

**ALFRED LOEDDING:
NEW INSIGHT ON THE MAN BEHIND PROJECT SIGN**

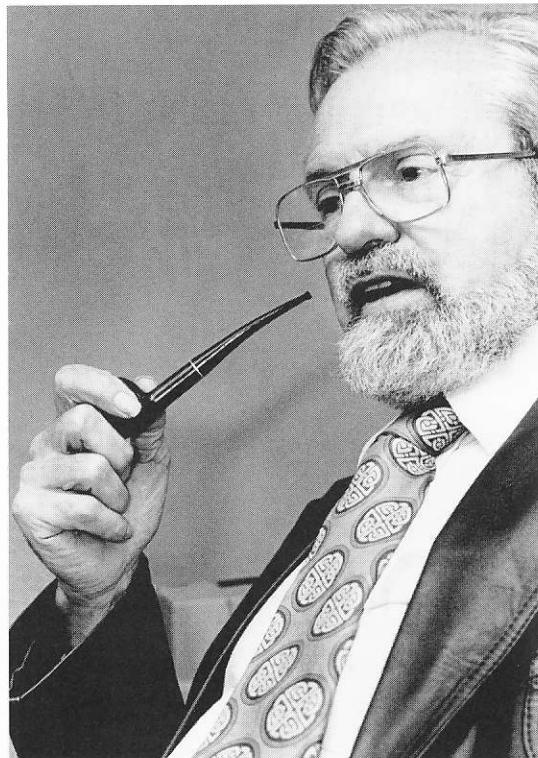
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ALFRED LOEDDING:

NEW INSIGHT ON THE MAN BEHIND PROJECT SIGN

BY MICHAEL DAVID HALL AND WENDY ANN CONNORS

Editor's Note: In the late fall of 1997 the authors spoke in a series of telephone interviews with family members of Alfred C. Loedding. During these conversations, Alfred's son Donald and his brother Fred conveyed many significant details of Alfred's association with the first official United States Air Force investigation into unidentified flying objects. Working with Project Sign researcher/historian Wendy Connors at the Project Sign Research Center, further correspondence between the authors and the Loedding family transpired. In June 1998, Connors, along with cameraman Joseph C. Stone, conducted an initial interview with Donald Loedding at his Colorado ranch, followed by a more in-depth video interview in August.

Working as a team, Hall and Connors have compiled a more complete scenario of Alfred C. Loedding than previously known. The authors also secured rights to copy Alfred Loedding's personal glass-slide collection that details his aeronautical interests and work at Wright Field, Ohio, prior to and during the Project Sign timeline.

This article focuses on the first UFO wave of 1947 until the end of Project Sign. The only speculation the authors engage in is Loedding's possible reaction to the events that initiated the modern era of ufology. However, this is based upon in-depth interviews and correspondence with various Loedding family members and their memories of Alfred Loedding's personal beliefs.

The morning of July 4, 1947, at 3733 Shroyer Road in Dayton, Ohio, began very peacefully. An initially hazy dawn yielded to a blue sky and a sunny, but muggy, day of 81 degrees. With the aftereffects of the Second World War still felt, the nation welcomed the three-day holiday despite the heat. It felt strange, however, for Alfred Christian Loedding not to be at work on that Friday morning. Loedding was a civilian



Alfred Loedding

aeronautical engineer working at the Army Air Force laboratories just down the road at Wright Field. He was also a workaholic who lived and breathed aviation. Yet for all of his talents, relaxing at home was not one of them.

Alfred's son Donald remembers his father always doing something when at the house. Perhaps that morning he was hard at work cleaning and tuning up his prized 1946 Buick. Or maybe he was down in his basement laboratory working on a host of experiments that over the years had made him one of America's first Army Air Corps engineers to study rocketry and jet propulsion. Alfred actually preferred to be designing and testing in his basement rather than be anywhere else.

His homespun research had paid off over the years, giving him the experience needed to start the first Jet Propulsion Division at Wright Field Laboratories and file a host of patents. By late 1948, one of these would include a design for a low-aspect-ratio aircraft, another one of Alfred's specialties.

Because of his cutting-edge innovations, we would like to know Alfred's exact thoughts at this time. Undoubtedly, sometime during that Independence Day holiday, he stopped to pay close attention to the news. Since June 24 there had been a small number of stories in the press concerning sightings of UFOs, or "flying discs" as they were called then. On this Independence Day holiday disc sightings dramatically increased and dominated the front pages of newspapers across the United States. Though West Coast papers were first with the details, by Sunday of the holiday weekend the *New York Times* had a page-one feature on disc sightings and would continue running saucer stories for the next three days.

Loedding may have heard the first accounts on Bob Smith's WNBC morning radio news show that Friday at 9:00 a.m. By Saturday, he could have caught the first Midwest stories in print. However, when he began hearing



Alfred Loedding in 1937, designing tailless models for Bellanca Aircraft.

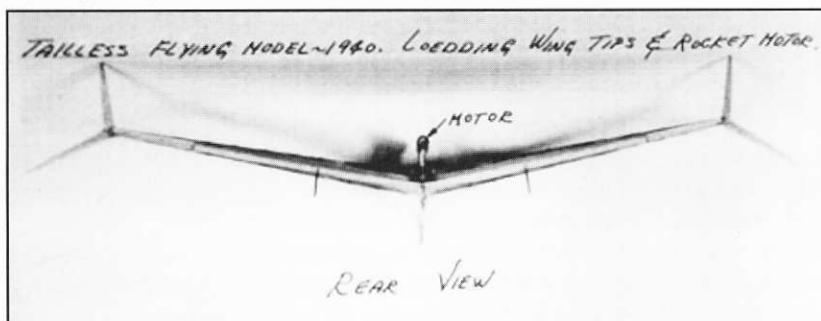
the accounts of the sightings, it is unlikely that he was surprised or unprepared. Loedding, like a number of people in previous years, had observed similar phenomena. In 1932, Loedding and his wife Marion saw something in the sky which they could never explain. A newspaper account detailed their incident as follows:

In October 1932, the couple saw such an object one evening while driving near Plainsboro, N.J., he reported.

At first they thought an aircraft was crashing nearby, Loedding said. Then the craft leveled off and flashed away at high speed, emitting a changing bluish-green light. On reaching his home, he immediately sketched the object from memory. Later, Loedding said former New York congressman L.G. Clemente reported he had seen such an object at about the same time. Loedding estimated the object he and his wife had seen was 100 feet in diameter and 500 to 600 feet high. He said the object gave off a weird light "like looking at a fire-fly" and appeared to change shape.

He said he had seen nothing of a similar nature since.
(*Dayton Journal*, August 9, 1957)

Because he did not reveal that story until 1957, it is impossible to know his thoughts during that first rash of disc sightings ten years earlier. Yet, it would be interesting to



A Loedding "flying wing" model, 1940.

read the mind of this brilliant engineer who had graduated from the Daniel Guggenheim School of Aeronautics in 1930. Loedding had been privately designing low-aspect-ratio aircraft (flying wings) and lecturing about this concept using his glass slides ever since his 1932 UFO sighting. By 1948, some of these concepts, which he translated into small working models, looked more like flying saucers than flying wings.

Loedding knew aviation, having held a key position with the Bellanca Aircraft Company before coming to work for the Wright Field Laboratories in 1938. However, as he was periodically borrowed from his position in T-3 (Engineering) by T-2 (Technical Intelligence—redesignated the Technical Intelligence Division in September 1947; to simplify our narrative, we refer to the office as T-2 throughout), it is fair to assume that he may have had some knowledge of the more spectacular flying-disc stories before he returned to work on Monday, July 7. He may have been intrigued by the July 6 *New York Times* exclusive on the deployment of two reactivated B-29 bomber groups to the West Coast and how their appearance coincided in place and time with many of the disc sightings.

Up to this time, the military had only issued a few contradictory statements on the sightings. On July 3, for example, Maj. Paul Gaynor stated that a preliminary investigation of the flying discs had been dropped for lack of evidence. On that same day, *Idaho Evening Statesman* reporter Dave Johnson got a different slant from Lt. Gen. Nathan F. Twining, chief of the Air Materiel Command (AMC). Twining, who commanded the T-2 group, commented that officials were indeed looking into the matter of flying discs. He stated that even top-secret research conducted at the aviation laboratories at Wright Field had not produced technology comparable to what had been observed. He added that a "reputable scientist" had seen one of the flying discs and that his report was being analyzed. (*Idaho Evening Statesman*, July 3, 1947.)



Nathan F. Twining

Loedding would have known that other units of the Army Air Corps were interested in the sightings, especially Kenneth Arnold's account. Fourth Air Force intelligence officers Capt. William Lee Davidson and 1st Lt. Frank Mercer Brown even interviewed Arnold for six hours, taking down a detailed statement at the

Hotel Owyhee in Boise. The officers liked him immediately, probably because of his aviation background. They confided details of other disc cases to Arnold, who later claimed they had told him that military intelligence had been aware of saucer stories as early as April 1947. (*Pendleton (Oreg.) East Oregonian*, July 17, 1947.)

Loedding never met Davidson or Brown, which is ironic since he ended up inheriting and expanding the mission of their first effort to investigate the sightings seriously. In those first few weeks of July, Davidson and Brown at Hamilton Field in California drew most of the duty, interviewing many of the early witnesses. Both in their twenties, they first received orders to investigate the discs following the July 4 sightings. That directive came down from AAF Chief of Staff Gen. Carl Spaatz, who wanted Hamilton Field's A-2 Intelligence to "open a file." Although Spaatz specified that they should forward their findings to T-2, Davidson and Brown had already been given orders to keep their reports classified. Much of their paperwork went not to Wright Field but directly to the Air Force Office of Intelligence (AFOIN) at the Pentagon.

The officers were provided with ample assistance to do their investigative work. This included a steno pool, two aircraft that consisted of an A-24 and a stripped-down but aging B-25. Unfortunately, both Davidson and Brown were tragically killed after the B-25 crashed on the way back from interviewing witnesses to the Maury Island incident during the early morning of August 1. Afterwards, Wright Field moved into a leading role in the flying-disc investigations and Loedding would be in the center of the investigations.

When he returned to work on July 7, Loedding had no idea what was to come. It must have been shortly after driving onto Wright Field that morning and parking in front of Building 11A that he caught the first hint of excitement. Walking up to his office in Room 252 in the overcrowded building that had been converted from an aviation museum, he heard the scuttlebutt. The Independence Day weekend had indeed accounted for a sizeable number of flying-disc sightings.

THE INCREDIBLE JULY 4 SIGHTINGS

In retrospect, the wave had begun very early on the morning of July 4, just about the time Loedding would have been climbing into bed after spending a late night tinkering in his basement laboratory. Around 1:00 a.m., East Orange, N.J., resident Mrs. Leonora Woodruff started off the long list of sightings when she reported "balls of fire silently darting through the air at high speed." (International News Service, July 5, 1947.) At 11:00 that morning a carload of people spotted four disc-shaped objects streaking past Mount Jefferson. While driving to work about that time, Harry Hale, production manager of the *Portland Oregonian*, saw a shiny object in the sky just west of Beaverton. (*Portland Oregonian*, July 5, 1947.)

At 1:05 p.m., Portland police officer Kenneth McDowell, while feeding pigeons behind Precinct House No. 1, was surprised when the birds were startled and flew away. He looked up to see five large, oscillating discs, two traveling south and three heading east. They were moving at a high rate of speed and looked like nothing he had seen before. At approximately the same time, two employees at the nearby Oaks Amusement Park saw the same objects and called the police. Two Portland police officers near Oaks Park, Walter Lissy and Robert Ellis (both civilian pilots and WWII veterans), reported three discs within 30 seconds of each other. Each headed east over the park at a high altitude. Lissy and Ellis heard no engine noises, but they did see flashes of light. Patrolman Earl Patterson, located at SE 82nd Avenue and Foster Road, reported an "oval, whitish aluminum-colored object" coming out of the west and heading toward the southwest. Patterson, a former Army Air Corps veteran, stated that it resembled no plane he had ever seen.

Clark County Sheriff Deputies John Sullivan, Clarence McKay, and Fred Krives reported 20 to 30 objects flying over nearby Vancouver, Washington, shortly after 1:00 p.m. After hearing reports of flying discs broadcast over the police radios, they went outside to have a look for themselves and soon saw round objects fly over high and fast in a straight line toward the west and south. As they passed, a low humming noise could be heard. Krives told the International News Service that "they were there and no mistake about that."

A group of harbor patrolmen reported to Portland police headquarters that they had seen three to six oscillating, flashing discs "shaped like chrome hubcaps" traveling fast and high toward the south over the Globe Mills. The men were uncertain of the exact number of objects because the flashes from the objects were so bright they could not stand to look at them. In Milwaukie, Oregon, three discs were observed flying toward the northwest.

Numerous Portland citizens also reported sightings. At 2:00 p.m., "metallic discs glinting in the sunlight" were seen across the Willamette River near the Rose Island bridge. Picnickers and a pilot saw "spinning discs." One woman described viewing an object at 4:30 p.m. like "a new dime flipping around." Two white or silver objects flew over Portland at 4:58 p.m. heading southeast; a third passed over the city at 5:30 p.m.

These were only the first few reports from dozens of states and Canadian provinces that day. Yet that night the second most sensational account of 1947 occurred. United Airlines Flight 105 took off from Boise at 8:04 p.m. While near Emmett, Idaho, about 9:20, Captain E. J. Smith and First Officer Ralph Stevens observed five discs "silhouetted against the sunset in a loose formation." When Smith asked stewardess Marty Morrow to come to the cockpit, she confirmed the observation. They all watched for several minutes as the DC-3 covered 45 air miles and the unknown objects moved in a northwesterly direction across Idaho.

Both Naval and A-2 Intelligence interviewed Captain Smith. The Davidson and Brown interview occurred on July 12 after their talk with Arnold. While at Arnold's house they heard Smith was in Boise for a layover and they all went out to the airport to talk to him.

Loedding and others at Wright Field who were following the Flight 105 incident were impressed with a sighting that seemed to confirm there was something strange in the sky over Idaho that night. It was filed by the manager of the Idaho United Press service and a 15-year veteran reporter, John C. Corlett. The resulting news story eventually made it into the Air Force Project Blue Book files. While relaxing at home in his garden in the early evening, Corlett, his wife, and their dinner guest, famed Boise artist V. H. Selby, observed a white disc zoom silently across the sky from the northwest and to the southeast at an apparent altitude of 10,000 feet. (*Portland Oregonian*, July 5, 1947.)

GERMAN TECHNOLOGY?

However, the sightings on July 8 sent Wright Field and the Pentagon into a high-gear search for the mysterious discs. It began between 9:30 or 10:00 a.m. at Muroc Air Base (now Edwards AFB) in California when First Lt. Joseph C. McHenry and three other witnesses watched two silver, spherical objects traveling about 300 miles per hour in level flight. At 10:10 a.m., Muroc test pilot Maj. J. C. Wise, while preparing his XP-84 aircraft for takeoff, observed one yellowish-white spherical object traveling at 200–225 miles per hour at 10,000 feet. It headed east with an oscillating motion. At 11:50 a.m., at nearby Rogers Dry Lake, two technicians and a test pilot observed a luminous object for about 90 seconds. Later in the afternoon, 40 miles south of Muroc, a P-51 pilot at 20,000 feet spotted a wingless, tailless "flat object of light-reflecting nature." He twice attempted an intercept but could not climb high enough. Intelligence later took great note of the incident because they had determined that no military or civilian aircraft were in the area at the time of the sighting. At 9:20 p.m., spherical objects were again seen in the area, this time at 8,000 feet and moving against the wind at around 300 miles per hour. (Personal papers, Edward J. Ruppelt, File R104 and File R105.)

The sightings over Muroc panicked the Pentagon and led the air force to issue classified orders requiring reports of any "saucer-like" objects to be given to T-2 Technical Intelligence, which had been "unofficially interested" in the disc reports since July 3. Orders were sent to all United States Army air bases requiring that UFO sightings be investigated, with reports sent directly to Wright Field and summaries to the Pentagon. However, research by coauthor Wendy Connors shows that most of the early casework actually went directly to the Pentagon and therefore T-2 did not get a complete set of files until late September 1947.

