. I'd like to know," he told Wright.

Wright, who always drives to Fleming to see if he could find out more about the incident, he had been told there was a power line across the highway.

That, he says, turned out to be a lie. "He got a wire from a pole more than a mile from the spot where Swartwood said his car was struck."

No Power Failures

Mulberry called a New York State Electric & Gas Co. crew to the scene. They could find no cause for the problem. "There had been no power failures,"

Curious neighbors began appearing and they helped the officers and the investigators look for something. Mulberry and the officers "went up and down and up and down until almost midnight. We didn't find anything," he said.

Mulberry also checked the neighbors for local lightning reports, unusual noise or strange lights or interference on television sets at the time of the incident. Nothing apparent.

Nothing Ordinary

The deputy said the men on the power crew told him Mrs. Swartwood's hand would have been burned if she had received any ordinary kind of electrical shock.

He also feels Swartwood isn't kidding about what happened.

The National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena, in its 1964 report on UFOs, recorded several cases of paralysis or electrical shock associated with sightings of unidentified flying objects.

SYRACUSE
HERALD-JOURNAL
APR 7, 1966

Object Hit Car in Millerton; Engine Stalled, Lights Went Out

MILLERTON — Village Patrolman Lewis Lindsay today said an area resident reported her car was temporarily stalled when hit by an unidentified object north of here late Monday night.

He said Mrs. Emma Funk, who resides about five miles north of the village, told him this story:

She was traveling north in Route 22 en route home after working, at 11:25 o'clock, when an object the size of a softball came from overhead and hit the windshield, then bounced away.

Simultaneously, the headlights went out, the car stalled and a bright light flared for a split sec-

ond in the car. Mrs. Funk was dazed and presently got her car in motion and then became aware she was driving southward.

Patrolman Lindsay said he checked the car and found a cracked windshield "although I couldn't determine what did it."

Mrs. Funk, still somewhat shaken, reported the incident yesterday morning.

There have been recurring reports of unidentified flying objects in Northeast Dutchess County.

The patrolman said a check of the area of the incident is planned in an effort to locate the sphere.

straight toward her windshield, seemed to brush against it and then veer off to her left. Mrs. Funk said that immediately on contact with the object, her car 'lit up like a great electric light bulb,' her engine quit, and her headlights went out. She, herself, was stunned.

When the woman finally regained her senses fully, her car was headed in the opposite direction, toward the south. She started her engine, which functioned normally; her headlights also worked. But there was a cracked area in her windshield about the size of a man's fist.

Mrs. Funk had about 15 minutes for which she couldn't account, and may have lost consciousness at the moment of impact.

This case is reminiscent of the Val Johnson encounter from northwestern Minnesota on August 27, 1979. Briefly, deputy sheriff Johnson was patrolling the western section of Marshall County at about 1:40 a.m. that early morning. He saw a brilliant light in the distance, which wasn't very large. He started to drive in its general direction to investigate, when it accelerated directly toward his vehicle. As it hit the car, Johnson became unconscious. Not until 2:19 a.m. did he radio headquarters and request assistance. The car was resting sideways on the road with the engine off when rescuers arrived. The vehicle left about 100 feet of skid marks, although Johnson doesn't remember engaging the brakes.

The car was damaged in several peculiar ways. One of the left-front headlights was broken, and there was a round dent, about one inch in diameter, on the hood. The windshield of the car was cracked in a teardrop shape, with evidence of both inward and outward motions on the glass. The police-style whip antennas were bent almost backwards, and one of the left-hand roof lights was damaged. The car's battery would no longer hold a charge, and the clock in the car was running 14 minutes slow. All the

He would not venture a guess as to whether it might have had any connection with a UFO.

damage was located in roughly a straight line on the left side of the car. The car was inspected by several technical experts, who could never determine an exact cause for the incident. (It was certainly not caused by contact with another terrestrial vehicle.)

As for Johnson, he had an intense pain in his eyes, and was in mild shock afterwards. He had a bruise on

his forehead, and felt "as if someone had hit me in the face with a four hundred pound pillow." At Warren Hospital, where he was taken that morning, Johnson was diagnosed as having a mild case of welder's burn to his eyes, which is caused by looking at an unshielded bright light. He did recover fully from his injuries, although not from the ribbing he took from the townsfolk about his experience. Eventually he moved away from the area.

