

# The Forgotten Correspondence of **EDWARD J. RUPPELT**

## The Story Behind **REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS**

by Michael Hall and Wendy Connors

Edward James Ruppelt served as project chief of Air Force investigations into Unidentified Flying Objects from November 1951 to September 1953. This brief time stands out more prominently than earlier or later periods because Ruppelt personally documented these years. If not for the presence of his memoirs, there would be little perspective from which to study the early case files. Published in 1956 and revised in 1959, *Report on Unidentified Flying Objects* chronicles many aspects of the Air Force's early UFO investigative endeavors. It was during Ruppelt's tenure that the famous code name Blue Book came into use. It designated the "official" UFO investigations being conducted by the Air Technical Intelligence Center out of Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. Some mystery exists as to the origin of that name, but it is known that Ruppelt was the individual responsible for popularizing the acronym "UFO." He disliked the more sensational phrase, "flying saucer" and understood that Intelligence was dealing with a complex situation if not a real phenomenon. Ruppelt served as an inspiration for those who wanted the issue addressed seriously. In honor of his memory we present these excerpts from his personal papers, held in Professor Michael Swords capable care. Never published before, they provide unique insight into the story behind Ruppelt's landmark book *Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*.

**B**ecause of the important inspiration Edward Ruppelt continues to provide to Ufology, he is a man we wish we could sit down with and talk to. Unfortunately, this is impossible. He died thirty-nine years ago on September 19, 1960 from a fatal heart attack at the young age of thirty-seven.

It would be interesting to speak to Ruppelt because he was not at liberty to discuss all he knew in his famous book, *Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*. Just imagine what interesting insights he might be able to convey. We may never come to treasure these jewels, but that is not to say Ruppelt's book ended with the great UFO wave of 1952. True, his writings centered around that year's

noted "summer of the saucers" and a generalized introduction of the phenomenon since 1947. Yet, Ruppelt took the reader beyond that and his own exit from the Air Force in September of 1953. Portions of his private papers, owned by the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies and preserved by Professor Michael Swords, also give many additional insights.

Ruppelt's papers tell us that since leaving Blue Book he kept in touch with his former right hand man and key office assistant, Airman 1st class Max Futch. In his personal correspondence Ruppelt not only referred to Futch as his "sergeant" but a trusted friend. Ruppelt also maintained a good working relation-

ship with the Intelligence officers at the Air Technical Intelligence Center (ATIC). After leaving the Air Force Ruppelt was employed by Northrop Aircraft and part of his job required that he serve as a liaison with his former ATIC unit.

Around this time Ruppelt's idea for writing a book on UFOs matured. In May 1954 he had an article published in *True* magazine detailing his experiences. The piece was to some extent ghost written by Jim Phelan. In fact a November 9, 1953, letter to Ruppelt from *True* Associate Editor John DuBarry reads as follows:

Dear Mr. Ruppelt: I had occasion to phone Jim Phelan of the Long Beach Independent today to discuss a story he did for True, and heard from him that he is the man you'd contacted for help on your Project Bluebook story. As I promptly told him, we're glad to know that it's him you chose—you couldn't be in better hands.<sup>1</sup>

Phelan was a close friend of Ruppelt and a talented newspaper correspondent from Long Beach.<sup>2</sup> His expertise made Ruppelt's story a national sensation and virtually guaranteed interest in a full length book. That article also rewarded Ruppelt and Phelan with a \$2,000 stipend.

However, the book which Ruppelt soon began writing was all his. Copies of his original manuscripts held by Professor Swords prove this. Although passages do suggest that Phelan occasionally corrected Ruppelt's tendency to use the passive voice. Phelan may have also convinced him to end a few of his chapters with more open ended remarks than Ruppelt would have been inclined to do on his own. Luckily, Ruppelt had compiled a comprehensive personal notebook which still survives in his personal files. He virtually wrote most of his book from this seven hundred page compilation. Archived by Professor Swords as R-

105, it is one of the long forgotten but most significant historical documents on this period.

Unfortunately for Ruppelt, it was not an easy chore to finish the last part of his book. Despite continued visits to ATIC, it became increasingly more difficult to stay abreast of the UFO situation once Max Futch left the Air Force on December 30, 1953. Soon after Captain Charles Hardin settled in as the new chief of Blue Book, Ruppelt lost a direct line to what was going on in his former office. Hardin and ATIC Chief General Harold Watson were strong UFO skeptics. They became a real "bottleneck" for Ruppelt getting his hands on interesting case material.<sup>3</sup> Luckily UFO friendly Colonel William A. Adams of the Topical Division of Air Force Intelligence headquarters (AFOIN) in the Pentagon was still around and corresponded with Ruppelt.<sup>4</sup>

The first edition of his memoirs published in 1956 by Doubleday do include useful observations on the post-Ruppelt period. For example, he gave a number of interesting reflections on the mood prevalent in Intelligence as well as a UFO wave brewing in Europe in 1954.