Loedding and his coworkers at T-2 began to speculate that flying saucers were German secret weapons of an

unknown and radical design that were being tested by the Soviets. Still working as an aeronautical engineer at T-3, Loedding had specialized in flying-wing aircraft even prior to World War II as well as those captured towards the end of the war under Operation Lusty. His expertise inspired a crusade by T-2 to attempt to trace the disc sightings to Soviet/German technology transfer in 1946. (Jan Aldrich, "The Horten Brothers, Air Material Command and UFOs: Perspective Thinking," at www.evansville.net/~slk/Horten1.htm.)

Especially suspect were the wartime designs of flying-wing aircraft by Reimar and Walter Horten of Göttingen, Germany. T-2 requested that the U.S. Army's Counter Intelligence Corps—Europe help in the investigation. CIC agents in Germany scoured the allied occupation zones for clues to the existence of operational models, but found nothing suggesting that the origin of the discs was from the work of the Horten brothers.

Without doubt the government began to feel pressure from the military and the public to solve the saucer mystery as early as July 8, 1947. On July 9, the following release appeared in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and other newspapers:

WASHINGTON, July 9 (UP) Official Washington was sure today that it knew what the flying saucers were not—but it hadn't the faintest ideas what they were. The Army Air Forces said they had the matter under investigation. Preliminary study disclosed that the flying discs are not:

1. Secret bacteriological weapons designed by some foreign power.
2. New-type Army rockets.
3. Space ships.

It is not entirely known how much reactive concern the White House placed on the Pentagon and its intelligence branches, but a clue can be found in the memories of Gen. Robert B. Landry, special military advisor to President Truman. In an oral history he prepared for the Truman Presidential Library, he stated, "The President said he hadn't given much serious thought to all these reports; but at the same time, he said, if there was any evidence of a strategic threat to the national security, the collection and evaluation of UFO data by Central Intelligence warranted more intense study and attention at the highest government level." (Oral history recorded February 28, 1974, available at [sunsite.unc.edu/lia/president/Truman_Library/oral_histories/Landry_Robert.html](http://unc.edu/lia/president/Truman_Library/oral_histories/Landry_Robert.html).)

In reaction, Army Air Force Intelligence Requirements (AFOIR) Branch Chief Brig. Gen. George F. Schulgen called on the FBI to help investigate the mys-



George F. Schulgen

tery. Schulgen brought one of the Muroc pilots to the Pentagon to be interrogated by a host of general officers, scientists, and psychologists. Despite a thorough grilling, the pilot remained convinced that he had seen a "flying disc." In the midst of all this, a need arose for some liaison between what Schulgen was learning and what T-2 at Wright Field needed to know. Loedding became that bridge and was sent by Col. Howard McCoy, adjutant general of T-2, to the Pentagon.

Schulgen also worked on this with Pentagon A-2 Intelligence Collections Branch Executive Officer Col.



Robert Taylor

Robert Taylor and his assistant, Lt. Col. George D. Garrett. This was the office that Loedding would coordinate with, but documents show that Loedding also met in person with Schulgen. Taylor and Garrett were the military connection to the FBI, and they utilized Special Agent S. W. Reynolds for their first UFO inquiries.

In late July, Garrett, perhaps after meeting with Loedding, decided to write up an initial report

and send it to both the Army Air Force chief of staff and the FBI. His memo basically served as a preliminary estimate of the current flying-disc situation. The intention may have also been to bring the issue to a head by formally establishing a position. Garrett and Loedding wanted to know whether the discs represented a secret American military project, or were of Soviet origin as first hypothesized. Other theories, including the extraterrestrial hypothesis (ETH), had yet to be considered.

Garrett's report did force the Pentagon to start eliminating possibilities. The chief of research and development, Gen. Curtis E. LeMay, dispelled the first assumption. He stated that "the Army Air Force has no project with the characteristics similar to those which have been associated with the flying discs." Nevertheless, something from somewhere was definitely flying over U.S. air space in July 1947 and the people concerned had but one other possibility to eliminate—a Soviet connection.

Wright Field began to receive firsthand UFO reports by Wednesday, July 9. One of these came from Idaho when *Idaho Evening Statesman* reporter Dave Johnson, like his friend Kenneth Arnold, caught a glimpse of something strange. Johnson was preparing to land at Gowen Field near Boise in an AT-6 from his National Guard unit when he observed a strange-looking, black, disc-shaped craft at 12:17 p.m. He attempted to make sense of the weird sight as it became silhouetted against the clouds. The disc made a

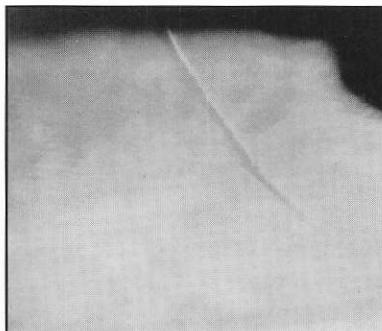
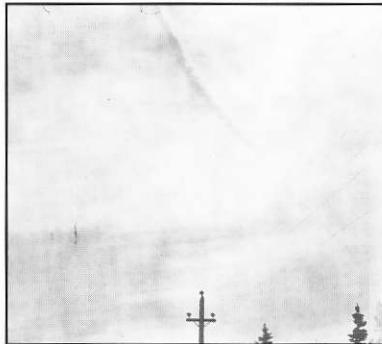


Curtis E. LeMay

half-roll and entered a stair-step climb. At first Johnson thought it might be a balloon (many of the early meteorological balloons were made from neoprene, which would turn smoky gray or black in the sunlight), but no balloon launch records could account for the incident.

A SOVIET CONNECTION?

The sighting report that sent the next shock wave through military channels (and most affected Loedding) came on July 10 from Newfoundland. At 5:30 p.m., two Pan-American Airways mechanics near Harmon Field observed a silver circular disc at about 10,000 feet. It passed in horizontal flight along a widely curved course. The disc's size approximated the wingspan of a C-54 transport plane and seemed to be cutting a bluish-black trail about 15 miles long as it literally parted a path through the clouds over the airport. The trail passed over the base toward the north-northeast. The mechanics took two Kodachrome photographs as the disc parted the clouds.



Photos taken July 10, 1947, over Harmon Field, Newfoundland, by Pan-American mechanics.

The Harmon Field case received the first intensive investigation by Army Air Force Intelligence. The case became especially relevant to intelligence officials at T-2 and the Pentagon because of the concern of a Soviet connection to the saucer mystery. If Russia was conducting reconnaissance flights over the United States, the missions would logically pass over some area of Canada or the far north. For this reason alone, a sighting 12 hours earlier in Newfoundland, coupled with this one and a report out of Alaska the next day, generated not only excitement but

extreme concern for national security.

Harmon Field intelligence officers filed their initial investigative report on July 16, but by the 21st a more detailed report was forwarded to the Pentagon. Schulgen ordered intelligence officers at Wright Field to prepare "immediately" a top-level assessment team to be sent to Harmon. T-2 Chief McCoy dispatched a team by the 30th that might have included Loedding. McCoy's team was



William R. Clingerman

asked by Schulgen to report directly to the Pentagon following their investigation. Interestingly, at that time Schulgen also asked McCoy what T-2 and T-3 had prepared to date on the disc phenomenon. McCoy's notes do not tell us if Analysis Division Chief Col. William R. Clingerman had any answers or if T-3, where Loedding still spent most of his time, had begun any analysis. But McCoy

had already started working on the German/Soviet technology angle to explain the flying discs and in fact had already interviewed Hugo Eckener, the successor to Count Zeppelin's dirigible empire.

The T-2 investigation of the Harmon Field case concerned many of the aeronautical engineers in T-3. Part of the report had the ring of Loedding's expertise and read as follows:

The bluish-black trail seems to indicate ordinary combustion from a turbo-jet engine, athodyd [ramjet] motor, or some combination of these types of power plants. The absence of noise and apparent dissolving of the clouds to form a clear path indicates a relatively large mass flow of a rectangular cross section containing a considerable amount of heat. (Michael D. Swords, "Project Sign and the Estimate of the Situation," forthcoming in the *Journal of UFO Studies*.)

T-2 excluded a meteor or fireball scenario, despite the fact that an astronomical event became the official explanation. Behind the scenes, T-2 and Washington still focused on a Soviet connection. Wright Field investigators spoke with the commander of Harmon Field as well as others to make sure that no British or Canadian aircraft had been in the area at the time. Since it was known that no American aircraft were to blame, it was privately concluded that something of "foreign origin" made the curious split in the clouds over

Newfoundland. By 1948, "foreign origin" would become the catchword to refer to extraterrestrial spacecraft at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. (The designation of Wright Field changed when the Army Air Corps officially became the United States Air Force in September 1947.)

Inexplicably, after July 11, 1947, UFO sightings dropped off. A few reports would follow to the end of the year, but whatever caused the initial flying-disc wave took place primarily between June 24 and July 11, 1947. The consensus was that the widely publicized Kenneth Arnold sighting had generated a form of mass hysteria. Yet if so, why did the sightings encompass the entire globe in a matter of days with too little time for most people to read news accounts of the first American saucers? Why were there some excellent sightings before Arnold's? Would Arnold's story have been so publicized if there had been no other sightings immediately following his? Why did the intensity of the phenomenon end so suddenly after July 11? If people were indeed caught up in a worldwide craze generated by media coverage, would not large numbers of reports still come in on the 12th, instead of hundreds the day before and only a handful until 1948?

By September 1947 these were the very questions Loedding was asking, but not just to himself. We still do not know how he managed it, but this month Loedding played a key role in inspiring an official Air Force investigation that would be based at Wright Field, Ohio. In fact, he had succeeded in transferring most of the Pentagon's flying-disc reports to Dayton. By September 23, T-2 had developed an even greater interest in the discs. This was probably due in part to Loedding's insistence that important information on aerodynamic and engineering principles could be obtained from investigating the reports.

Since the Muroc sightings, T-2 officers had been compiling files of their own. Most of the paperwork, however, was generated by Air Force or Naval Intelligence officers from military bases nearest to a sighting or from the Headquarters of the Fourth Air Force at Hamilton Field, California.

At times, intelligence officers around the country had warned some witnesses not to talk about their reports. (See Edward J. Ruppelt, *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*, Doubleday, 1956, p. 29.)

Regardless of Loedding's role, by September the public was demanding an answer. Twining replied to a verbal request from Schulgen at AFOIR for T-2's analysis of flying-disc reports up to that point. Now known as the "Twining memo," it had an interesting conclusion, namely, "The phenomenon is

(continued on page 24)



Group photo of the Project Paperclip team leaving England to return to the United States. Col. Albert B. Deyarmond is second from the right.

INVESTIGATING THE GHOST ROCKETS

BY JAN ALDRICH

In the spring of 1968, Donald H. Menzel, director of the Harvard Observatory and a committed UFO debunker, initiated correspondence on the 1946 reports of ghost rockets—UFO-like phenomena reported in northern Europe and elsewhere a year prior to the dawning of the Age of Flying Saucers. The correspondence involved Lt. Col. Hector Quintanilla, head of the U.S. Air Force's Project Blue Book; Dr. Robert Low, coordinator of the University of Colorado government-contracted UFO project; Herbert Strentz, at the time a Ph.D candidate whose dissertation was on press coverage of UFO reports; and Dr. Edward U. Condon, the head of the Colorado project.

Menzel's opinion was that "the '46 Swedish flap did a lot to condition the Air Force [concerning UFOs.] I repeat, the Air Force, not the general public! Our interest was stimulated, as Strentz indicates, by the prominence of Peenemünde [German rocket center that fell under the Soviet control after World War II].... I think that there must have been some briefing of top generals, by CIA or other cognizant authority.... Some years ago I tried to get such information from CIA but failed." (Letter from Menzel to Low, July 15, 1968, in the Condon papers at the American Philosophical Society.)

Menzel felt that his thesis was vindicated by Strentz's discovery of ghost-rocket (GR) articles in the American press. The Air Force, he thought, was conditioned to be "too accepting of flying saucers" by GR reports in the intelligence channels and in the press. He thought there might be even be an organization that investigated GRs and later continued to investigate UFOs. He later mentioned to Condon that he would ask the CIA to comment on this. Menzel's guesses may have been close to the mark, but probably not for the reasons or in the places he thought. Official interest in GRs did not end with 1946, nor did the phenomenon cease at that time.

BACKGROUND

During World War II, there were reports that the Germans were testing new and fearsome weapons, sometimes over

Jan Aldrich is coordinator of Project 1947, an international research effort to document the early history of the UFO phenomenon.

the Baltic. On June 13, 1944, the crash of such a weapon in Bäckebo, Sweden, made such reports credible. The Swedes, though neutrals in the conflict, allowed the United States to send a plane to haul away the crashed weapon for further examination. Thus the Allies were able to gain technical data on the V-2 rocket. (*Preliminary Description of Rocket Parts Found in Sweden, 13 June [1944]*, secret Report K-67927, at the Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA), Maxwell AFB.)

After the war, many countries pushed rocketry development. Both the West and the Soviets attempted to exploit and expand on German achievements in this area by using captured German equipment, facilities, scientists, and engineers. Intelligence agencies tried to pierce the high security surrounding these efforts and detect any new developments by any country. The U.S. Navy's Technical Air Intelligence Center started publishing a series of intelligence analyses of foreign air forces, ranging from the large powers down to the small Central American air forces.

GR reports started in about February 1946. When the first reports appeared in the press in May, the American attachés took notice. (Few official documents from the early part of this wave have surfaced.)

The press reported that on May 24 at about 2:00 a.m. a rocketlike object was seen over Landskrona, Sweden. A "rocket" traveling in a southwesterly direction at an estimated altitude of 1,000 feet was one of the first widely reported GR incidents. An analysis dated July 16 for Gen. Carl Spaatz, commander of the Army Air Force, referred to prior GR incidents gathered by the attachés. Not only were there reports from Scandinavia, but in July a GR was also reported over the Rhône valley. (Memorandum for the Commanding General, Army Air Force, July 19, 1946, secret, *Reports of "Rocket" Sightings over the Scandinavian Countries*, in the Gen. Curtis LeMay papers, AFHRA.)

U.S. GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

About 150 pages of U.S. ghost-rocket documents have recently been assembled by Project 1947 members from various agencies: the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) and naval attachés, top-secret Army Air Force incoming/outgoing messages, as well as USAF Directorate of Intelligence and miscellaneous documents from the files of the

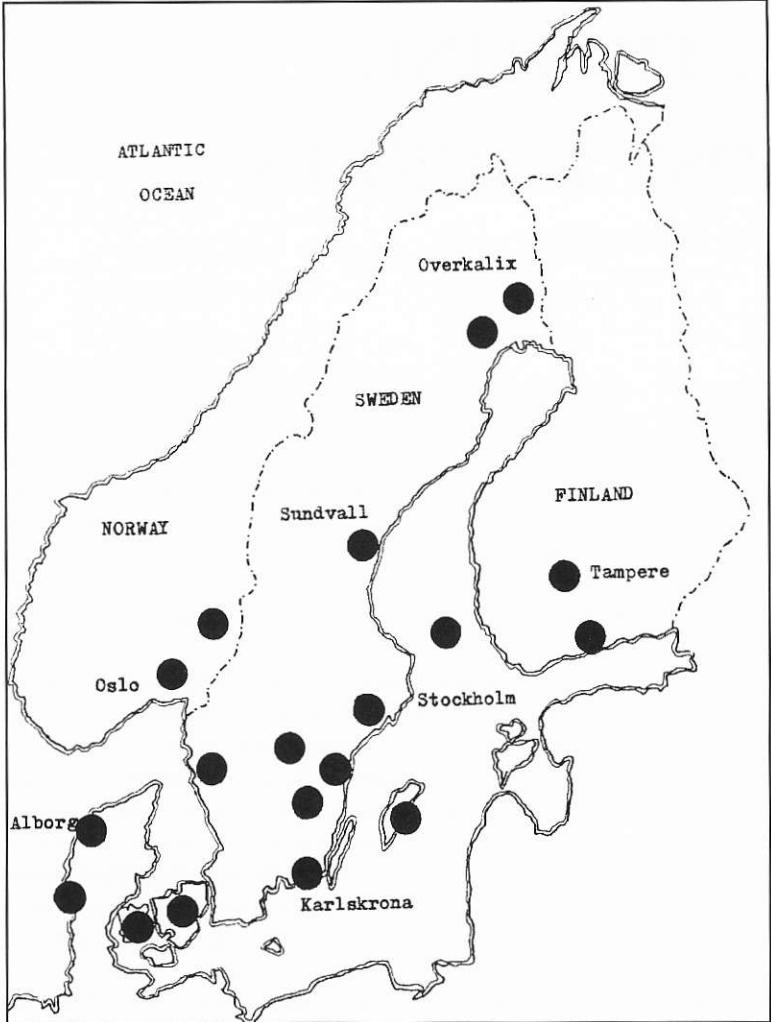


Fig. 1. Sighting locations of the 1946 UFO wave in Scandinavia.
From Ahmad Jamaludin, Major UFO Waves: 1896–1982 (1988).