UFO investigators did succeed in one other case to have samples chemically analyzed from the damaged car. On July 13, 1967 (curiously, only four days before the Millerton event), Robert Richardson and Jerry Quay, both 21 years old, were driving to Whitehouse, Ohio, southwest of Toledo, to see if the Whitehouse Quarry would be open for swimming that upcoming weekend. At a point about midway between Maumee and Whitehouse, at about 11:26 p.m., the men saw an unusual light, or object, right in the middle of the road. The car was traveling at about 40 mph toward it. Quoting from the report of APRO investigator Nils Paquette:

Mr. Richardson's reaction was a violent one in that he immediately took evasive action to avoid hitting this something in the middle of the roadway. He swerved his car to the left . . . and in doing so skidded approximately 70 feet. At the start of the skid, both men closed their eyes believing that an inevitable calamity would ensue. . . . After he [Richardson] opened his eyes there was no trace of anything.

The UFO the men saw is shown in Figure 4. The light had no discernable outline or edge, and was about the length of a standard passenger car (making it about the largest UFO reported to have struck a car). The car itself had scratches on the front hood, and a dent on the bumper, where some of the chrome plating had been stripped off.

The witnesses immediately reported the incident to the police from nearby Waterville, but they were not taken

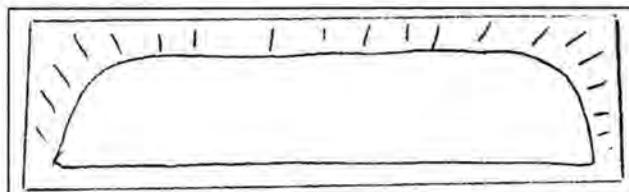


Fig. 4. Drawing of light source as observed through the windshield.



Fig. 5. Car damage from the Whitehouse, Ohio, incident.

seriously. They then went to Maumee and contacted the state police, who did take a statement and revisit the site with them, but found no other physical evidence.

Later, Richardson found a fibrous substance on the front bumper of his car, which was sent to the University of Colorado's UFO project for analysis. They reported it to be composed of about 92% magnesium, 5% aluminum, 2% zinc, and 1% manganese. Note that manganese was the metal oxide that Budinger found in the Mount Clemens case, although it was present in only small amounts in the Whitehouse case.

As the Lorenzens state in their summary of this case, taken from their book *Encounters With UFO Occupants* (New York: Berkley Medallion, 1976), "While there is nothing unique or mysterious about the alloys involved, an alloy containing 92 percent magnesium is not what one would expect to find on one's front bumper."

As with so many other physical trace cases, UFO/vehicle crashes have not always been investigated with the depth warranted. (We often don't even know the make and model of vehicle that was struck.) Thus we have little scientific data to compare across cases to look for patterns.

MAN BITES DOG

Given the reports I've discussed, it should be obvious that it is best to avoid an extremely close encounter with a UFO while driving. But there are always those exceptions. I take the following report from the Foreign Forum section of *IUR*, December 1977, p. 2. A few nights before August 16, 1977, at Nocera Umbra, Perugia province, Italy, "Several

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LETTER

GEPAN AND COMETA

To the editor:

Mark Rodeghier and Gildas Bourdais have provided *IUR* readers two interesting articles about some aspects of UFO research in France, focusing respectively on the Cometa Report (Summer 2000, pp. 20–22, 30) and on the French government's GEPAN/SEPRO UFO project (Winter 2000–2001, pp. 10–13). Both authors present useful information, and Bourdais presents some important original details. However, a few additions and corrections are perhaps needed.

Bourdais dates from 1974 the committee of auditors from the Institut des Hautes Etudes de Défense Nationale (IHEDN) that tackled the UFO problem and made recommendations for its study. But, unless there were two such committees, which I strongly doubt because I have never seen any mention of this, the committee actually met during the last months of 1976 and in 1977. It produced a report titled *Rapport sur les "Phénomènes Aériens Non Identifiés,"* dated June 20, 1977. (It was later translated by Bonita Samuelson and published by CUFOS in 1980 with the title *Report on Unidentified Aerial Objects.*) The name of Gendarmerie General Robert Blanchard appears nowhere in this report, which mentions Gendarmerie General Jacques Richard as the chairman and spokesman of the committee; Richard is also mentioned by Robert Roussel, who interviewed the general (*OVNI: Les vérités cachées de l'enquête officielle*, Paris: Albin Michel, 1994, pp. 30–31). The document offers only a brief review of a small portion of the ufological literature, but it presents interesting views about the defense aspects of the UFO problem. The committee members were divided about the existence of true UFOs, but they agreed that the UFO theme could be used for psychological warfare.