He confirmed that in the years following his tenure, the Air Force tried to crack down as much as possible on the release of UFO information, although it is doubtful he ever knew the full impact of the Robertson Panel. That CIA directed conference had privately recommended to the National Security Council in early 1953 that UFOs were *not* dangerous per se—but belief in them *was*. The panel worried that UFO sightings could cause an *hysteria* which might hamper American defense systems during those tense Cold War years. Regrettably for Ruppelt, he left the Air Force before being fully briefed on that new stance—soon adopted hook, line and

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sinker by the Air Force. His information after that point had become only mid-level. The days of briefing generals and rubbing shoulders with top-side personalities was over.

Yet, something did happen to him several years later. Ruppelt had developed a new outlook. At the time a later Blue Book chief, Major Robert J. Friend, was supplying him with officially authorized information for three new chapters that Ruppelt was simply tacking onto the end of his book. These additions took the UFO story up to date to that time.

In those pages Ruppelt's objective and somewhat open-minded attitudes on UFOs, which had so characterized his 1956 book, changed drastically. For instance, in the concluding sentence of his earlier 1956 manuscript, he flatly stated, "Maybe the earth is being visited by interplanetary spaceships. Only time will tell." Perhaps that was just a Jim Phelan touch, but by 1959 when he was composing the additional chapters, Ruppelt appeared to become more doubtful of an extraterrestrial origin. This is reflected in the concluding statement of his final revision, published in late 1959:

No responsible scientist will argue with the fact other solar systems may be inhabited and that some day we may meet those people. But it hasn't happened yet and until that day comes we're stuck with our Space Age Myth—the UFO.

A clip from a rough draft of Ruppelt's last chapter which never saw print, is even harsher. It comes from Ruppelt's personal papers:

The Air Force emphasizes the belief that if more immediate detailed objective observational data could have been obtained on the unknowns, these too would have been satisfactorily explained. And I agree wholeheartedly. Of the thousands of UFO reports I've read, there wasn't one which could not have been satisfactorily explained.<sup>3</sup>

Correspondence from two former associates of Ruppelt's may have influenced this new stance. This first letter is from Anderson Flues, a member of Ruppelt's Blue Book staff in 1952. The second comes from astronomer Dr. J. Allen Hynek who served as a scientific consultant in various capacities to the Air Force throughout its twenty-two year investigation of UFOs. Hynek, in later years, became an advocate for a more serious investigation into the phenomenon and in 1973 formed the still thriving Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS). At this time, however, he had a cautious and healthy skepticism:

May 12, 1959

Dear Ed:

Thanks for your letter of April 21st. As I assume you by now are aware, we have in the interim period become the parents of a pair of identical twin boys. This is quite a record, three boys now all under 24 months. Aren't you jealous? . . .

I do have a statement to make concerning my feelings regarding unidentified flying objects, and I hope that it is not too late for my thoughts on this matter to be enclosed in the rewrite of the book which Doubleday is publishing. I agree with you that in our investigations we did not find anything solid enough to warrant the conclusion that we were dealing with interstellar space vehicles. While we were conducting the investigation, and in my specific case up until about the end of July of, I believe, 1952, I had the feeling that the possibility definitely existed that we might have been dealing with some form of interstellar space objects. However, the crux of the matter is that, as you know, within the framework of our capabilities, we tried to do a pretty thorough job of investigation of the very best reports. To my knowledge, during this period of an extraordinary number, both visual and electronic, even taking into consideration the highly qualified backgrounds of some of the people who made visual sightings, there was not one single case which, upon the closest analysis, could not be logically explained in terms of some natural phenomena. [sic]

There were three particular cases which come to mind. These were the Dayton sightings, about which you wrote in your book, the Presque Isle sighting, and the Port Huron, Michigan, sighting. At the outset of the investigation in each of these cases, I felt that they would be insolvable without incorporating some interstellar

space vehicle theory. However, as you know, upon close analysis they broke down into what always seemed to become a normal pattern. The same thing occurred, of course, when you and Bob Olsen [sic Olsson] went to West Palm Beach. Therefore, I must conclude that, since we explained the difficult ones in this matter, ones which were of lesser quality and which we did not have time to investigate would undoubtedly have fallen into similar patterns had we had the inclination or the resources to analyze them thoroughly.

I do not think, however, that we can say that the project was worthless. In the first place it was something which simply had to be investigated as bearing on the Air Force's mission for the security of the United States. Secondly I believe that everyone connected with the project, however remotely, gained a new insight into the incredible variety of natural phenomena in the atmosphere, of the malfunctioning characteristics of theoretically foolproof equipment, of the tricks which can be played upon the human senses, and last but not least of the quirks of human psychology.

I certainly hope that you can use these paragraphs of mine in your book. Please feel free to edit or change them in any way you see fit.

However, I do ask that out of some loyalty to your old comrade in arms you maintain the pure essence of my extraordinary thoughts in this matter.