State Department, Army, and other agencies. Interestingly enough, these documents refer to a large number of other materials that have not yet been discovered or were withheld by the originating agency at the time of the declassification review and are still unavailable. They originated from even more diverse sources: ONI, AAF intelligence, military (Army) and naval attaché cables and reports, State Department cables and reports, Strategic Service Unit (SSU) reports, and various military commands in Europe.

Most of the top-secret GR messages in the AAF incoming/outgoing message files originated with or were addressed to Maj. Gen. (later Lt. Gen.) Stephen J. Chamberlin, the Army's assistant chief of staff for intelligence, with copies sent to Spaatz and Gen. Norstad. Some of the messages were also distributed to Generals Curtis LeMay, Ira C. Eaker, Chauncey, Otto Weyland, Earle Partridge, Anderson, Hood, Everest, George C. McDonald, H. S. Aurand, and others.

On July 16, preliminary analyses of the GR activity reached top-level commanders, and in August the small

forerunner of the CIA, the Central Intelligence Group (CIG), reported its findings to President Truman.

The CIG analysis suggested the rockets seen in Scandinavia came from Soviet launching sites in Estonia or Latvia. The Åland Islands in the Gulf of Finland (where Soviet "tourists" had suddenly appeared in great numbers) was also a suspected firing site. On the same day, a message from the military attaché to the War Department stated that the Swedish army staff was studying 300–400 rocket incidents. The Swedes claimed they could see no evidence of radio control, and the Swedish Defense Research Institute was supposedly studying fragments which were non-ferrous. The Swedes further theorized that the Soviets were using the rockets for experimentation or a "war of nerves." They were nervous about informing the Americans and the British, fearing that the Soviets might protest that Sweden had joined the Western Bloc. (This and following documents are found in Incoming/Outgoing top secret AAF/USAF messages, Nov. 1941–1947, RG 318, entry #5, boxes 23–43, at National Archives II; and ONI and attachés reports, RG 38, National Archives II.)

On August 1, Col. E. K. Wright, executive to Director of Central Intelligence Lt. Gen. Hoyt Vandenberg, in a top-secret memorandum for the President (Fig. 2), summarized the CIG analysis. Most information came from the military attaché in Sweden and the conclusions were from the director of intelligence for the War Department general staff. Significantly, the report noted the missiles turned and flew circular courses, which seemingly indicated radio control.

The report concluded that since the Soviets had a vast, empty territory where they could conduct their rocket tests, their purpose might be to intimidate the Scandinavians, the British, or the Americans by displaying their capabilities.

The next report came from the U.S. delegation in Budapest on August 6. Speaking with an old Hungarian friend, a German scientist in a Soviet major's uniform revealed that he now worked for the Soviets, who were seeking natural gas in Hungary in the hopes of using it as a special rocket fuel. He said the Soviets had developed guided rockets called V-3 and V-4 that were able to fly a round trip of 700 miles. This intelligence report not only ended up in Washington, it was also sent to the intelligence office of the U.S. Forces in Europe Theater (USFET) and the U.S. military attaché in Moscow.

This message from Hungary sparked a flurry of activity. On August 13, Chamberlin asked the Budapest delegation for further information on these missiles. Top-secret requests sent to the military attachés in London, Stockholm, Oslo, Helsinki, and Copenhagen requested listings of all

GR reports and the results of any analysis. Information was also sought on the “V-3 and V-4 rockets.” Naval intelligence and the naval attachés were not left out of the intelligence chase. The naval attaché in Sweden alerted the ONI to State Department and SSU cables on the subject and sent in their own reports (most of which are still withheld from the public).

Also on August 13, the military attaché in Norway reported that a Soviet ship in the north Baltic Sea apparently had been transmitting code to Soviet shore stations concerning the rocket flights.

However, the most interesting document was a top-secret intelligence report from Naval Attaché Capt. Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter, based in Paris, concerning a report on ghost rockets “disseminated to the French President, the Chiefs of the General Staff of National Defense, the top officials at the General Staff of National Defense, and the Committee for Scientific Coordination.” According to Hillenkoetter, French intelligence felt that much of the material was contradictory, but that some reports were observations of V-1 rockets and the others were possibly V-2s. Some of the objects seemed capable of supersonic speed. Peenemünde was identified as one of the possible launch sites, while others were thought to be in the Soviet Union with rockets traveling from Russia to the North Sea.

Finally, the U.S. military attaché in Moscow asked the War Department, the commander of USFET, and the attachés in Sweden and Finland for any intelligence that indicated where the GRs might originate. He soon had plenty of answers. Chamberlin replied that the rockets either came from launch sites on Dagö Island in the Baltic, or from Estonia or Latvia. Peenemünde was considered a possibility but “good evidence [was] lacking.”

Gen. Joseph McNarney of USFET also answered the Moscow attaché’s message. In his view, Peenemünde had been refurbished after the war and was the launch site for

THE PLAYERS

The **Strategic Service Unit** (SSU) was an interim organization created to wind up the affairs of the World War II intelligence agency, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). President Truman ordered the OSS to cease operation on October 1, 1945, at which time there were 13,000 employees. When the SSU activities were merged into the new Central Intelligence Agency in 1947, only 1,300 of the original OSS employees made the transition. During the SSU operations, intelligence gathering continued with a reduced and inadequate budget. Many contacts in foreign countries established during the OSS era continued under the SSU. The OSS operations in neutral Sweden during the war represented a crucial window on Nazi activity in central Europe.

The **Central Intelligence Group** (CIG), also known as the National Intelligence Authority, was the first attempt to centralize intelligence gathering. It turned out to be a small interim operation subsumed by the establishment of the Central Intelligence Agency in 1947. Lt. Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg was the second Director of Central Intelligence, from June 1946 to May 1947.

The **War Department** in 1946 contained both the Army and the still subordinate Army Air Force (AAF). The Army’s staff was considered at the time superior to the Air Staff which served under the commanding general of the Army Air Force. The Army Air Force would not become independent until 1947, though planning for an independent Air Force began at the end of World War II.

Attachés stationed at foreign embassies were usually intelligence specialists tasked with specific duties for their service’s intelligence operations. They coordinated military matters with the foreign military and engaged in ceremonial duties involving the embassy. The Army attaché was known as the military attaché.

The **U.S. Force European Theater** (USFET) in Frankfurt, Germany, handled all U.S. military matters in the European Theater including the U.S. elements assigned to Allied commands.

Gen. Carl A. Spaatz served as Air Force chief of staff from 1946 to 1948 during its transition to independence and in the formative years.

Lt. Gen. Ira C. Eaker was deputy commander of the Army Air Force during General Spaatz’s tenure. He was sometimes referred to by his initials ICE.

Maj. Gen. Stephen J. Chamberlin, Army assistant chief of staff for intelligence, was in 1946 considered the superior to the AAF Intelligence staff.

Maj. Gen. George C. McDonald, Assistant Chief of Air Staff for Intelligence, served on Gen. Spaatz’s staff and later as the USAF Director of Intelligence. His program for establishing postwar air intelligence was adopted by Gen. Arnold.

Gen. Curtis E. LeMay in 1946 was the AAF deputy chief of staff for research and development.

Gen. Earle Everard Partridge was assistant chief of the air staff for operations during this period.

Maj. Gen. Clayton L. Bissell was the military attaché in London at this time. He was highly respected in Air Force intelligence.

Gen. Otto P. Weyland was assistant chief of staff for planning in 1946.

Col. Howard H. McCoy, chief of intelligence at Air Materiel Command at Wright Field, signed much of the official correspondence for the first official UFO investigation, Project Sign.

Col. William H. Clingerman was McCoy’s deputy. He also personally investigated some early UFO cases.

tests of some 100 rockets of the V-2 type. The military attaché in Stockholm reported that a Swedish source identified Dagö Island, Peenemünde, and Parkkala in Finland as possible launch sites, while the naval attaché in Stockholm had information from the naval and military attachés in Poland that Leba on the Polish coast was the source.

British intelligence, which sent a mission to Sweden on another matter, told the Americans that they had come up

~~TOP SECRET~~

1 August 1946

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: "Ghost Rockets" over Scandinavia

1. Since 15 May there have been occasional press reports of "ghost rockets" seen passing over points in Sweden. On 19 July two such "rockets" were reported to have fallen in Norway. The Swedish and Norwegian Governments have now imposed a news blackout with respect to the subject.

2. Official sources, principally the Military Attaché at Stockholm, have confirmed these reports and obtained additional, but inconclusive, information. Although ten such missiles have fallen within Sweden, the Swedish General Staff has as yet been unable to reach firm conclusions on the basis of the fragments recovered.

3. From the information presently available, the Director of Intelligence, WDGS, has concluded that:

a. The missiles are of the jet-propelled V-1 type (rather than rockets).

b. They contain only small demolition charges (for self-destruction) rather than a warhead.

c. They outrange the V-1. This result could be achieved by construction from light, non-ferrous materials, and by the substitution of additional fuel for the heavy warhead. It could also be achieved by the use of a turbo-jet engine such as the Germans were developing at the close of the war. German scientists in Soviet employ are capable of completing this development, and the characteristic noiselessness reported supports the supposition of its use.

d. Their course is apparently controlled, either by radio or pre-set controls. (Turns and circular courses have been indicated).

e. Their launching from some Soviet-controlled point in the vicinity of the Gulf of Finland is probable.

4. Since the interior of the U.S.S.R. affords areas suitable for extensive and undetected experimentation, the launching of these missiles over Scandinavia must be a deliberate demonstration for political effect. In this, the Soviet objectives might be:

a. Intimidation of Sweden and Norway, by a demonstration of their vulnerability to attack with such missiles.

b. Intimidation of Great Britain, by demonstration of the vulnerability of the United Kingdom to such attack from the continental areas which the Soviets now control or are capable of seizing.

c. Intimidation of the United States by a demonstration of Soviet capabilities for the scientific development of new weapons.

FOR GENERAL VANDENBERG:

E. K. WRIGHT
Colonel, GSC
Executive to the Director

kilometers. Generally the rockets entered from the south and moved north. Sometimes they were on zigzag courses.

The same day, a series of questions from the U.S. occupation force in Japan concerning the GRs arrived at Washington. The reply contained a summary of the information to date.

On August 22, Vandenberg submitted another memorandum for the President to Adm. William D. Leahy, head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who forwarded it to the White House the next day. It contained the same information, with an additional report from Leopoldville radio in July that the Soviets had warned shipping in the Baltic against passage through certain areas: The Soviets were threatening death to seamen who might disclose "phenomena" they witnessed.

During the next few days the natural-gas rocket fuel search report was discredited. Similarly, no confirmation could be found for Wennerstroen's information. Several reports leaked to the British press about the British mission and a Swedish request for radar equipment, which embarrassed the neutral Swedes.

On August 24, the military attaché in Sweden pointed out some problems with the entire GR scenario. Perhaps, he theorized, the whole thing was "an unintentioned hoax" exploited to fatten Western defense budgets. The attaché reasoned that GRs either represented nothing new or were the Swedes' own missiles, but the reports became an unintentional hoax when the Swedes let the press reports continue without clarification. However, the hoax story put the Swedes in an uncomfortable position as Cold War tensions escalated, though it was also recognized that some evidence pointed to misperceived observations of meteors. The attaché cited what he thought was evidence for his accidental-hoax theory. For one thing, he noted, the Swedes had not recalled either their Air Defense or Defense Research Institute personnel who were supposedly studying fragments from their summer vacations. The Swedes offered no physical evidence of rocket crashes or explosions, though they claimed that such evidence was being analyzed.

The same day, the Commander of Naval Forces in Europe wrote to the naval attaché in Oslo concerning missiles that had supposedly landed in Norway. This secret letter informed the attaché that the navy was very interested in the missiles and recovery of same. It pointed out, however, that no naval equipment was available and any invitation for recovery personnel would probably require approval by political authorities.

Gen. McNarney of USFET laid out his reasons why Peenemünde was the probable source of the GRs. He cited



William D. Leahy

Fig. 2. Memo to the President from Col. E. K. Wright, executive to Director of Central Intelligence Lt. Gen. Hoyt Vandenberg, August 1, 1946.

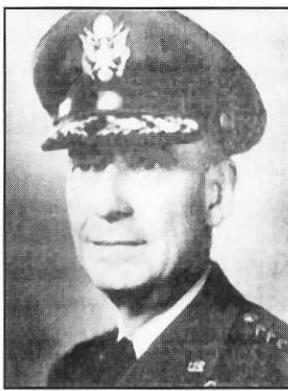
with no new information.

The attachés had trouble obtaining GR sighting reports because most Scandinavian countries had some type of press censorship in effect.

On August 19, the military attaché in Moscow reported on the visit of Maj. S. Wennerstroen of the Swedish Royal Air Force. Wennerstroen revealed that radar indicated that the source was in the vicinity of Peenemünde, and he thought that the V-1 was not involved. The rockets appeared to be radio-controlled, carried no warheads, were self-destructive, and were plotted over a range of 1,000

renewed building activity, the repair of railroad facilities in that area, and the presence of a Soviet Technical Commission headed by Col. Maksim and Lt. Col. Swentitiaki, Soviet rocket experts.

On August 26, the military attaché in Stockholm reported that the Swedes, possibly worried about a Soviet



Joseph P. McNarney

veto of their application for membership in the United Nations, formally canceled their request for British radar equipment.

On August 29, Chamberlin gave more detailed top-secret answers to questions from the U.S. military in Japan. The "unintentioned hoax" theory was also mentioned.

Capt. William C. Wright, naval attaché in Stockholm, dispatched a number of reports

and requests during the first week of September. He asked a colleague in Moscow to forward all Soviet press releases concerning GRs. (A check of the intelligence tasking register for the naval attaché in Moscow from 1946 to 1948 turned up no assignments top secret or below for information on GRs or other aerial phenomena.) Wright already had seen Soviet press comments that GR reports were contrived to create distrust and suspicion of the Soviet Union.

On September 9, British intelligence distributed a report entitled *Investigation of Reported Missile Activity over Scandinavia*. The report reviewed the situation and provided a number of conclusions from different viewpoints: "Thus if the phenomena now observed are of natural origin, they are unusual; sufficiently unusual to make possible the alternative explanation that at least some are missiles. If this is so, they must be of Russian origin." However, a conservative skeptic commented, "We were not so successful in explaining the Loch Ness Monster." The final sentence in the document is instructive: "Pending these results, we must reserve judgment, remarking that there is at least a chance of an entirely innocent explanation." (File 512.6522B, at AFHRA.)

On September 12, Cmdr. R. A. Winston, acting naval attaché in Stockholm, wrote to the London naval attaché in a secret air mailgram (with copies to the Chief of Naval Operations and the naval attaché in Oslo) that he suspected there was a British-Swedish collaboration on GRs designed to keep the United States from learning the truth.

The visits to Sweden of retired Gens. James Doolittle and David Sarnoff are not addressed in any of the documents except for quoted news stories which reported that both would consult with the Swedish government on the topic. The earlier June visit of Navy Secretary James Forrestal was also not mentioned in any of the documents.

The *New York Times* and *Washington Post* carried the results of the Swedish investigation on October 11. The

Swedes had concluded that of 1,000 reports 80% "could be attributed to celestial phenomena," but that radar equipment had detected some objects which could not be natural phenomena, products of the imagination, or Swedish airplanes. The report concluded, however, that the objects were not the V-type bombs used by the Germans in the closing days of the war."