Several authors have claimed that the recommendations of IHEDN's committee led to the creation of GEPAN. This is very unlikely, because of the date of the IHEDN report. Besides the date, the report mentions the April 1977 Acapulco UFO Congress and lists four hearings of experts from December 7, 1976, to March 12, 1977. As for GEPAN, its prehistory can be traced back to 1971–1972, when Claude Poher began to notify his bosses in the French space agency (CNES) about the results of his early UFO research, and then lobbied for the creation of an official structure within CNES in 1972. His pressure was finally successful in 1976, thanks to his statistical results (however now in dispute), and probably to the many discussions at that time in scientific and political circles about the need for an official agency. CNES decided to create GEPAN at the beginning of 1977; GEPAN officially began on May 1, and a public announcement was made on August 31 of the same year. According to Poher himself, the birth of GEPAN was a decision purely internal to CNES (interview by

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NASH/FORTENBERRY—continued from page 23

tually published posthumously in 1995, under the title *Unconventional Flying Objects: A Scientific Analysis*, in which Hill presents his thesis that UFOs "obey, not defy, the laws of physics."

At the time of these sightings, flying saucers had been big news for many weeks. The staff of nine at Project Blue Book was swamped with sighting reports, far more than they could properly deal with. By mid-July they were getting about 20 reports a day and frantic calls from intelligence officers at every Air Force base in the United States. The reports were good ones and not easily explained. In fact, the unexplained sightings were running at about 40%. All this was leading inexorably to the following weekend when UFOs were picked up by radar at Washington National Airport in restricted air space over the nation's capitol, and would become one of the most highly publicized sightings of UFO history. For those reasons, the Nash/Fortenberry sighting received a less than adequate investigation. Project Blue Book quickly determined that the five jets flying out of Langley AFB could not have possibly been responsible for the sighting, and the case was dropped and filed as an "unknown."

It was not until 1962 that the case would be reexamined by the director of the Harvard College Observatory, astrophysicist Donald H. Menzel, and published in his book, *The World of Flying Saucers: A Scientific Examination of a Major Myth of the Space Age* (Doubleday, 1963). At the time, Prof. Charles A. Maney, a physicist at Defiance College, had been engaged in a rather lengthy correspondence with Menzel, and when the Nash/Fortenberry sighting came up, Maney forwarded copies of the correspondence to Nash, then an advisor to NICAP. This led to a lengthy correspondence over a six-month period between Nash and Menzel that provided considerable insight into the process by which Menzel arrived at his eventual solution to this inexplicable sighting.

Based on the meager data contained in the official report, Menzel assumed that the sighting could be reasonably explained as a reflection in the cockpit windows, especially considering the nearly instantaneous reversal, which seemed to defy the laws of physics pertaining to inertia. In support of this explanation, he underscored the apparent failure of the crew and Air Force investigators to make any tests for possible reflections, and generally called into question the credibility of the pilots. In a fairly scathing letter, Nash remonstrated Menzel on this critical point:

Dr. Menzel, regardless of your figures the western horizon was not quite bright, and regarding your "reflection theory," in the first place the objects were between us and the West. In the second place, they would have had to be damned persistent, consistent and impossible reflections to have manifested in three

cockpit windows in exactly the same way. We first observed them through the front window. As they approached and I moved across the cockpit, I kept my eyes on the objects and saw them through the curved window of the windshield, and we both finished our observations looking through the right side window. That is why there is no evidence (as you complain to Dr. Maney) that the pilots considered that what they saw was a reflection; and you state that we were too excited by what we saw to make the most elementary scientific tests. Again, Doctor, pilots do not excite easily or they would not be airline pilots—please—a little respect for us?

Menzel's next line of inquiry concerned whether the reflection could have been caused by an illumination within the cockpit, or possibly a "hostess taking a drag of a cigarette." Maney's rather sardonic response to this possibility was, "Quite a long drag, wouldn't you say?" Nevertheless, the pilots weren't smoking, the cockpit door was closed, there were no hostesses on the flight, and the pilots observed the object's reversal out of the right window *below* the plane. This pretty well convinced Menzel that an internal reflection was unlikely to explain the phenomenon and what Nash had seen was something outside the plane.