A top-secret Air Intelligence report designated the rockets seen over Scandinavia as "V-5 (suspected of being the Swedish fire-ball) produced in Siebel Words, Halle [Germany]." (Air Intelligence Division Report #100-136-34, *Significant Developments of Scientific Warfare in Russia*, Nov. 29, 1946, in the Current Intelligence Branch files, USAF Directorate of Intelligence Top Secret Control #4-12981, at the National Archives II.)

GHOST ROCKET AFTERMATH

It did not end there. Sightings continued. The attachés submitted reports. Though the Project Saucer report mentioned that these reports continued at a reduced rate in January and February 1947, the investigations went on after this date. More agencies within the U.S. military became involved. Further on-the-spot investigations and intelligence gathering continued into 1947.

The GR investigation by the Swedish defense staff continued, as investigators made the transition to UFO reports. (This might actually have been the first UFO investigation, predating the U.S. effort.)

A different situation existed in the United States. On January 23, 1948, Col. William E. Clingerman, writing for Col. Howard McCoy at Project Sign at Wright Field, asked Lt. Col. George Garrett of the USAF Directorate of Intelligence for the files on "Swedish incidents" accumulated in 1946 and 1947. These files are not in the Project Blue Book files or any other surviving UFO documentation from other sources. Because they probably contain top-secret information, the documents have not yet been released.

Several new theories came to the fore: The GRs were the result of Swedish rocket experiments, a very small number of reports were indeed Soviet rockets while the great masses of reports were misidentification of natural or man-made phenomena, or the reports involved a British or Swedish hoax for various political or material reasons. The "unintentioned hoax" hypothesis was resurrected. Various fragments of physical evidence allegedly from crashed GRs did not seem to stand up to rigorous analysis and thus offered no help in identification.

In a report from Nørreby, Denmark, in October 1947, an object the size and shape of a pint milk bottle with a fiery tail allegedly hit an electric pole and exploded. Fragments that looked like colored glass were collected and sent in for analysis. No follow-up is known. (Jan L. Aldrich, *Project 1947: A Preliminary Report on the 1947 UFO Sighting Wave*, UFO Research Coalition, 1997, pp. 158-59.)

What were the 1946 ghost rockets? Folklore, meteors,

hysteria, Soviet missiles, Swedish missiles, a Swedish hoax to facilitate a defense build-up, or true UFOs? Maybe all of the above. In 1948 GRs returned to the news in great numbers. Again, American sources speculated that the Swedes were exaggerating the reports in the hopes of acquiring modern radar or other equipment. But by 1948 these reports were regarded as UFOs and recorded as such in Project Sign's records.

Some incidents were not in the Project Blue Book files. Here is one such report from the USAF Directorate of Intelligence daily activity files, 1948.

TOP SECRET
DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON
24 August 1948

AFOIR-RC
MEMORANDUM FOR EXECUTIVE, AIR INTEL,
REQUIREMENTS DIVISION

SUBJECT: SUPPLEMENT to Daily Activity 24 Aug 1948

1. It has been noted in cable brief that Sweden Armed Force C in C [Commander in Chief], General Jung, saw an aerial explosion considered to be some form of guided missile originating from Estonian islands, possibly Dagö or Ösel. A point of interest lies in the fact that recent word has been received from our attaché in Stockholm of a reconnaissance sortie accomplished over Ösel and the stated intention of further aerial reconnaissance there. The Swedish reports have mentioned civilian evacuation on the western coast of the above islands.

2. The Swedish aerial reconnaissance stems from an arrangement which was made with the Directorate of Intelligence for the loan of long focal length cameras to the Swedes.

3. General Jung has a keen interest in the products of reconnaissance in a personal as well as an official way. He has as a personal friend the head of the section of the General Staff of Defense which is charged with covert reconnaissance; General Jung's sister-in-law holds a key position in that section.

4. It is believed that photographs of the area will be received in the near future. (Lt Col Fuller 2376)

/s/ J. E. Mallory
/t/J. E. MALLORY Colonel, USAF Chief, Reconnaissance Branch Air Intelligence Requirements Div. Directorate of Intelligence

IMPLICATIONS FOR UFO RESEARCH

Anders Liljegren of the Archives for UFO Research and Clas Svahn of UFO Sweden received permission to research and copy material found in the Swedish Defense

Staff Archives. They have been able to document some of the GR and subsequent UFO investigations. As the GR incidents also took place in Norway, Denmark, and Finland, one would expect to find that these countries, like their Swedish neighbors, had opened official investigations of GR reports that may have continued through 1947 and after.

British intelligence carried out a GR inquiry, and in early 1947 a spate of "ghost aeroplanes" was reported. Was there a carry-over and investigation into UFO reports? Project 1947 members have collected more than 50 UFO reports for 1947 in the British Isles.

Capt. Hillenkoetter's report on the French government's interest in GRs showed that most top French officials were informed on the problem. In the summer of 1946, GR reports spanned all of Europe. Press accounts tell us that the Belgian and Italian governments also instituted inquiries. Searching the Italian archives, Centro Italiano Studi Ufologici member Massimiliano Grandi found a file on 1946 "ghost bombs," a nearly complete collection of dispatches sent to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the Italian embassy in Stockholm. No evidence of an Italian commission or an investigation has yet been uncovered.

So maybe Dr. Menzel made a lucky guess, but not necessarily the one he thought he had. The ghost rockets alerted Europeans to the presence of unidentified flying objects. We still do not know as much as we could about what their governments were doing about them in 1946.

In the United States, UFOs seemed to catch the Army Air Force flatfooted. There is still more information to be found on GRs in U.S. archives. Much of it will probably not be released until after 2002 when President Clinton's executive declassification order takes effect.

Still another 1946 mystery also awaits discovery: the 1946 wave in the Soviet Union.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Some useful literature on ghost rockets includes:

Robert E. Bartholomew, "Redefining Epidemic Hysteria: An Example from Sweden," *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* 88 (1993): 178-82.

Jerome Clark, "Ghost Rockets," in *The UFO Encyclopedia*, 2nd. ed. (Detroit, Mich.: Omnigraphics, 1998), pp. 439-447.

Loren E. Gross, *UFOs: A History—1946: The Ghost Rockets*, 3rd ed., (Fremont, Calif.: The author, 1988).

Goran Jansson, *Spokraketerna 1946*. In Swedish. Previously on the Internet; copy in author's file.

Anders Liljegren, "Project 1946—The Ghost Rocket Documents Released by the Swedish Defense Staff," *AFU Newsletter* 28 (January/December 1985): 2-5.

Anders Liljegren and Clas Svahn, "The Ghost Rockets," in Hilary Evans and John Spencer, eds., *UFOs 1947-1987: The 40-Year Search for an Explanation* (London: Fortean Tomes, 1987), pp. 32-38. ♦

A MOMENT IN HISTORY:

AN INTERVIEW WITH BILL BEQUETTE

BY PIERRE LAGRANGE

When I started my investigation of the Kenneth Arnold story more than 10 years ago, I found a few mentions of Bill Bequette, the reporter who first interviewed the man whose sighting ushered in the Age of Flying Saucers.

Bequette's article was published in the paper for which he worked, the Pendleton *East Oregonian* (on June 25, 1947), and in newspapers carrying the Associated Press wire service. I very much wanted to meet him. He was, after all, one important link in a long chain.

Thanks to UFO researcher Greg Long, I located Bequette in the Richland-Pasco-Kennewick area of Washington. I sent him a letter and was pleased to receive a reply from him. I wrote again and asked him many questions. He replied again. Then I told him that I wanted to come to see him in the Pacific Northwest. He warned me that I would be spending my money for little result. I insisted, and I think that my impossible project of reconstructing the events of 1947 amused him. He agreed to see me. We met in July 1988.

Bill Bequette never tried to get any fame from the story he helped launch. I brought with me pictures of the *East Oregonian* building, of Kenneth Arnold and his plane, and of the articles Bequette had written in the *Oregonian*. I also played for him the tape of a June 26, 1947, interview with Arnold over KWRC radio. I had found it only a few weeks earlier.

What follows is taken mostly from our mail correspondence:

PL: How did you meet Kenneth Arnold?

BB: My first meeting with Kenneth Arnold? June 25, 1947. Both Nolan Skiff and I were in the office, which was small, when Mr. Arnold came in. As I remember, we both talked with him, listened to his story, told him we didn't have a clue to what he had seen but would send the story to the Associated Press in hopes some editor or newspaper reader might be able to explain the strange objects.

That first meeting probably lasted no more than five

minutes. Nolan jotted down a few notes, then wrote a short story which I squeezed into the bottom of page one. Then I punched an even shorter (as I recall) version into the AP wire. We were only minutes from "putting the paper to bed," so we didn't have much time to give him.

PL: Why did you give the story to the AP?

BB: The story was given to the AP as a matter of course. The Associated Press is a cooperative, and a member paper is obligated to offer its local stories. In those days, AP member papers in Oregon were linked to each other and to the AP bureau in Portland by a teletype transmission wire usually referred to as the "C wire." Member papers "punched" their stories onto the C wire. Other papers were free to use stories from the C wire, and the AP bureau took whatever stories the Portland editors thought had regional or national interest and transmitted them to the AP's main or trunk wire.

Stories from the C wire sometimes were rewritten for the trunk wires. I punched the original story into the C wire.

PL: What happened then?

BB: When I returned to the office after lunch, the receptionist's eyes were as big as saucers—the kind we use under coffee cups. She said newspapers from all around the country and Canada had been calling. They wanted more details on the "flying saucers." I spent the next two hours with Mr. Arnold in his hotel room. From that interview I wrote a story about 40 column inches long. The story was telephoned to the AP bureau in Portland. Next morning almost every newspaper in the country published the story on page one.

Even after 40 years I feel some embarrassment over the original UFO story. My embarrassment is because I failed to recognize what a big story Mr. Arnold brought into the office that day.

PL: Who did coin the phrase "flying saucer"?

BB: I don't remember whether or not Arnold used the words "saucer-shaped craft." I am inclined to credit his version [that he only spoke of objects moving like a saucer if you skipped it across the water], knowing the tendency of journalists to rephrase. I'm sure I didn't coin "flying saucers."

(continued on page 20)

Pierre Lagrange is a French sociologist with a long-standing interest in the early history of the UFO phenomenon. He lives in Paris.

SIGNALS, NOISE, AND UFO WAVES

BY RICHARD HALL

Over the past 50 years a seeming outbreak of UFO sightings has captured public and news media attention on average about every five to eight years. Sometimes the sightings have been sufficiently spectacular that the publicity has led someone to attempt a scientific study, but these studies usually bog down in confusion and controversy, and the interest fades away.

News media interest comes and goes, the press tending to treat UFOs as a "silly season" topic. Ufologists continue to compile data suggesting that UFO sightings tend to come in waves, but no particular pattern has been found that would even begin to bowl scientists off their feet.

For whatever reasons, the UFO phenomenon—or attention to it—ebbs and flows over the years. A number of studies have been conducted on the so-called UFO waves (once called "flaps") in an attempt to understand their significance. Relatively less examined is the sighting troughs between waves. During these slack periods when UFOs seem to go away (but really don't), what happens? What, if anything, is different about UFO manifestations during the trough periods? Are there any characteristic types of trough-period sightings that might provide a useful clue about what they are up to?

To study these questions, I first reviewed some literature to arrive at a good consensus on major waves, and on definite periods of low sighting frequency on an international basis. (See References and Notes.) As noted elsewhere, sighting waves are partly apparent and partly real; some mixture of a real upturn in sightings and the attendant publicity, or lack of it (Hall, 1988, pp. 213–224).

Since it usually takes many years to flesh out the data and to uncover obscure cases, I have used the time period from 1947 through the mid-1980s in this study rather than more recent time periods. The established consensus waves are indicated in Table 1 at the end of this article, in two categories: (1) pronounced waves (several countries on

several continents) and (2) other concentrated periods of sightings on a somewhat smaller scale, located nationally or regionally. These waves are pretty well agreed upon by most researchers.

From a study of the Project Blue Book microfilms and three other references (Clark, 1998; Andrus and Hall, 1987; Hall, 1999) it was possible to derive four rather clear-cut trough periods between 1947 and the mid-1980s, each lasting three to four years:

- 1948–1951
- 1958–1960
- 1970–1972
- 1979–1981

I can confirm from personal experience the 1958–1960 trough, a veritable drought, because those were my first three years at the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP), in Washington, D.C. At that time NICAP was very much in the news, and people knew where to report sightings, but several objective measures confirm my impressions: sightings were scarce all over the world at that time (Hall, 1994).

An examination of the UFO cases that occurred during these sighting troughs primarily confirms that there is no qualitative change in the reports. Exactly the same kinds of events were reported as at other times. They included disc- and elliptical-shaped objects, radar trackings, and vehicle encounters. In fact, a strong case for the reality of UFOs could be made by ignoring the wave period sightings altogether, and concentrating exclusively on sightings from the trough periods.

For example, many classic cases occurred during the 1948–1951 trough, including the 1948 Chiles-Whitted airline encounter, several significant cases at White Sands, New Mexico, and the 1950 Great Falls, Montana, movie film. (See Table 2.)

After the November 1957 wave, UFOs once again seemingly disappeared—or drastically cut back activities if we are thinking in terms of visitors from space—for three years. But the disappearance was mostly from the pages of newspapers and the airwaves. After-the-fact historical research shows that there was a steady flow of sightings throughout 1958, with a slight increase in October. Not a

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large number, but plenty to demonstrate the continuity of the phenomenon. Similarly, throughout 1959 and 1960, a steady flow of absolutely typical UFOs were reported.

Again, many highly significant and classic cases occurred during the 1958–1960 sighting trough. (See Table 3.) They included the Trindade Isle, Brazil, photographs in 1958; the 1959 Father Gill case in Papua New Guinea; and the Red Bluff, California, state police sighting in 1960.

THE UFO EVIDENCE

In preparation for my new volume of *The UFO Evidence*, I conducted an extensive literature survey and compiled data on UFO sightings for the 30-plus years since the cut-off date of the original 1964 report. Using those data, I have studied the 1970–1972 and 1979–1981 sighting troughs fairly intensively, looking for anything different, possibly a scientific clue of some kind.

The major difference in UFO manifestation during this period, obviously, was the eruption of the abduction phenomenon. However, typical UFO sightings continued to be made. Again, there was no qualitative difference between the waves and the troughs as far as UFO sightings were concerned.

Were there any “unusual” or different activities during the troughs in addition to typical UFO sightings? Sometimes yes, and it may be in this area that we need to focus in the search for clues. Each major sighting wave has tended to introduce or to intensify some startling or attention-getting feature. In 1952 it was the radar-visual and jet interception cases. The 1957 wave featured a rash of electromagnetic effects on vehicles. In 1966 and 1967, vehicle encounter cases multiplied. The 1973 wave brought us a rash of humanoid encounters. But what about during the troughs?

UNUSUAL EVENTS DURING TROUGHS

Let us examine each trough period in turn for relatively unusual occurrences that may or may not have later become more common. During the 1948–1951 trough (see Table 2):

- UFOs interacted with test vehicles at White Sands Proving Grounds, New Mexico, in 1949 circling a missile in flight and in 1951 circling a Skyhook balloon.
- At least three military pilots in scattered locations engaged in intensive “dogfights” with glowing UFOs (in one case a clear-cut disc), also seen by independent observers in two of the cases.
- The mysterious and still unexplained green fireballs appeared, primarily over New Mexico, observed by many scientists in November 1951, just before the colossal 1952 sighting wave began.

Also notable in these events is the concentration over sensitive military and scientific installations in New Mexico. This fact was commented upon in at least two Air Force documents (Hall, 1988, p. 200). One, an OSI report from

New Mexico in 1950, expressed concern about “the continued occurrence of unexplained phenomena of this nature in the vicinity of sensitive installations.”

During the 1958–1960 trough (see Table 3), there were an unusual number of “blatant display” cases for this early period of UFO history. Though the displays were not unprecedented, they did not become more common until much later. They were unusual for that time:

- A large number of Air Force officers at Strategic Air Command headquarters at Offutt AFB, Nebraska, in 1958 observed a cigar-shaped UFO with satellite objects.

- In the last quarter of 1958 there were at least three cases in which oval or elliptical UFOs hovered within plain sight, then accelerated and shot upwards out of sight at incredible speed.