Still, Menzel concluded that Nash's observations "are completely consistent with the theory that the discs were immaterial images made of light."

Therefore, to explain the sighting he theorized that

a temperature inversion can lead to a sharp concentration of haze, ice crystals, smoke or other particles in a relatively thin layer. The layer is often invisible until the plane actually goes through it, when it appears as a thin, bright, hazy line that disappears a moment later when the plane breaks through it. Multiple layers of such haze are not unknown, stacked one on top of the other. Now, a sharply focused searchlight, shining at night through a series of such hazy layers, will show up as a series of discs. As the searchlight moves, the discs will appear to spread out, exhibit perspective, and, as the searchlight turns around, the discs will appear to ricochet.

The soundness of his theory depended on the prevailing weather conditions. Since the official weather reports for that evening indicated that there were *no temperature inversions present*, Menzel carefully constructed a scenario in which inversions (in meteorological parlance, a subrefractive condition) could have been present though undetectable by the weather service.

In the summer of 1952 all the eastern states were suffering from a intense heat wave and drought, and the ground cooled rapidly after sunset, because of the lack of cloud cover during the day. In a period of heat

and drought, the nightly cooling produces marked inversions favorable to extreme refraction and reflection. Small in extent, existing only briefly in one place, constantly changing location, such inversions may not be detectable by radiosonde observations.

Menzel admitted that his solution did not identify the particular beacon or searchlight responsible for the sightings, though he suggests, "A light on the Virginia coast, shining northeast toward the plane, could easily have been spread out into a series of images like those observed." Apparently, the location of the light is assumed to be at the point of the pilot's initial sighting of the red glow, beyond and to the east of Newport News. This begs the question why experienced pilots could not identify an apparently fixed, high-intensity, red light source if it were emanating from a position 25 miles in front and below and directed toward their aircraft.

Since the discs were organized in a stepped-up echelon, with the leading disc at the lowest point, one would deduce that the source of the light must have been from behind the aircraft. Had the light source been in front of the aircraft, as Menzel postulates, the leading disc would have appeared in the highest position in the echelon. Further, a searchlight reflecting off a horizontal cloud layer at an oblique angle to the observer would produce a gradual elongation of the disc as it moved relative to the observer. Nor does the theory account for the two discs that darted out from under the plane and conjoined the original six before disappearing into the night sky. Or the mechanism that would need to be in effect to make the discs appear to flip vertically on edge, reverse position in formation while maintaining relative distances, and then flip back to the horizontal plane—while executing a 150-degree course change at, in the words of investigating officer Maj. John Sharpe, "...a speed fantastic to contemplate." Incidentally, 90 miles in 12 seconds equals 27,000 mph.

In his book, Menzel asserts that his solution offers "a highly probable explanation that is consistent with all observations and does not depend on the presence of an extraterrestrial spacecraft." I have to agree with the latter part of the statement, but have no doubt that readers will find further inconsistencies in Menzel's impracticable solution.

Some years later, in early 1957, Bill Fortenberry was lost in a Boeing Stratoliner crash in the Pacific Ocean, with all onboard. In the early sixties, Nash transferred to Germany, and for the next 15 years flew the Berlin corridors before retiring from Pan American. In a recent interview for the Sign Oral History Project, a still vivacious Captain Nash provided their concluding supposition:

Looking at the thing shook us up. We stared at each other, and all of a sudden there was this realization that our world is not alone in the universe. Because, nothing could have advanced to that degree of scientific progress without some of the intermediate steps

having become public knowledge, or, at least known to the people who were flying. Bill had just come out of the Navy and was fully acquainted with their latest developments. We just knew that they were not from this planet. I know to this day, that it was nothing from this planet.

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William B. Nash, interviewed by Thomas Tulien and Jan Aldrich, January 4, 2002. (Sign Oral History Project).

Personal files of William B. Nash. (Copies of the Nash files with the Sign Historical Group). ♦

INTERNATIONAL UFO MUSEUM OPENS IN TURKEY

The Sirius UFO Space Sciences Research Center opened in Istanbul, Turkey, on January 18. Located in the center of town, the museum aims to inform Turkish citizens, as well as the millions of tourists who visit the city, about the UFO phenomenon.