- On February 4, 1959, a reddish object sped back and forth in the path of a Pan American Airways airliner, then disappeared rapidly upwards.

- Father Gill and others in Papua New Guinea watched a disc with humanoid figures visible on it. The figures seemed to respond to gestures by the witnesses.

- On August 13, 1960, in Red Bluff, California, an important but underrated case with highly credible witnesses involved an astoundingly maneuverable elliptical object which behaved “intelligently” (Hall, 1964, p. 61).

What these cases have in common is their obviousness and closeness to the witnesses, and their long duration. Few (if any) conventional explanations come even close to accounting for them. Cases of this type, however, became common in the 1960s and 1970s.

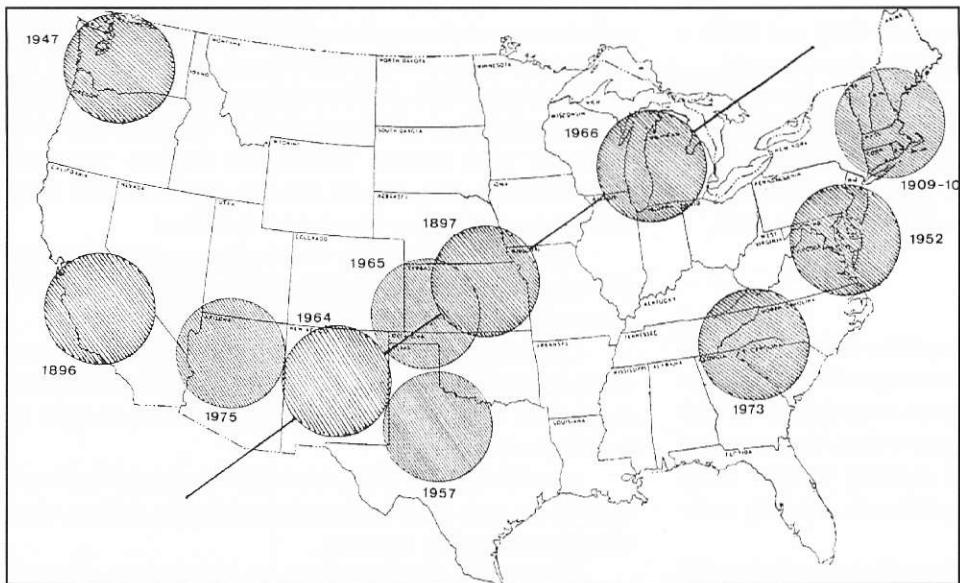
During the 1970–1972 trough (see Table 4), humanoid sightings and vehicle encounters continued, but nothing that we had not heard before.

During the 1979–1981 trough (see Table 5), several strong physical evidence cases occurred. Once again, no scientific clues are immediately obvious.

REMARKS

First of all, it is clear that the amount and kind of general news media reporting on the UFO subject at the time of a wave serves as a sociological filter factor in some way, its main effect being to give a somewhat misleading impression of what is really going on. The reporters do not attempt to distinguish solid, carefully investigated reports (“real” UFOs) from trivial IFOs. This often makes it seem that a veritable invasion is going on, whereas in reality the noise level is high.

Waves that were not centered in the United States, or did not have some highly publicized U.S. UFO cases, tend to be unknown here. Some pronounced non-U.S. waves have occurred, but they went essentially unreported by our news media. Examples are 1969, 1977–1978, and to some degree the early 1980s concentrations in Europe and South America. This journalistic failure, in and of itself, ought to be of interest to serious scholars.



American UFO wave epicenters, 1896–1975.
From Ahmad Jamaludin, Major UFO Waves: 1896–1982 (1988).

UFOs apparently do put on spurts of activity from time to time, and new features occasionally do appear. But how much reliance can we place on the wave and trough numbers we currently have to be an accurate reflection of wave magnitude? Several lines of anecdotal evidence suggest that the fundamental underlying causes of apparent waves and troughs are sociological and psychological in nature and that waves are not nearly so pronounced as they appear to be.

When public funding of an independent study of UFOs at the University of Colorado was announced in 1966, an astounding number of scientists and academics emerged from the “UFO Underground” to express their support for scientific study, and public interest soared. Probably not by coincidence, one of the largest UFO sighting waves of all time occurred in 1967. However, this wave cannot be explained by misperceptions on the part of people who desired to see UFOs. Instead—at least for the moment—UFOs were respectable, witnesses knew they would be taken seriously, and they knew where to report the sightings because the investigating agencies were much in the news.

Once the University of Colorado Project failed, rent by internal divisions, political pressures, and confusion over proper methodology, UFOs were once again debunked. The scientists and academics then vanished once more into the underground. Anyone with his finger on the UFO pulse knows that this underground movement still exists and is substantial. Due to their caution and conservatism, however, these scientists and academics surface only when it is (politically and otherwise) safe to do so. The message is that ridicule is a powerful factor in suppression of objective UFO reporting and investigation. This despite the fact that, as J. Allen Hynek stated, “ridicule is not part of the scientific method.”

Clear documentation exists to show that important groups of people are inhibited by the ridicule factor from reporting their sightings or participating in open scientific study of UFOs. Airline pilots, at times, have been restricted by their companies from talking about the subject. Individual pilots on their own, with good reason, have concluded that it would be professional suicide to talk openly about their sightings.

Military service careerists often experience the same pressures. Charles I. Halt, Colonel, USAF, retired, recently acknowledged in a public talk that he feared for his reputation and career when

he went out into the field expecting to find a simple answer for the “lights” that were spooking his men outside of Bentwaters AFB, England, in December 1980, but instead personally experienced some mystifying events which he felt obliged to report up the chain of command.

Later, the senior enlisted men involved confided in Halt that they, too, had held back on reporting all that they had experienced for fear of damaging their professional careers. When all the evidence is pieced together about the Bentwaters event, it can be clearly seen as a pivotal case in the effort to unravel the UFO mystery. Overwhelming credible testimony is out there, if we could only get past the misleading and confusing speculation that so dominates the field. In order to do that, we must first penetrate the ridicule curtain.

The ridicule factor has a powerful net effect in inhibiting some of the best potential witnesses from fully reporting their experiences, so that persuasive testimony and important evidence are lost and UFOs fail to receive the scientific attention they so badly need. Most veteran UFO investigators will have encountered bitter and cynical UFO witnesses who swear they will never report another sighting to anyone, however spectacular, because of the ridicule and the negative effects on their lives and careers.

Next time a news reporter asks you, “Why is it that only little old ladies in tennis shoes report UFOs?” you may want to suggest that maybe they are the only ones naive enough to do so. News media, in general, serve only to perpetuate the stereotypes. Little in the way of vigorous investigative reporting has been applied to the subject, largely because of the scientific disdain and the prejudices of editors. Television news shows usually report UFOs only as their light story of the day: “Now let’s all have a big laugh about the latest flying saucer story.”

Table 1. Consensus UFO Sighting Waves

- 1952:** radar-visual sightings and jet interceptor pursuits, UFOs over Washington, D.C., Utah movie film.
- 1954:** pronounced world-wide wave with pilot sightings, humanoid encounters in France and Italy.
- 1957:** primarily U.S. and South America, electromagnetic effects on vehicles, humanoid encounters.
- 1960:** relatively high sightings in several countries, not particularly in the U.S.
- 1966–1967:** very large wave, innumerable CE1 and CE2 reports.
- 1973–1974:** pronounced world-wide wave, Charles Hickson abduction, Ohio helicopter encounter.
- 1977–1978:** pronounced world-wide wave, concentrations in Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Italy, and the Middle East.
- 1982–1985:** relatively high sightings in several countries.

Table 2. Sightings During 1948–1951 Trough

- 7/23/48**—Montgomery, Alabama. Chiles and Whitted. Airline encounter with cigar-shaped object.
- 10/1/48**—Fargo, North Dakota. F-51 pilot. Dogfight with highly maneuverable ball of light.
- 10/15/48**—Japan. F-61 night fighter. Radar-visual encounter with elongated object.
- 11/18/48**—Andrews AFB, Maryland. USAF pilot. Dogfight with glowing, highly maneuverable disc.
- 4/24/49**—Arrey, New Mexico. Balloon tracking crew. Theodolite observation of high-speed UFO.
- 6/10/49**—White Sands, New Mexico. Two round, white objects maneuvered around a missile in flight.
- 8/49**—Las Cruces, New Mexico. Astronomer Clyde Tombaugh. Sighting of window-like rectangular lights.
- 3/20/50**—Little Rock, Arkansas. Circular disc with portholes maneuvered above an airliner.
- 5/11/50**—McMinnville, Oregon. Trent. Photos of daylight disc.
- 5/20/50**—Flagstaff, Arizona. Meteorologist Seymour Hess. Sighting of “powered” disc.
- 8/15/50**—Great Falls, Montana. Mariana movie. Film of two discs.
- 1/16/51**—Artesia, New Mexico. Two discs circled Skyhook balloon, observed by balloon trackers.
- 8/25/51**—Lubbock, Texas. “Lubbock Lights” photographs.
- 10/10/51**—Minneapolis, Minnesota. Two sightings of UFOs by balloon trackers in aircraft.
- 11/51**—New Mexico. Mysterious “green fireballs” observed by numerous credible witnesses, including scientists and technicians.

Table 3. Sightings During the 1958–1960 Trough

- 1/16/58**—Trinidade Isle, Brazil. Clear photographs of Saturn-shaped daylight disc.
- 4/2/58**—Columbus, Ohio. Cigar with row of portholes or windows.
- 4/4/58**—Santa Monica, California. Cigar with windows, rapid vertical climb.
- 5/5/58**—San Carlos, Uruguay. Airborne encounter with brilliant object, pilot felt heat.
- 5/17/58**—Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Light reaction case; UFO sped away when light was shone at it.
- 9/8/58**—Offutt AFB, Nebraska. Numerous USAF personnel observed cigar-shaped object with satellite objects.
- 9/21/58**—Sheffield Lake, Ohio. Disc hovered near ground.
- 10/7/58**—Nantucket, Massachusetts. Oval object hovered, climbed away at high speed.
- 10/26/58**—Baltimore, Maryland. Hovering ellipse flashed, shot up out of sight.
- 12/20/58**—Dunellen, New Jersey. Police saw red pulsating ellipse approach, hover, shoot straight up out of sight.
- 6/27/59**—Papua New Guinea. Father Gill case. Humanoid beings on top of hovering disc.
- 7/13/59**—Blenheim, New Zealand. Domed disc with beings descended, illuminated area in green light.
- 9/24/59**—Redmond, Oregon. Disc hovered near airport, ascended into clouds as jet interceptors approached.
- 3/4/60**—Dubuque, Iowa. Three glowing, blue-white objects in formation.
- 4/25/60**—Plymouth, New Hampshire. Bright red cigar-shaped object hovered, sped away.
- 8/13/60**—Red Bluff, California. State police saw highly maneuverable elliptical object, red light beams.
- 10/3/60**—Tasmania, Australia. UFO with satellite objects.

Table 4. Sightings During the 1970–1972 Trough

- 1/7/70**—Imjarvi, Finland. Humanoid beings confront skiers, apparent abduction.
- 8/13/70**—Haderslav, Denmark. Egg-shaped object over police car, E-M effects.
- 4/14/71**—Callery, Pennsylvania. Disc with windows, humanoid beings visible within; light beam upwards.
- 5/24/71**—Mendoza, Argentina. Saturn-shaped UFO, darting motions, rapid acceleration.
- 8/9/71**—Minas Gerais, Brazil. Airliner paced by glowing orange disc.
- 11/2/71**—Delphos, Kansas. Glowing object hovered just off ground, animal reactions, strong physical traces.
- 6/9/72**—Cadiz, Spain. E-M effects on car, pulsating yellow oval object visible on road ahead.
- 8/19/72**—Colby, Kansas. Luminous disc brightly illuminated ground, departed upwards at high speed.

In the final analysis there is no question that many hundreds, perhaps many thousands, of sightings by competent and credible witnesses are suppressed because of the ridicule, and the failure of our major institutions to address the subject squarely. On top of that, many cases never are carefully and thoroughly investigated. Under these circumstances, we cannot be at all sure about the frequency of real UFO sightings.

Those seeming tidal waves, truth be known, may be more like ripples. But those ripples are portentous.

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Table 5. Sightings During the 1979-1981 Trough

1/3/79—Mindalore, South Africa. Mother and child saw craft on ground, humanoid encounter.

3/6/79—Westminster, South Carolina. Low-level dome-shaped object illuminated area, up and down motions, light beam.

8/4/79—Canoga Park, California. Two beings visible through dome of large glowing disc.

4/2/80—Pudasjarvi, Finland. Car drove into "fog," headlights deflected, abduction, physical examination.

5/7/80—Valdese, North Carolina. Domed disc maneuvered near car, E-M effects on radio.

9/30/80—Victoria, Australia. Top-shaped object with body lights landed, strong physical traces.

12/27/80—Bentwaters AFB, England. Military police encounter with landed craft, radioactivity and physical traces.

12/29/80—Huffman, Texas. Spindle-shaped object blocked highway, strong physiological effects, mystery helicopters.

1/8/81—Trans-en-Provence, France. Disc-shaped object landed, physical trace evidence investigated by official agency.

7/4/81—Lake Michigan. Airliner crew saw silvery disc-shaped object ahead of plane.

10/8/81—Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. Daylight disc photograph.

11/24/81—Marshall, Texas. Domed disc hovered, beamed light onto truck.

BEQUETTE—continued from page 15

PL: What's your feeling about Kenneth Arnold?

BB: Mr. Arnold did not impress me then as a person who "saw things." And Nolan Skiff also believed Mr. Arnold to be an honest and sincere person who was genuinely puzzled by what he had seen that day. Arnold was most cooperative when I went to his hotel room for a follow-up story. He seemed eager, as I remember, to answer all my questions as fully as possible.

Arnold became the butt of many jokes, some of which were not good-natured, in the ensuing days and weeks. When he came into the office a few weeks after the initial visit, he was carrying an 8mm movie camera with a telescopic lens. His intention, he said, was to get pictures of the next "flying saucers" he saw.

PL: What do you think about the evolution of the UFO debate?

BB: Fifty years after Arnold reported seeing "flying saucers" zipping among the clouds over the Cascade Moun-

tains, and thousands, perhaps millions, of UFO sightings all around the world, I think at least one should have been captured by now. As I told before, Arnold didn't impress me as one who saw things that weren't, or who dreamed up strange things so he could get his name in the newspapers. And among the thousands of people who have claimed sightings are some who are not the kind that "see things." Former President Jimmy Carter, for one.

My skepticism and the disbelief of many others does not mean UFOs do not exist, or that what Kenneth Arnold saw was not real. And there may be substance to the theory, and theories, that some of the UFOs may be ultra-, super-, more-than-top-secret aircraft tested by our government or some other government. Two years ago, I read a book titled *Above Top Secret: The Worldwide UFO Cover-Up*. The author is Timothy Good, and the forward is written by Lord Hill-Norton, the former British Chief of Defense Staff. The title is the thesis, but not in all the nearly 600 pages could I find proof of the charge.

We have a saying that "the proof of the pudding is in the eating." My Dad would have said, "Show me!" ♦

THE END OF A PHOTOGRAPHIC CASE

BY MARK CASHMAN

On August 8, 1965, in the middle of a nationwide UFO wave, three youths, one 17, one 20, and another whose age is not mentioned, were present when the youngest took a famous UFO photograph in Beaver, Pennsylvania. The photograph attained wide currency. It was examined by newspaper reporters and photographers, and no flaws were found. It was examined by NICAP and declared genuine. Author John G. Fuller, completing his investigation that would result in his best-selling book *Incident at Exeter* (1966), interviewed the witnesses. His investigation is recounted in the book, and the photograph appears on its cover. The *Look* magazine UFO special (*Flying Saucers: Twenty Years of UFOs, The Great Mystery of Our Time*, 1967) included the photo with approving comments from NICAP.

On the other hand, the Condon photoanalyst William K. Hartmann declared the images a hoax. He created generally similar images by holding an illuminated plate near the moon. There were dissimilarities between these images and the images produced by the youths. Philip J. Klass, in *UFOs Explained* (1974), used Hartmann's results to discount the Beaver photos.