The exhibition area documents hundreds of UFO incidents and offers photos, drawings, and written commentary in both Turkish and English. Specific exhibits include a worldwide sighting map, ancient cultures and extraterrestrial theories, crop circles, Area 51 and secret bases, abductions, secret government documents, scientific findings, and Roswell.

The museum library is open to the public and has more than 1,000 books on UFOs and the search for extraterrestrial life.

Visitors can also watch UFO documentaries and films in both Turkish and English. The museum is located at Büyükkapı Sok, No. 14, Kat. 1-2, Beyoğlu, Istanbul, Turkey. For more information, visit www.siriusufo.org. —*Turkish Daily News*, June 6, 2002.

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Williamson offered up a largely fictitious resume. Moseley is still shocked—shocked—that Williamson *didn't really have a Ph.D.* Wow. I guess that makes him one of—perhaps a conservative estimate—tens of thousands of his fellow Americans who at one time or another have falsely claimed the same or tried to pass off a piece of paper from a diploma mill as the real thing. Even less overwhelmingly, Moseley professes to find damning a letter from a University of Arizona official who remembered the undergraduate Williamson as an “oddball.”

No serious observer of Williamson’s extraordinary career would hold that the man lacked core sincerity. Hardly anything about his life makes sense otherwise: His immense, energetic, always enthusiastic private correspondence, his personal library,¹⁹ the hardships he endured, the paltry financial rewards, the dazzlingly visionary books,²⁰ the repeatedly expressed conviction of an imminent breakthrough which would validate the contactee message beyond anyone’s ability to doubt it any longer, and his inevitable disillusionment when nothing turned out to be quite as it seemed.

For all his professed interest in the personalities of UFO and saucer people, Moseley seems oddly blind to some basic realities about those human personalities in particular and human personalities in general. For instance, that people can be, often are, dauntingly complex, their exact motivations not always known even to themselves. Somebody can be one thing at one time, and another thing at another time. Williamson can lie about his academic credentials (presumably in a misguided effort to buttress honestly held belief with phony scientific authority), shade or exaggerate the facts in other areas, and yet conscientiously arrange his life around larger esoteric experiences and “truths,” however bizarre or outlandish they may appear to those of us who don’t share Williamson’s interstellar Weltanschauung.

In his treatment of the 1950s contactee movement, Moseley’s imagination fails him for the same reason it falters when he tries—admittedly without detectable intellectual exertion—to understand Williamson. Moseley thinks of Williamson, Adamski, and the rest only as cynical confidence artists; the only honest people are those too gullible, ignorant, crazy, or stupid to know better, in other words the rubes who believe them.

The reality was, as reality is wont to be, not so simple. Yes, some contactees were cynical confidence artists. Others were earnest mystics who in another time and place would have been communing with other kinds of gods, saints, and supernatural entities. Many were probably something of both, with—to borrow a phrase from Melville—one eye on the cosmos, the other on the main chance. Williamson was probably among the last, but his career arc suggests that the eye directed at the cosmos was the more focused one. Even more than Adamski (who lied and also,

on another level, believed²¹), Williamson contained levels of complexity that only a gifted literary novelist could hope to plumb.

There was, and is, nothing unique about the saucerians. The followers were, and are, not feeble-minded, easily fooled “kooks” of a sort that separates them from ordinary mortals. They are participants in a form of visionary religion which has existed in all times and all places and in every case taken on the coloration of the particular cultural moment and context. These people are not, as Moseley would have it, mutants peculiar to the UFO age. They would be here even if there were no UFOs, which manifest in the theology of modern visionary religion simply because they are there; if they weren’t, other kinds of otherworldly phenomena and forces would occupy their place. From one point of view, all that separates visionary religions from mainstream ones is that the latter are older, stabler, larger, and more firmly institutionalized. The Venus of contactee lore, after all, is easily recognizable as heaven, albeit one stocked with technology borrowed from science fiction.

Witless stereotypes notwithstanding, ufologists and saucerians are interesting not because they are ufologists and saucerians but because they are human beings acting like human beings. Nothing in *Shockingly* reads like anything other than the actions of people being people, no more or less strange or banal or funny or sad than the ones who live on your block and who think about UFOs even less than James W. Moseley does.

In the end, as it was when it all started, it is the UFO phenomenon—elusive, weird, tantalizingly remote, and, to appearances anyway, not human at all—that is the remarkable thing.