After I had written an article on UFO luminosity for the *MUFON UFO Journal*, I received back a marked-up copy for alterations. I was surprised to see a note from MUFON director Walter H. Andrus Jr. suggesting that the Beaver case, which I had mentioned briefly, was a hoax. At the time I was aware only of the positive material on the case. True, nearly two decades ago I had read the Condon report, but I



Fig. 1. The first of the Beaver, Pennsylvania, photographs. The object reportedly approached from the left, then hovered. The moon is on the left.

did not have a copy of my own, so I had not recalled the negative evaluation.

Thanks to the Internet and the researchers of Project 1947, I was quickly up to speed on the previous negative evaluations. Still, the Condon Committee and Klass are hardly unimpeachable references for unbiased evaluation of UFO cases or photos. Further, a scan of Hartmann's images from the Condon report (*Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects*, Bantam, 1969, Plates 50–51) differed in a number of essential features from the Beaver photos (Plates 48–49), and that difference was significant enough to cast doubt on the explanation.

Hartmann's explanation is also cursory:

North Eastern (Case 53): Two photographs show a bright, amorphous object that reportedly swept past four boys who were photographing the moon at night. The image on the photographs is strikingly suggestive of an out-of-focus plate-like object supported by a

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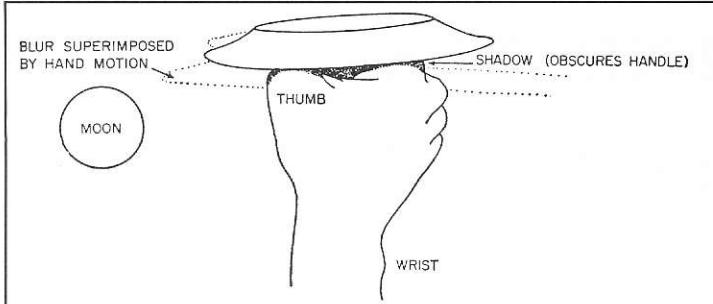


Fig. 2. Hypothetical reconstruction of Fig. 1 by William K. Hartmann (from the Condon report).

human arm and hand photographed by time-exposure. According to the original report, (NICAP, 1965) the "arm" was an invisible gaseous discharge from the UFO. A photograph (Plate 9) that demonstrates how such an image can be fabricated was made by taping a plate to a small handle. The apparent transparency of the "gaseous discharge" was simulated by moving the arm during the time exposure. In the light of such simple reproduction of these photographs, I have concluded that this case is of no probative value. (Bantam ed., pp. 83-84)

Note that there were only three witnesses, not four, and that the case took place in Pennsylvania, which for some reason Hartmann fails to mention.

Methodologically, there are some problems with the "reproductive" approach to UFO photo validation. Any physical or nonphysical object can be reproduced in a photo or film image. This is shown on a daily basis on television and in films, where paintings, models, computers, and many other techniques are used to produce highly realistic but simulated images. The existence of such simulated images does not, of course, invalidate the existence of the things they portray, or even invalidate photos of such things.

Geometrically simple objects will generally require only simple methods of reproduction, especially in the absence of specific reference marks, such as illumination cast on trees, buildings and ground, or occlusion of the object by nearby elements of the scenery. The simplicity of reproduction cannot constitute proof that the photograph was faked. It can only be an indicator, in the sense that a photograph which would require deep knowledge and expensive and elaborate studio equipment to fabricate may be considered slightly more likely to be real than one which does not. However, as some recent video images may indicate, this is also not a fully reliable indicator, at

least not for evidence created in the era of image computing.

As for Klass, according to Larry Hatch, "Here [in *UFOs Explained*], I find that Klass did investigate the photos himself, and was initially 'taken in' by them until reminded by his friend Dr. William K. Hartmann how they could be duplicated using white paper plates etc.... Hartmann's colleague, one Robert Sheaffer (who studied under J. A. Hynek) made such a model and showed the photos to Klass, who found them 'convincing.'"

A NEW INVESTIGATION

I wanted a conclusive answer to the question of whether or not these photos were genuine. Ultimately, I decided that contacting the original witnesses would be the best course. After 30 years, they would probably be willing to admit a hoax.

I used a variety of Internet resources to assemble a list of candidates, and, fortunately, the first candidate turned out to be the older brother of the photographer, at the time of the sighting aged 20, now 53.

My initial call required me to leave a message on his answering machine. The next day, I called a second time, and this time I reached him directly.

At first he was slightly suspicious, which he explained as being due to a previous hostile contact with Klass. I quickly explained that I was planning to use the photo in my research and that I simply wanted to determine the truth or falsity of the image. He stated that the photo was real, but his responses to questions requesting more detail on the sighting seemed curiously lacking. I did determine that the third witness was present with the first two, not independent, as implied by Fuller ("a third witness... saw the UFO from his home across the road"), and that the third witness was also a youth.

He informed me that he had little contact with his brother, who also lived in Pennsylvania, but not nearby, and did not have a phone number or address for him. I asked him to call me if he were able to reach his brother, and also if he

were able to recall any further details of the events that night. I told him I would be glad to send him a copy of my research, and that any assistance he could provide would be appreciated. He agreed to do what he could.

A short time later he called me. In that conversation he confessed for the first time that the photo was indeed a hoax. He stated that neither he nor his brother had ever revealed it because they were afraid they would suffer legal troubles, but that they did not want me to do



Fig. 3. The second Beaver photograph. The moon is on the right.

County Youth Snaps 'Saucer' In Action

work based on their false claim.

According to him, the two and their friend were engaging in a little underage drinking while their parents were away. When they noticed that the moon was hazy, like a pretty photo the older brother had previously taken, they went out to take some pictures. Inspired by the 1965 flap, then underway, they decided to make a UFO picture. The photo was made largely as described by the Condon report.

Things got out of hand quickly. They made a copy for a friend (apparently not in on the hoax), and, unknown to them, he took the image to the local paper. The Air Force spokesman was evasive about a radar UFO for that day and time when the reporter for the paper called them, which led him to believe that the UFO had been picked up on radar.

Before they knew it, the picture was famous. And they were scared. They were terrified that they would go to jail if anyone found out it was a fake, so they made up a story to go with the picture.

The attention died away fairly quickly, but the incident had always bothered them. When I told them I was spending time looking into this, they were motivated by sympathy to reveal the hoax, but the witness expressed concern about getting into trouble, even after all these years. He said they had made no money from the picture "though there were some people who did." According to him, the negatives are long since gone.

What may surprise people is how much of a burden this was to the two claimants. They were greatly relieved to get this settled. Other hoaxers may be similarly burdened, and we need to be able to give them a way to own up to the truth.

LESSONS LEARNED

Serious researchers have to walk a fine line when they deal with any UFO report or evidence. It is essential to remain objective and open to the possibility of false information.

Sadly, the fear of using false information has to some extent crippled efforts to attain progress in the scientific aspects of UFO study. No researcher wants to be taken for a fool, or to appear foolish for basing hypotheses on what is known or becomes known as a fraudulent case.

At the same time, once it becomes definitely clear that a case is false, it is difficult for some to let the case go. Excuses are found for continuing to accept the case, notwithstanding strong evidence of its falsehood. And, finally, when a case is identified or revealed as a hoax, it is often not documented in such a way that all researchers have access to the explanation, or even know that an explanation exists. Indeed some databases purge these cases, which can lead future researchers to consider such cases valid.

This case reveals certain weaknesses in the investiga-

tive and analytical process, which are probably well-known, but bear restating. First, media investigators cannot necessarily distinguish between real claims and hoax claims, nor can their photographers necessarily identify a hoax photo. In this case, several journalists and photographers examined the negatives and declared them genuine. Second, the background of the claimants is not necessarily a reliable indicator of their propensity to hoax, especially for young people. In this case the claimants were vouched for by the police and school officials. Third, success or failure in reproducing the image is not necessarily a validation or invalidation of the photo. In this case, experienced photographers stated that they could not think of a way to create such a photo. Hartmann was able to generate a similar but not identical image, which could be interpreted as either success or failure in reproduction.

CONCLUSION

The Beaver photos are now definitely known to be a hoax, thanks to a confession from one of the claimants. There may very well be numerous other cases which now, after 30 or so years, can be also determined to be hoaxes by conversation with the claimants. It is essential that such activity be undertaken by the analyst before using a case, wherever possible, since it is clear that initial field investigation is not necessarily reliable.

Those of us who do field work must leave the witnesses a way to own up to a lie or a hoax and still save face. This delicate problem must be handled with tact and understanding. We cannot, of course, necessarily obtain admissions from those whose hoax is created as a result of some psychological need or problem, but we are more likely to succeed with decent persons caught up in something without malicious intent.

We must do the same in regard to reinvestigation of older cases. Sympathetic but firm approaches will succeed far more than either uncritical acceptance or hostility.

Finally, this must bring home to us how fragile some apparently reliable information may be. It is essential to check with others as to the status of cases to be used in research, and at least some level of reinvestigation is desirable before accepting a case for republication or analysis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Walt Andrus for calling to my attention the problems with this case. Thanks to Larry Hatch for checking the references and providing quotes. Thanks to Michael Strainic for providing scans of the Condon images, and to Project 1947 list members for their thoughts on the case. ♦

LOEDDING—continued from page 8

something real and not visionary or fictitious."

The Twining memo strongly urged that a permanent project be established at T-2 to investigate and analyze future UFO reports. However, much of Loedding's thinking from earlier that summer, which linked UFOs to German/Soviet technology transfer, still lay at the heart of the Twining memo and the creation of Project Sign. For this reason, it is assumed that Col. McCoy, with his wartime experience in recovering Nazi technology and rocket scientists during Operation Lusty and Project Paper Clip, actually drafted the Twining Memo with Loedding's assistance. The Twining memo recommended a specific Essential Elements of Information (EEI) document to serve as a checklist of items for intelligence officers to note about UFO sightings. Loedding and Dr. Charles Carroll, a math and missile expert, had composed this document at a meeting in the Pentagon in August. Apparently Loedding and Carroll, with Schulgen's assistance, were in the process of laying the groundwork for an official investigation. Twining's memorandum was, therefore, a mere formality in recommending that an official investigation be sanctioned and conducted at AMC.

By December 30, 1947, Loedding had successfully used his Pentagon position to lobby for the Twining memo's main recommendation—the establishment of a formal investigative unit within T-2. On that date, Maj. Gen. Laurence Craigie, who had replaced LeMay as director of research and development at Air Force headquarters, issued an order approving a formal AMC investigation of UFOs. The project was "to collect, collate, evaluate and distribute to interested governmental agencies and contractors all information concerning sightings and phenomena in the atmosphere which can be construed to be of concern to the national security." This led to the establishment of Project HT-304 (Project Sign) under Air Force Technical Instruction No. TI-2185. Craigie's order appeared to be another mere formality, as Loedding already had the project guidelines and functions up and running before the end of the year.

Because Sign was a small military endeavor within the larger scope of T-2's responsibilities, Capt. Robert R. Sneider was its official administrator. However, it was in name only. Loedding was its cocreator and its civilian monitor as chief liaison to the AFOIN. Though Sneider was a link in the military chain of command up to McCoy, Loedding actually reported to Col. Albert Bonnell Deyarmond, McCoy's friend from the days of Operation Lusty and Project Paper Clip.

Deyarmond had assisted McCoy in building the technical database at Wright Field after the war. He left active service at the end of 1946 but retained his rank as a reserve officer. In July 1947, he was summoned by McCoy to return to active duty, specifically to assist in the flying-disc investigation. However, because Deyarmond had some minor medical conditions, his request for active-duty status was denied. McCoy circumvented this by having him brought into T-2 as a civilian employee. Deyarmond belatedly joined Project Sign in February 1948. Deyarmond was a top-notch aeronautical engineer who would have been sent to the Pentagon as liaison had his return to Wright Field not been delayed, so McCoy chose Loedding for this task based on his aeronautical expertise. (Personal papers of Albert B. Deyarmond.)

Loedding was a major figure in AMC's investigation of UFOs from July 1947 until the end of Project Sign in April 1949. On September 5, 1947, he began work as T-2's liaison with the Pentagon and was directly involved in meetings between Schulgen and Carroll. After meeting to review a UFO sighting in Fukuoka, Japan, Loedding continued to attend meetings with Lt. Col. George Garrett of the Pentagon's Intelligence Collections Branch to discuss and formulate plans for the development of Project Sign.

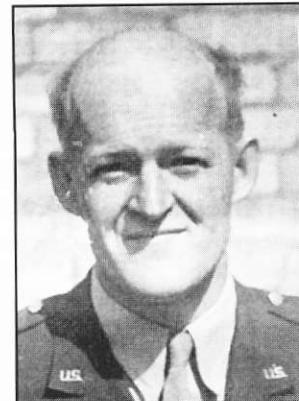
THE PROJECT SIGN DAYS

Loedding initially concentrated on a German/Soviet answer to the flying-disc phenomenon, as did others involved with Project Sign, but by mid-1948 he, Garrett, and Sneider, among others, became supporters of the extraterrestrial hypothesis. Loedding's excitement and his belief that all other engineering and scientific explanations had proven invalid led him to conclude that the only rational explanation was that aliens were visiting the earth. We may never know Loedding's full influence, but his papers do characterize him as the "initiator of Project Sign." Certainly is it fair to speculate that he may have been the key figure pushing for approval of the ETH. The authors' extensive interviews and communications with family members also show that Loedding may have been the person who came up with the code name of "Sign."

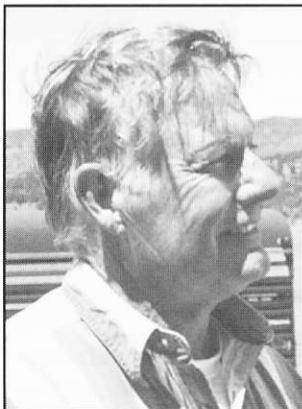
The authors' extensive interviews with Loedding's son Donald and brother Fred revealed that he had indeed been an extremely gifted and sought-after aeronautical engineer and rocket proponent. This evidence, combined with extensive research by coauthor Wendy Connors into Deyarmond's life, shows that members of the Project



Laurence Craigie



Albert B. Deyarmond



Donald Loedding

Sign team were forward-thinking individuals with expertise in applied and theoretical aeronautics. Debunkers of the UFO phenomenon have discounted Project Sign by focusing on the team's inexperience. Research by the authors finally dispels this absurd myth.

The best information from Loedding's Project Sign days comes from his son Donald, who was in transition from middle school to high school in those years. He recalls many impressions from the time, including a clear memory of his father talking to him about "landing cases."

Project Sign documents released through the Blue Book files at the National Archives do not include any documents on landings. However, Donald recalls not one but numerous trips his father made to investigate such events, including incidents in which UFOs interfered with the electrical systems of automobiles. Electromagnetic cases were not officially documented by Air Force investigations until 1957. He also remembers his father being especially interested in UFOs reported by airline pilots. The Project Sign files do include such cases, but they detail far fewer incidents than Donald remembers hearing about.

Donald emphatically states that his father never spoke of any Roswell-like crash/retrieval, and he is certain that his father would have known about such an incident. Fred confirms this aspect. In Alfred's memoirs there is no mention of a UFO crash near Roswell, New Mexico. Fred does recall a time when he went to Wright-Patterson AFB to see his brother's office. Alfred told him that a particular hanger was off-limits but did not say why; presumably his brother did not have access to that area. However, Fred got the impression that it was related to UFOs.

Project Sign lasted only 15 months. Yet if there was any time when a group of technically trained military personnel with the support of civilian scientific consultants sought the true answer to the complex UFO phenomenon, it occurred under its jurisdiction. The Project Sign team was looking for a sign—an honest answer to one of the most perplexing mysteries of the modern age.

SOME CLASSIC CASES

On January 7, 1948, they thought they had an answer. On that day Kentucky Air National Guard pilot Capt. Thomas F. Mantell Jr. died when his F-51 fighter crashed southwest of Franklin, Kentucky, after attempting to intercept a high-flying UFO. The case is one of the most famous flying-saucer incidents. Publicly, the Air Force blamed the planet Venus as the object Mantell pursued. However, many of the

intelligence officers in T-2's Project Sign were slowly becoming convinced that UFOs were extraterrestrial. Loedding and Sneider got the Venus explanation from astronomer J. Allen Hynek, who had offhandedly suggested the planet as one possible explanation for the UFO sighting. The Sign team used Venus as a cover to explain away what at the time was an extensively publicized and long-investigated incident.

Project Sign team members thought they might be forced to admit a far more shocking conclusion, but not before they had the time to develop the ETH.

Capt. Edward Ruppelt, head of the Air Force's later UFO investigation known as Project Blue Book, confirmed as much in his memoirs, stating that many at T-2 had adopted the "interplanetary" answer by the end of the Mantell investigation because all other explanations were exhausted. For that reason the Sign staff, in Ruppelt's opinion, looked only for evidence that suggested spaceships were involved. Not finding any, they adhered to the Venus explanation to keep it under wraps. This served their purpose well, but in their haste they did not bother to confirm whether Venus would have been bright enough to be seen by Mantell or the military men at Godman Field that day.

Ruppelt asked Hynek that question in 1951 when he launched a reinvestigation of the Mantell incident and learned that Venus would have been far too dim that afternoon. Ruppelt also discovered evidence suggesting that some or all of the Kentucky sightings could have been caused by a Navy Skyhook research balloon that was released that morning at the Clinton County AFB in Ohio. Skyhooks were used for high-altitude cosmic-ray research and were top secret at the time. Ruppelt felt certain this was the answer, but the Air Force never officially backed down from its implausible Venusian explanation.

Two other amazing but less well-known UFO cases came to T-2 during the long Mantell investigation. One was a "flying wing" sighting in the Philippines. Reported by 1st Lt. Robert W. Meyers, the sighting took place on April 1, 1948, at 9:55 a.m. on a clear day with unlimited visibility. Meyers was leading a flight of three P-47s from the 67th Fighter Group. At 1,500 feet, he noticed an unusual object three miles east of his position. Shaped like a flying wing or half-moon with a "turtle back," it resembled no military craft used in the Pacific area at the time. The silver-colored UFO flew below the squadron at an altitude of about 1,000 feet and a speed of approximately 200 miles per hour. Meyers estimated the craft's overall size to be 30 feet wide by 20 feet long. When he attempted to contact the other



Thomas F. Mantell Jr.

three aircraft in the squadron, he realized that his radio had gone dead.

Meyers decided to try for a closer look at the unknown object. As he made a 240-degree left turn, he watched the UFO make a 90-degree left turn, level off, and move away at a tremendous speed. Meyers estimated that all of this occurred in approximately five seconds. He heard no sound coming from the object, and detected no power unit, landing gear, cockpit, or exhaust trail. Meyers did notice that the craft had a small dorsal fin.

Loedding, with his expertise and knowledge regarding flying-wing designs, may have taken a special interest in this case. By all accounts Meyers was a "reliable, non-excitable individual who appeared quite positive about his statements." This, coupled with the fact that the Northrop Flying Wing (XB-35/YB-49) was the only aircraft in the world that matched the characteristics of the object Meyers saw, makes this a remarkable sighting. Since the Northrop Flying Wing never left the continental United States, the Project Sign team knew Meyers saw something of foreign origin. Even the diehards within the project were becoming doubtful that such aircraft could be of Soviet construction. By the spring of 1948, Loedding and a majority of the team theorized that many of the UFO incidents represented something from outside the Earth.

A report that strengthened their position came four days later. On April 5, 1948, three trained balloon observers and project leader J. W. Peoples of the Geophysics Lab Section of Holloman AFB, New Mexico, were working on a secret project connected with the Air Force's Watson Laboratories in Red Bank, New Jersey. In the middle of their tests they noticed a round white object with a golden hue fly very high over the base at "tremendous speed." One of the observers briefly caught sight of a second UFO. One of the men described what he saw as an irregularly rounded craft that was slightly concave on top. The duration of the incident was approximately 30 seconds, but in that time the unknowns made at least one vertical loop and disappeared to the west.

Although the object superficially resembled a balloon, the witnesses were certain it was not for three reasons: (1) its violent maneuvers surpassed the stress limits of any known balloon in use at the time; (2) westerly winds of 10–15 miles per hour were measured up to 65,000 feet, and balloons cannot fly against the wind; (3) even if high winds were blowing from the east, no balloon could attain a speed of 200 miles per hour. Only the fact that no sound was detected by either the observers or the 400-meter atmospheric-noise receiver indicate the object might have been a balloon.

Loedding and Lt. Col. J. C. Beam, an assistant from T-

2, traveled to New Mexico to investigate the case. Unfortunately, when they arrived Peoples and the other observers were away from Holloman AFB on temporary duty. (They were later interviewed at Watson Labs in New Jersey.) At Holloman, Loedding and Beam did talk to a Lt. Markley, who indicated that unusual radar returns had been picked up at the base. He also told them of a sighting he had in August 1947 of a "flat, round aeroform." Loedding and Beam took advantage of the trip to visit Phoenix, Arizona, to interview William A. Rhodes, who had photographed a heel-shaped flying disc on July 4.

After Peoples and the balloon observers were interviewed at Watson Laboratories, the Sign investigators became personally convinced that what these men had observed flew "faster than any known object" of the time. This case was logged by the Sign team as the first of only seven unidentified sightings for 1948, a conservative number since even the flying-wing report from the Philippines did not make the unidentified list. The Sign team assigned unidentified ratings sparingly, despite claims by many researchers that the team's objectivity was exceptionally biased towards the ETH.

The fourth and most important event that shaped Sign's position on the extraterrestrial origin of the flying discs occurred at 2:45 a.m. on July 24 when Eastern Airlines Flight 576 took evasive action 20 miles southwest of Montgomery, Alabama, to avoid colliding with a torpedo-like object with windows and a "50-foot trail of orange-red flame" coming from its rear. Immediately after landing, the pilots reported the incident to the airline manager, who released the details of the spectacular event to newspapers the same day. The story generated sensational headlines that reached the Pentagon and its new Intelligence Chief, Maj. Gen. Charles P. Cabell, who immediately had T-2 on the phone ordering McCoy to initiate a prompt investigation by the Project Sign team.

By the afternoon of July 25, Loedding, Deyarmond, and Maj. Raymond Llewellyn were on a plane headed to Atlanta to interview the pilots and witnesses. Pilots Clarence S. Chiles and John B. Whitted were interviewed the next day at the Henry Grady Hotel. Loedding and Deyarmond, after questioning the pilots several times, became impressed by the consistency of their accounts. Afterwards, they sent a preliminary report to the Pentagon and returned to Wright-Patterson AFB convinced



Airline pilots Whitted and Chiles shortly after their sighting.



Charles P. Cabell

more than ever that something beyond human origin had been responsible for this and other incidents.

Ironically, for unknown reasons, the "pro-saucer" Sign team told the pilots that the incident resulted from a rare astronomical event known as a fireball. Chiles and Whitted, however, refused to accept this explanation and later publicly stated that they had seen a manufactured craft of some sort.

Ruppelt states in his memoirs that regardless of what the crew saw, the Sign officers were indeed becoming convinced that UFOs were interplanetary. Sneider seemed to be a major advocate of this idea. His reports are the most fascinating to read in the Blue Book files. Sneider attached a one-page memo to the Chiles-Whitted Incident case file in which he argued that a wingless torpedo-shaped object was aerodynamically feasible, stating, "That this development is possibly of foreign origin would seem to be a logical premise." Sneider was saying that the object Chiles and Whitted saw was from outer space. The Sign team was beginning to force the Pentagon to take a stand on the subject one way or another and Loedding would be responsible for bringing the extraterrestrial idea to a point that it would eventually cause the demise of Project Sign and an almost certain end to his career at Wright-Patterson AFB.

ESTIMATING THE SITUATION

After the Chiles-Whitted incident, T-2's Sign team sponsored, apparently under Alfred Loedding's sole authorship, a top-secret document for interservice distribution that traced the history of UFO investigations back to the Scandinavian ghost-rocket sightings of 1946. Like other military evaluations, it was termed an "estimate of the situation." According to Ruppelt, this Estimate of the Situation concluded that many of the UFO sightings investigated by Project Sign were interplanetary in origin. The most dramatic part of the report advocated that the military should be put on an "alert" status in the wake of the inexplicable sightings. (J. Allen Hynek, *The Hynek UFO Report*, Dell, 1977, pp. 13-14.)

Needless to say, the Estimate of the Situation drew considerable attention as it went up through the chain of command to Chief of Staff Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg. However, Vandenberg refused to authorize the distribution of the document because of what he saw as a lack of physical evidence to support its conclusion.

The Sign team could only provide circumstantial, not physical, evidence. Further correspondence shows that Pentagon officials were also mindful of the panic caused by Orson Welles's radio broadcast of *The War of the Worlds* on October 30, 1938. No general officer would have been willing to answer to the President of the United States if an Air Force press release about UFOs led to a similar scare. Vandenberg, a decorated commander from WWII and a career military officer, intended to focus all of his efforts on organizing and improving the image of the new, indepen-

dent United States Air Force. Proclaiming that the flying discs were interplanetary did not fit into this plan. Anyway, the Estimate of the Situation conceded that, even if they were from outer space, the flying discs demonstrated no apparent threat to national security. The Pentagon chose a wait-and-see attitude.

Unfortunately, Vandenberg's apparent lack of interest in the Estimate of the Situation led to low morale among the Project Sign staff.

Despite a trip to the Pentagon by Loedding, Deyarmond, and Lawrence Truettner to lobby for acceptance of the Estimate, the Pentagon refused to be swayed into sanctioning it. No matter how significant their conclusion, the Sign team could not voice its opinion outside of T-2.

Donald Loedding clearly remembers the controversy surrounding the rejection of his father's report to Vandenberg. Loedding had been a rising star at Wright Field, but he quickly fell out of favor because of his personal belief that many of the flying-disc sightings represented craft of extraterrestrial origin. When he put that opinion on paper, Loedding severely crippled his government career.

By the end of 1948, a drastic change took place within Project Sign. The great sense of importance that the Pentagon had previously bestowed on the project suddenly ceased. Sign was dropped almost overnight. By mid-1949, the Project Sign staff found themselves reassigned to other duty within the Air Force. Loedding was ousted and, except for a period in the early 1950s, the AMC staff would never again openly talk about the origin of UFOs. The extreme conclusions of Loedding's secret Estimate of the Situation became just too much for the Pentagon to handle. Project Sign's final report, completed in February 1949 by Deyarmond and Truettner, was the end of the first official investigation of UFOs by the United States Air Force.

AFTERMATH OF PROJECT SIGN

The Sign report was released to specific government and military offices. The Air Force did not, however, stop investigating UFOs. Project Grudge quickly replaced Sign at the request of the director of research and development. Officially indexed as the "Detailed Study of Flying Discs," Grudge marked a sudden change in the Air Force's attitude. Grudge began in April 1949 by creating a public-relations campaign to downplay UFO sightings both in and out of the armed forces.

At the same time, the T-2 intelligence officers, almost all of whom had gravitated to Project Sign, were on their way out. Ruppelt wrote that many in intelligence "drastically and hurriedly changed their minds about UFOs when they thought the Pentagon was no longer sympathetic to the UFO cause." He stated that others who had not changed



Hoyt S. Vandenberg

their minds were "purged." Others who had briefly considered the extraterrestrial hypothesis eventually found themselves replaced by new personnel. The Pentagon used Project Grudge to "put an end to UFO reports" by explaining every sighting and telling the public just how the Air Force used expert investigative methods to reach their conclusions. This sudden change in policy was so pronounced that Ruppelt wondered if there was not some hidden agenda behind it. He wrote of an underlying feeling he had when taking over UFO investigations in 1951:

This period of "mind changing" bothered me. Here were people deciding that there was nothing to this UFO business right at a time when the reports seemed to be getting better. . . . Maybe I was just playing the front man to a big cover-up. I didn't like it because if somebody up above me knew that UFOs were really spacecraft, I could make a big fool out of myself if the truth came out. (Ruppelt, pp. 58-60.)

Hynek also wrote that the change at T-2 occurred virtually overnight. Donald Loedding confirms that his father was fired from Project Sign by 1949. Although he did remain in Dayton doing work for the Air Force until 1951, the pressure continued. Donald feels that officials at AMC attempted to "phase his father out," as is often done in the corporate world. Records show that Loedding's efficiency-rating reports went from excellent in 1948 to lower and lower until he resigned on February 6, 1951.

Following his long career at Wright-Patterson AFB, Loedding secured a job as director of jet research at Unexcelled Chemical Corporation in Cranbury, New Jersey. Following Vandenberg's death in 1954, Loedding again

found that his skills and expertise were needed by the Air Force, and he returned to Wright-Patterson AFB to serve as the first director of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

By 1960 Loedding was working out of Langley AFB in Virginia as Air Force liaison officer to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Although the records indicate that he served only as a civilian consultant, his family suggested he had a possible connection with the Central Intelligence Agency. But from 1951 until his death in 1963 Loedding never again worked on or talked about UFOs. His disappointment, according to Donald, was so deep after being fired from Project Sign that he never returned to the forward-thinking aeronautical designs that fueled his creativity and genius.

Alfred Christian Loedding was of strong German descent, imbued with a strong work ethic and a dedication to family and country. When he helped draft the Sign position on the extraterrestrial hypothesis, he did so with great thought and devotion. Vandenberg's rebuff severely injured his pride, but he was far too dedicated and true to himself to be merely a yes-man. The worst that can be said about Alfred Loedding is that he was not a diplomat; rather he was a man of great inventive genius who gave much to his nation and the study of ufology.

The authors would like to express their gratitude to Donald, Fred, Robert, and Mike Loedding and the entire Loedding family for their gracious assistance and trust in our investigation of Alfred C. Loedding. Their generous support of our work is deeply appreciated for allowing us the opportunity to bring his contributions to the forefront of aeronautical and ufological history. ♦

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LETTERS

DEBRIS DATA DISPUTED

To the Editor:

Robert A. Galganski's calculations in the Summer *IUR* (p. 31) to evaluate and reject the "Project Mogul explanation" for the debris found by rancher Mac Brazel are based on inaccurate data and an *unjustified assumption*.

They are based on Maj. Marcel's 32-year-old recollection (when he was interviewed in 1979) that when he saw the "debris field" on the Brazel ranch on July 7–8, 1947, it was "scattered over an area of about three-quarters of a mile long and several hundred feet wide." Based on this, Galganski calculates that the debris field covered approximately 667,000 sq. ft.

He ignores the smaller debris-field size estimate given by rancher Brazel during his July 8, 1947, interview at the *Roswell Daily Record*—only three weeks after he first discovered the debris. Brazel was quoted in the July 9 issue as estimating that the scraps of "rubber [were] . . . scattered over an area about 200 yards in diameter"—less than one-half the area that Galganski uses in his calculations. Presumably this estimate included the pieces of metal-foil-covered parchment paper.

More importantly, Galganski *assumes* "there had to be sufficient thin-shell [metal foil/parchment] material available [in three Project Mogul radar-targets] to create at least one densely packed region as well as to define the perimeter of the vast area described by Marcel. . . ." (Emphasis added.) *Rancher Brazel never mentioned any "densely packed region" in his July 8 interview, nor did Marcel during his 1979 interview.*

Philip J. Klass
Washington, D.C.

Robert Galganski responds:

One of the reasons Philip Klass rejects my conclusion is because I utilized in my mathematical model the $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile (roughly 4,000-foot)-long debris-field dimension provided by Major Jesse Marcel. Predictably, he avoids mentioning my what-if analysis, which showed that even a parabola-shaped field only 250 feet long—41,700 ft² of pasture—would have been covered with 540 ft² of thin-shell material. That's exactly 10 times the amount of aluminum foil/paper laminate that could have come from Project Mogul Flight 4's three radar targets.

The shell surface area given by Equation 7 in my March/April 1995 *IUR* article couldn't be evaluated in closed form (i.e., algebraically) for a parabolic field shape. So I used an expedient but crude manual numerical integration technique which greatly *underestimated* the quantity of such debris at the Foster ranch site.

I recently recalculated those areas using Mathcad7, a sophisticated scientific software package. The model now predicts that the 250-foot-long field would have had about

870 ft² of thin-shell material on it. Consequently, Flight 4 can now account for only about 6% of the stuff—on a field only 1/16th the length Marcel described.