REFERENCES

1. Saucerianism is the realm of contactees and all they imply. To ufologists, UFOs are unidentified; to saucerians, they are identified spacecraft piloted by benevolent, godlike extraterrestrials. In other words, ufologists study UFOs, saucerians worship flying saucers. Of course, this being the complicated real world where boundaries can be blurry, I speak only generally.
2. Michael G. Mann, “Prince or King, He Isn’t a Spaceman!” *Saucer News*, March 1960.
3. “Who Is Fooling Donald Keyhoe?” *Saucer News*, September 1960.
4. For specifics, see Thomas E. Bullard’s “Anomalous Aerial Phenomena Before 1800,” in my *The UFO Encyclopedia: The Phenomenon from the Beginning* (Detroit: Omnigraphics, 2d ed., 1998), pp. 121–138.
5. Moseley’s grudges, which can span decades, are a kind of psychosocial wonder. The one of which Hopkins is the subject began in 1976, when the two crossed swords in the wake of a multiwitness CE3 (the so-called Stonehenge incident). When Moseley and associates engaged in an

adolescent publicity stunt involving an attempt to contact Space Brothers at the encounter site, Hopkins, who had conducted an extensive investigation of the original story, exploded—understandably under the circumstances to just about anybody besides Moseley, who professes to have no idea what could have set Hopkins off. “I have never forgotten or forgiven Hopkins for it,” he writes. Unfortunately, we believe him.

6. For a full account from Hopkins’s perspective, see his *Witnessed: The True Story of the Brooklyn Bridge UFO Abductions* (New York: Pocket Books, 1996).

7. Sandow expresses it well: “The hoax is getting cumbersome; its *dramatis personae* keep multiplying. And where’s the evidence for all this? There isn’t any.... The hoax, complex as it is, should leave a trace. Skeptics have a right to ask for evidence that the case is real. So why can’t believers—or, for that matter, people on the fence—ask for proof that it isn’t? . . . There’s nothing conclusive on either side of the ‘Linda’ case, and even skeptics will have to live with that.”

8. Not her real name. Her real name was, however, exposed in both the paper’s content and title.

9. Defying what most ufologists would judge an elementary ethical imperative—the obligation of UFO writers and researchers to keep witnesses’ identities confidential if that is their desire—Moseley also publishes Linda’s real last name. His justification, like the debunking trio’s whose precedent he follows, is that she once spoke briefly to a UFO group, albeit under her pseudonym. Moseley feebly argues that this is a self-outing, but this unconvincing assertion only thinly conceals a self-serving rationale that since Linda is a hoaxter, she does not deserve protection. For an account of the harm and embarrassment that came to Cortile and her family after her identity was exposed, see Sandow’s previously cited *IUR* article.

10. In the fashion of most other post-Holocaust Semitophobes, Williamson employed the euphemism “International Bankers.” Fortunately, ravings of this sort are confined mostly to one Williamson book (written with John McCoy), *UFOs Confidential! The Meaning behind the Most Closely Guarded Secrets of All Time* (Corpus Christi, Tex.: Essene Press, 1958), one of those dreadful quasiliterary exercises in which every sentence seems to end with an exclamation point. Williamson’s close ties to Indian tribes in the Americas suggest that he was no racist. His anti-Semitism appears to be a phase he eventually grew out of.

11. James W. Moseley and Michael G. Mann, “Screwing the Lid Down on ‘Doctor’ Williamson,” *Saucer News*, February/March 1959.

12. May 21, 2002, letter.

13. In one especially hilarious dodge, he wrote, “The only copy . . . I have been able to locate is in the Library of the Siyyum al Yahud’fil Marraqesh, which institution will not appreciate inquirers.”

14. “The first night I arrived in London, I received the

tragic news of my dear wife’s death in Lima, Peru. The loss of a wonderful wife and mother to my son [Mark], and my fellow worker in science, was a great shock to me . . . but Betty was dedicated to a Divine Cause, and evidently she was needed elsewhere to serve at this time. My research will go on . . . research that she was greatly responsible for in the past will find its fulfillment in the future. Without Betty I could not have accomplished anything in the UFO field . . . she was (and is) my inspiration” (George Hunt Williamson, “Preliminary Report on My World Tour,” *Flying Saucer Review*, November/December 1958; ellipses in the original).

15. I am grateful to Michael D. Swords, who owns most of Williamson’s files (all of them, in fact, except—frustratingly—those pertaining to Williamson’s interactions with Adamski), for this information.

16. “UFOs and the Amish,” *IUR*, September/October 1993, pp. 12–13.

17. Williamson told him, according to Moseley, that he had observed Adamski’s fabled first contact through low-power binoculars. Adamski was conversing with “someone, who could have been anyone.” Nearby was “something that might have been a saucer.”

18. Letter to Michael D. Swords, October 3, 1993.

19. Bookseller Robert Girard, who acquired it, wrote of it, “In addition to a decent range of UFO material, Williamson possessed many books of great interest in the areas of mythology, folklore, ancient history, ancient astronauts, ethnology, and especially, a strong holding of books on the Americas and American Indians.” Williamson’s deep engagement with these subjects—however eccentric his perspective on them—is obvious to any reader of his books.

20. Most of all, the staggeringly imaginative ancient-astronaut trilogy *Other Tongues—Other Flesh* (Amherst, Wis.: Amherst Press, 1957), *Secret Places of the Lion* (Amherst, Wis.: Amherst Press, 1958), and *Road in the Sky* (London: Neville Spearman, 1959), which one day will certainly be recognized as classics of esoteric literature. Von Däniken’s *Chariots of the Gods?* is a feeble wheeze next to Williamson’s full-throated roar.

21. No other explanation seems possible, given the absolute dedication of those who lived with Adamski, who knew him as well as anybody could, and who went to their graves convinced of his sincerity, at least in a metaphorical, if not necessarily a literal, sense. On January 28, 1965, a few months before his death, Adamski wrote a private letter to his old nemesis Donald Keyhoe (who ignored it) that is extremely difficult to square with the standard derisive view that Adamski was committed to no higher mission than fooling people. He certainly did fool people, consciously—as Moseley among others established beyond any reasonable doubt long ago—but perhaps he did so in the service of a larger cause best known, if at all, to himself. To his credit Moseley, who liked Adamski, does not accuse him of any major felony. ♦

OF INTEREST TO CUFOS ASSOCIATES

THE INTELLIGENT CREATION OF WORLDS AND CELESTIAL LAWS

Author's book theory UFOs outlined designs of Earth, constructed pyramid-face on Mars, North-South America measured units, and huge celestial New Jerusalem space-city. \$25.00. Kenneth Lloyd Larson, 200 North Commonwealth Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90004.

LETTER—continued from page 26

Perry Petrakis, *Phenomena*, no. 39, August 1998, pp. 5–20), but the general public and scientific milieu surely furthered it.

I totally agree with Bourdais's final statement that "there is no indication that deep secrets on UFOs would be buried there [in the French military establishment]. Actually, the Cometa report, by its mere existence, suggests rather the contrary." Such a position is also confirmed by the revelations of retired General G.D.C. published in the August 2000 issue (no. 357) of *Lumières dans la Nuit*. Although his military career would have very probably led him to be knowledgeable about any UFO secret among the French military, he asserted that such a "Great Secret" does not exist. This fits perfectly Vicente-Juan Ballester Olmos's discoveries concerning the UFO involvement of the Spanish Air Force.

But such a position reveals a major contradiction in the Cometa Report. Its authors suggest that true UFOs do exist and that "the extraterrestrial hypothesis is by far the best scientific hypothesis," and they develop military, political, and sociological consequences of such a hypothesis. But they proceed as if they have identified or discovered a situation the government was not aware of. However, if UFOs are extraterrestrial craft flying (nearly openly) in our skies, it seems inevitable (at least to my own eyes) that many intelligence services, many armies, many governments, including France's, necessarily already know what is happening on Earth. And that they have taken measures (even if secret ones), either altruistically for the benefit of mankind or egoistically for the benefit of their own nations or even private interests. How else can one explain that the Cometa authors acted naïvely, exactly as if this official situation did not exist? And if the French (or Spanish) situation can be extrapolated to other countries, we must face an intriguing question: Why does the U.S. scene seem to give a very different picture?