A simple calculation shows that just 2% of the ground would have had any debris on it. Sparse ground coverage and the extremely high area-measure disparities noted above are characteristic features of the model output, regardless of field length input. They indicate that virtually any conservative debris distribution pattern can be utilized in the model—with similar order-of-magnitude results. It follows that Klass's argument concerning the assumed densely packed debris region is moot.

As a sidebar I might add that although Marcel and Mac Brazel never mentioned such a concentration, ranch hand Tommy Tyree did allude to one. Tyree said that Brazel was upset because he (Brazel) had to herd the sheep around part of the field in order to move them to their watering location. To prompt such a remark it's very likely Brazel couldn't find a relatively clear path for the animals through a maze of closely packed fragments, thus necessitating an extended detour.

Klass also cites the oft-quoted July 9, 1947, *Roswell Daily Record* article which gives the debris field a *circular* shape and less than one-half the ground area I used in my initial modeling effort. I responded to that charge in an earlier exchange with Klass in the Letters section of the Spring 1998 *IUR*. There I discussed why that story cannot be accepted at face value.

For the sake of argument, however, let's assume that the description is correct: a field 200 yards (600 feet) in diameter that encloses 282,700 ft² of pasture. Could the Mogul balloon train account for *all* of the thin-shell debris on the Foster ranch?

To address that question quantitatively I recently developed a new mathematical model for a circular field. (The reader may wish to refer to my March/April 1995 *IUR* article to help follow the following brief description.) It utilizes an extremely conservative, radially symmetric shape function $\rho(r)$ in the form of a decaying exponential:

$$\rho(r) = \rho_0 e^{-\gamma r/a}$$

where r is the field's radius extending from the center of the circle to its circumference at $r = a = 300$ feet, $e = 2.718$ is the base of natural logarithms, $\rho_0 = 0.20$ is the average ground coverage density in a small region where some shell fragments are assumed to be relatively concentrated, and γ is an arbitrary constant. Peak debris density is concentric with the center of the circle; a 100 ft² area surrounding this point contains 20 ft² of thin-shell material.

The constant γ governs the rate at which the debris ground coverage decreases from its maximum value. Its numerical value was selected so that an eyewitness could use very small and scattered fragments far away from the

debris "cluster" to infer a circular pattern. By assuming that any 100-ft² region along the field's periphery contains a single fragment (or collection of smaller fragments) having a surface area equal to that of a dime, we find that $\gamma = 9.1$.

The total quantity of thin-shell material surface area A_s on a circular field is given by:

$$A_s = \iint_A \rho(r, \theta) dA = \int_0^{2\pi} \int_0^a \rho(r) r dr d\theta$$

The shape function $\rho(r)$ can be made to affect the entire circle by integrating it with respect to the angle θ over 360 degrees (2π radians). Substituting the expression for $\rho(r)$ in the double integral leads to a closed-form solution for A_s :

$$A_s = 2\pi\rho_0 \frac{a^2}{\gamma^2} [1 - e^{-\gamma}(\gamma + 1)]$$

Substituting numerical values in the above equation yields A_s equal to 1,360 ft². Once again we find an enormous disparity between the model-predicted and Mogul-supplied material surface areas. It would be even greater with a more physically realistic shape function similar to Equation 4 in my 1995 article.

Twenty-five Mogul Flight 4s (via $1,360 \text{ ft}^2 \div 54 \text{ ft}^2$) carrying a total of 75 radar targets would be needed to generate the predicted quantity of shell fragments on the circular field. To illustrate just how wide open the field would still be for even *that* amount of material, less than *one-half percent* of it would be covered with debris.

Once again the Mogul hypothesis just won't work—and again by an extremely comfortable margin.

I'll leave it to Klass and the other Mogul-hypothesis proponents to explain how three radar targets comprising a measly 54 ft² of sheet-like material could have broken into enough pieces to outline a 600-foot-diameter circle.

ATTENTION DEFICIT DISPUTED

To the Editor:

Despite his proclamation that he's not a psychologist, Tom Carey in "Will the Real Sheridan Cavitt Please Stand Up?" (*IUR*, Fall 1998, pp. 14–21) nonetheless proceeds to psychoanalyze the subject of his article at some length. I only want to respond to his statement that "For all we know, [Cavitt] may actually enjoy the attention that he is getting and may even be taking some sort of sadistic pleasure in thwarting people."

I don't know about sadism (perhaps there's evidence that Cavitt also tortures cats and refuses to answer the door on Halloween?), but the enjoyment of attention, however garnered, is an almost universal human trait. When was the last time you heard of anyone complaining of getting too much attention?

Fact is, the observation that someone may actually enjoy attention arguably applies to virtually everyone associated with the Roswell case, sadist and non-sadist alike. Can any of us say with certainty, for example, that Jesse Marcel Sr. didn't "actually enjoy" the attention he received

from UFO investigators and media reporters, or that Jim Ragsdale, Gerald Anderson, Glenn Dennis, Frank Kaufmann, Frankie Rowe, and numerous others actively shunned, avoided, or disliked the attention that came their way, resulting in their names in print and their faces on TV?

I'm no psychologist either, but there's clearly no compelling reason to think that they haven't all actually enjoyed the ride Roswell has given them. Whether they're control freaks, sadists, or merely enamored of the sound of their own voices is for someone else to say. Maybe Carey would like to volunteer his services on each of the above named in turn, so we'll know who to credit and who not to.

Dennis Stacy
San Antonio, Texas

MORE DEBRIS DISCREPANCIES

To the Editor:

From Thomas Carey's "Will the Real Sheridan Cavitt Please Stand Up?" (*IUR*, Fall 1998, pp. 14–21) we learn that what Sheridan Cavitt has *actually* said about the Roswell event (calling it a trifling, hardly-remembered incident) contrasts sharply with what he is *alleged* to have said, according to Lewis Rickett's Roswell story. May not the likeliest explanation of this discrepancy be that Rickett's story was essentially a work of fiction? After all, Carey shows us that the story contained an impossibility (p. 19) and that it clashed irreconcilably with Jesse Marcel's more hyperbolic account (pp. 19–20).

It should be noted that the *only* extraordinary component of the Foster Ranch debris ever reported by anyone was the mysterious "paper-thin, super-strong shards"—reported only by Rickett and Marcel. Both described these strange shards as being abundant and conspicuous (see, for example Randle and Schmitt's *UFO Crash at Roswell*, pp. 40 and 64 (Marcel), pp. 62 and 163 (Rickett)); yet nothing of the kind was ever mentioned by any other observer of the debris, including Jesse Marcel Jr. And, as Carey points out, even the Rickett and Marcel stories failed to agree. Might not those remarkable extraterrestrial fragments be best explained as a purely imaginary embellishment of their stirring tales?

Alexander Mebane
Venice, Florida

Thomas Carey responds:

Yes, we learned what former Roswell CIC Captain Sheridan Cavitt (Rickett's former boss) actually said about Roswell. That's the problem: Not only did it contrast with what he was *alleged* by Rickett to have said, but it contrasted with *his own account* of events, depending upon to whom he was talking. Incredibly, at the same time Cavitt was telling the Air Force's Col. Richard Weaver that he was indeed involved in the 1947 Roswell events, he was *still* telling Roswell researchers the *fiction* that he was not! Apparently such duplicity is no problem for Mebane, and it

is Rickett—not Cavitt—whose credibility we must worry about.

As for the differences in the Marcel and Rickett accounts of their respective debris-recovery activities, they do not “clash irreconcilably,” and can best be dealt with by concluding that each went to a different site. (Recent research suggests a minimum of two and a maximum of three such related sites—excluding the problematical Plains of San Agustin.)

We know that Marcel went to the Brazel/Foster Ranch debris field site, but Rickett’s description of the site that he went to and how long it took him to get there led me to conclude that his site was closer to Roswell than the Foster Ranch. Once there, both Marcel and Rickett described much of the same type of debris, only there was much less at Rickett’s site.

Mebane is wrong when he claims that the thin, super-strong foil described by Marcel, Rickett, and others was the “only extraordinary [debris] component” ever reported to have been found. The list is long:

- Loretta Proctor described a piece of wood that Brazel had shown to her and her husband Floyd that could not be cut or even scratched with a knife;
- Bill Brazel Jr. described monofilament wires, reminiscent of something akin to present-day fiber optics, that he found while riding the Foster Ranch sometime after the cleanup;
- Bill Brazel Jr., Frankie Rowe, Dan Richards, L. D. Sparks, Royal MacKenzie, and others have described the light-as-a-feather memory-metal that unfurled itself without a crease after being wadded up;
- Jesse Marcel Jr. described a mysterious I-beam that displayed an unidentified form of writing embossed along its inner surface;
- Vennie Ragsdale described strange hieroglyphs contained on several long, super-strong metal strips brought home by her late husband and kept in their trailer for years;
- Rickett and Dr. Lincoln LaPaz found a small, super-light, black, seamless box that could not be opened (when later asked about this by his son, Sheridan Cavitt simply exploded like a volcano, screamed at him and stomped out of the room); and
- Bessie Brazel Schrieber and later Jack Wright described a smooth, metallic flange.

Will Mebane concede the point?

As for the ubiquitous Roswell debunker, Dennis Stacy, considering the large amount of information contained in my article, if that’s all he could find to complain about, I accept his surrender.

HYBRIDS GO HOME

To the Editor:

Thomas Bullard’s review of David Jacobs’s *The Threat* (IUR, Summer 1998, pp. 20–27) is thought-provoking to say the least, and is bound to inspire discussions—perhaps,

unfortunately, not in the right direction. Jacobs, for all his research skills, is a historian. Bullard is a folklorist. Indeed, one of ufology’s problems is that it seems to have few consultants in the field of zoology. As someone with qualifications in that field, may I be permitted a few words?

Animals and plants are constructed from cells, and the cells are constructed out of complex chemical chains. Each of these chains is made up of many smaller units. However, the template for each of these chemicals is contained in the DNA in its genes, because each of the units in the DNA codes in a quite arbitrary fashion with one of the units in the proteins which make up the cells.

All living creatures on earth are related. Despite their very different appearance, your pet dog or cat has the same fundamental structure as you. Its organs and yours are merely variations on a theme. Its biochemical makeup is also a variation. Its genetic code is identical to yours. Indeed, although the genetic code is purely arbitrary, it is the same in every earthly creature. Yet no one would suggest that you could hybridize a dog and a human—not even with in vitro fertilization. A host of factors prevent hybridization between all but *closely* related species.

So how can anyone expect a hybrid between a human and even the most humanlike alien? Its organs would be constructed on a totally different pattern from anything on earth. Its biochemical profile would be quite different. Its DNA code would be different from ours—assuming that it uses DNA in its genetic processes at all. Even something as simple as hybridizing cells, or inserting an alien gene into a human cell line, would be impossible. In a cell with a different genetic code, the alien gene could not produce the chemical it was coded to produce.

We may not know the ultimate secrets of subatomic particles and unified fields, but we have a pretty good idea of what human flesh is capable of. So abduction researchers, write this in large letters above your desks: Faster-than-light travel and telepathy may be possible. But interplanetary hybrids are out of the question. Period. No matter what they look like, Jacobs’s “hybrids” are not true hybrids. Whatever the purpose of the aliens’ bizarre genetic experiments, interplanetary hybridization is not one of them.

Malcolm Smith
Brighton, Queensland, Australia

DID YOU KNOW

. . . there was a worldwide wave of UFO sightings in 1909–1910? The sightings began on England’s east coast in March 1909, spread to Wales and Ireland, and continued well into May. Airships with searchlights were seen over New Zealand in the summer, and lighted objects pestered New England in the winter.

Brush up on this wave and much more with Jerome Clark’s revised two-volume *UFO Encyclopedia* (published in June by Omnigraphics). \$140.00. An invaluable resource for the serious ufologist.—G.M.E.

BOOK REVIEW

John Schuessler, *The Cash-Landrum UFO Incident*. La Porte, Tex.: Geo Graphics Printing Company, 1998. 322p.

Thousands of UFO reports have been investigated over the years. Regrettably, relatively few of these investigations has produced an unbiased, comprehensive documentation of the event.

Not so with John Schuessler's treatment of the Cash-Landrum case. Involved in the case early on, he has been a conscientious investigator, a tenacious pursuer of facts and documents, and not least, an advocate for the victims. Now 18 years after the event, his work has been published.

In 38 short chapters Schuessler takes us through the event and its sequelae: On the night of December 29, 1980, Betty Cash, Vicki Landrum, and Vicki's seven-year-old grandson Colby were driving on a little-trafficked farm road east of Houston, Texas, when they encountered a bright "large as a water tower" diamond-shaped object, roaring and emitting flames apparently associated with its propulsion system, as it descended over the road directly in front of them. Their vehicle became incredibly hot. Despite their terror—it was impossible to retreat or turn on the narrow country road—the two women got out of the car, Betty for possibly several minutes. Soon they became aware of many helicopters—CH-47s—approaching the object, which Schuessler calls the "intruder." The helicopters surrounded the object and eventually led it away. Betty was then able to continue driving home.

Within the hour they all began experiencing the classic signs and symptoms of massive radiation exposure: nausea, diarrhea, headache, skin eruptions, and great thirst, followed by hair and nail loss. Multiple hospitalizations for Betty ensued; she developed breast cancer. Colby has suffered the least, possibly because his smaller body was shielded by the car.

Schuessler's priorities were to identify the etiology of their health problems so as to facilitate their treatment, and to establish the government agency responsible for the helicopters. Neither of these tasks has been easy. The late Dr. Peter Rank concluded that Betty and Vicki sustained radiation damage confined to the skin and immediate subcutaneous area. Whether this was due to ionizing, infrared, ultraviolet, or microwave radiation is unclear.

As for the 23 helicopters, Schuessler was continually stonewalled in his attempts to ascertain the identities of the pilots or their mission. FOIA requests and even a suit against the U.S. government filed through the generosity of attorney Peter Gersten have proven futile. The case was finally brought before a judge who then flatly refused to even hear the evidence.

With few exceptions, questions that arise in the reader's mind are quickly answered. One would certainly like more about this comment (on p.106): "Dr. Shenoy made some

calls to radiologists, internists, and a gastroenterologist. He said they told him that 'Betty's problems were similar to those of other people who had encounters with UFOs.'" Huh? What other people? Did these physicians treat them? What was the outcome? What were the instigating circumstances? It would be nice to know. Such throwaway sentences are frustrating.

And on p.167 the late Coral Lorenzen of APRO claimed knowledge of a flight of an experimental aircraft from Albuquerque to Ellington Field, Texas, on that date. This too is never explained, nor is there any indication that a FOIA request was ever filed regarding it.

Schuessler's book takes us through hypnosis sessions performed by Dr. Leo Sprinkle, and extensive details of the medical problems experienced by all three witnesses. In an 86-page appendix one finds original drawings, maps, documents, and correspondence. It is unfortunate, however, that the physical production of the book is not first-rate, probably due to the fact that it was self-published by Schuessler using a local print shop. The book would have benefited from grammatical and typographical editing. Some variations in typesetting for sections dealing with medical data, for example, would have "refreshed the eyes." Nevertheless, the cover, a painting of the encounter done by Kathy Schuessler, is attractive and effective.

Two thumbs up for Schuessler's efforts. You may know the story already, but it is still a good, suspenseful read.

—Jennie Zeidman

RECENT UFO CASES

A good way to keep up on current UFO sightings (if you have access to the Internet) is by visiting Joe Trainor's "UFO Roundup" Web site at <http://ufoinfo.com/roundup/index.shtml>. Updated every week, the site has summaries of recent cases, aerospace news, and recommendations on other fun UFO Web sites. A complete archive is available online.

Some recent sightings described by UFO Roundup:

- Bright blue-white lights were seen on November 30 throughout Sussex County, Delaware. One man reported "a large blue light that was moving all over erratically," with smaller lights coming from the larger one. Local researcher Jane Segal received reports that "fighters from Dover Air Force Base were flying all over the region."
- Two daylight discs were reported November 11 at 11:55 a.m., by Ms. R. M. Jones as she was driving through Alexander, Arkansas. "The first was larger, more white, more stationary and lasted longer. The second was a white cigar sort of thing, sort of shimmery."
- UFO activity in Brisbane, Queensland, on December 2, consisted of a bright white light, an orange ball of light, and a missing time experience, all by different witnesses.