Claude Mangé
Figeac, France

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What further research could be conducted to determine the true nature of angel hair? The following are some suggestions:

- UFO researchers could publicize details of past falls and call for collection of material at future falls.
- Persons picking up the substance could be encouraged to keep a sample in a sealed container and forward it for analysis.
- UFO researchers could compile a global listing of cases, undertake a similar analysis to this Australian data and compare and contrast results.
- UFO researchers could revisit such recent cases as Quirindi, Esperance, and Old Noarlunga looking for additional witnesses and additional data. One particular area to reexamine is the nature of the reported dissipation and disappearance of falls.
- UFO researchers could undertake a closer examination of the literature on spiders' web to examine the characteristics of web. ♦

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Ruppelt even criticized the report. At the time, he wrote to UFO investigator Max Miller, criticizing its findings. He stated: "This was a shock to me because I was the one that had had this study made. . . . the answer was, statistical methods were no good for a study like this. They didn't prove a thing. . . . I had written it off as worthless. . . . The report was finished in September 1953 and it wasn't released as the 'latest hot dope' until October 1955."

13. "Princeton Engineer Believes Flying Saucers Real Thing," *Trenton (N.J.) Sunday Times-Advertiser*, October 10, 1954. (It should be noted that it is primarily Ruppelt's memoirs that state that the Estimate "went up through the chain of command." However in the original manuscript to *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*, Ruppelt stated that the Estimate was initially batted back down before it ever got to Gen. Vandenberg. Ruppelt then infers that the Sign team directly lobbied Vandenberg to read the Estimate, but that the General refused to do so because he had heard of its supposedly far-out extraterrestrial hypothesis. Ruppelt's manuscript states: "While the people working on Project Sign were pondering over Lt. Gorman's 'duel to the death,' before they found out that his adversary was a lighted weather balloon, two things were taking place. One, the higher the Estimate of the situation went in the Air Force chain of command the cooler the reception it got, and two, reports of radar picking up UFO's began to come in. How far the Estimate got is something that I could never determine, but it got up into the high echelons of the Air Force before it was batted back down. The reason for batting it down was the conclusions, interplanetary vehicles, lacked proof. A group from ATIC [then part of

TID's Sign project] went to the Pentagon to sell the idea to the late General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, then Chief of Staff of the Air Force, but had no luck. The evidence just didn't impress him enough to make him decide to buy the interplanetary theory." However that 1954 interview with Alfred Loedding by the *Sunday Times-Advertiser* indicates that it may have actually been the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board or a scientific advisor from the Board that had the most influence in having the Estimate rejected. Loedding's son Donald nevertheless does confirm that it was Vandenberg himself who had the most influence on rejecting Loedding's Estimate which Donald stresses his father was deeply disappointed over. Interviews with Donald Loedding by Michael Hall and Wendy Connors, October 1997, June and August 1998, and May 1999.)

14. FBI file courtesy of Loren Gross. (Blue Book officially received 1,279 UFO reports for the year 1952, of which 212 cases remain classified unidentified. However, prior to the public release of the index, 1,501 sightings had been accounted for during Ruppelt's tenure with 301 unidentified cases.)

15. Letter to Capt. William B. Nash from Donald H. Menzel, January 18, 1962, personal files of William B. Nash.

16. Ruppelt's personal papers, File R022, courtesy of Michael Swords. (It should be stated that researcher Tom Tulien learned in a 1999 interview with Mrs. William Garland that she did not think her husband ever had a UFO sighting.)

17. By late 1953 Garland had actually been forced to step down as ATIC commander for health reasons. He had suffered an epileptic seizure while piloting a B-25 on final approach into Washington, D.C., with Capt. Bill Hoey. (This was the same Hoey who had flown Ruppelt down to Florida during the Florida Scoutmaster investigation.)—Personal interview with Victor H. Bilek by Michael Hall and Wendy Connors, October 29–30, 1999.

18. Ruppelt, *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*, pp. 109, 110. ♦

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witnesses, including a Mr. Bruno Vitali, saw a cone-shaped object 'more than a meter high.' Vitali said that he tried to hit the object with his car but was unsuccessful [emphasis added]. 'I pressed down on the accelerator but the distance between me and the object stayed the same.'"

As they say on TV: Kids, don't try this at home.

Acknowledgements: I wish to thank Harold Marquardt from MUFON for his excellent investigative work on the Mount Clemens case, Phyllis Budinger for her analysis of the sample, and Frank John Reid for his search of the CUFOS files and published literature for cases of vehicle encounters with various sorts of phenomena. ♦