Marilyn and I are looking forward to seeing you during your next trip to Chicago. We have a house now, as you know, and if you would find it convenient to lay over here during one of your trips either to Armour Research or to air Technical Intelligence Center, we can assure you a couple of stiff drinks, a good meal, and a very comfortable bed.

With personal regards to you and to your family, I am

Sincerely yours,  
Anderson G. Flues.<sup>6</sup>

28 May 1959

Dear Ed:

Sorry to be so late in answering your letter of 1 May. In answer, I think I can quite safely say that we have no record of ever having received from our MOONWATCH teams any reports of sightings of unidentified objects which had any characteristics different from those of an orbiting satellite, a slow meteor, or of a suspected plan mistaken for a satellite.

MOONWATCH' teams are, of course, usually watching only for satellites passing at predicted times and I imagine might be reluctant to report anything else, unless it were of a very definite and most unusual appearance.

As far as quoting me in your revision is

concerned, I think I could say simply that I am rather surprised that reported sightings continue to come in. We all believed, of course, back there in 1947-48, that this was all post-war craze that would disappear as quickly as the hula-hoop and many other recent popular pastimes. The fact that it hasn't to me indicated primarily the great interest in, and even awe for, any events in the sky. This is all the more so since the advent of the Satellite Age. I continue, however, to be surprised also at the uncritical nature of many of the reports; this again to me implies a strong element of wishful thinking. I believe that there is no doubt that many people would honestly like to believe that outer space is populated and that we are occasionally the recipients of visits. And because of continued reports and the continued interest, it is clear that the subject of UFO's continues to constitute primarily a most interesting public relations problem and one that offers a fine chance for the demonstration to the public of the operation of the scientific attitude. I still will hope, as I have done in the past, that open ridicule and a refusal even to accord a sympathetic look at reports, does not constitute the scientific method and, particularly in this day, I believe it is important that the public's confidence in science and scientists be enhanced, by demonstrating to the public how in the interesting case of UFO's the scientific attitude works.

Sincerely yours,  
J. Allen Hynek  
Associate Director<sup>7</sup>

By the time Ruppelt had completed his three more skeptical chapters he was still working for Northrop Aircraft. It was rumored but never proven that Northrop, a major government contractor, pressured Ruppelt to tone down his open-minded position on UFOs.

However, nothing in his personal papers suggests this. They, in fact, present the opposite picture. Apparently their UFO-hunting author/engineer generated a fair amount of favorable publicity for Northrop. Here is an internal memo in the Ruppelt papers from Northrop's Vice President of engineering:

Book, dated Jan 27, 1956:  
NORTHROP AIRCRAFT, INC.  
MEMORANDUM  
To: ALL ENGINEERING PERSONNEL  
From: VICE PRESIDENT, ENGINEERING  
Subject: ENGINEERING DIVISION ACTIVITIES

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Date: 27 January 1956

### **....2. Engineer Author**

Since 1947, when the first reports of "flying saucers" were made, many of us have wondered about the validity of these accounts. It is likely that we shall have to continue to speculate, since we still have no concrete evidence that the reports are based on any actual, unknown objects. However, a very interesting book, revealing much of the Air Force's work on the evaluation of hundreds of such reports, was published last week. We may have a greater interest in this book than the public at large, not only because it deals with an "aeronautical" subject, but because it was written by one of our engineers.

The book "The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects," is the work of Ed Ruppelt, an aeronautical engineer who is working in our Weapon Systems Analysis department. A World War II bombardier, Mr. Ruppelt was recalled during the Korean War and assigned to the Air Intelligence [sic] Center at Wright Field [sic]. In 1951, he was given the job of evaluating UFO reports compiled by the Air Force. Later, he was selected to head the project which continued the work of compiling and evaluating UFO information. The book is an account of his experiences and observations during his two-year assignment to Air Force Project Blue Book (the intelligence agency which evaluates UFO reports).

In his book, which was published by Doubleday and Company, Mr. Ruppelt implies that, while many of the UFO sightings cannot be explained as hallucinations, no country now has the ability to produce aircraft such as those reported. The Air Force, although it approved the publication of the author's report, has not changed its position that there is no reason to believe in the existence of UFO's.

Regardless of the reader's position in this controversy, he will find that the book is well written, and is probably the only really inside viewpoint ever released on this subject.<sup>10</sup>

The other accusation from some researchers is that the Air Force exerted pressure on Ruppelt. We know Ruppelt had to submit both his original manuscript and the revision to Air Force Classification Review in December 1955 and mid-1959. Yet, there is no indication in 1955 that the Air Force used this process to pressure Ruppelt in any way and it seems his original book had no difficulty receiving final clearance. (There are suggestions that Colonel Adams may have lent some assistance in this.)<sup>10</sup>

It is true that by the time of the book's second printing the Air Force had become very defensive over the UFO subject. This stemmed primarily from the creation in 1957 of the largest and most successful civilian UFO research organization in history—the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomenon. Its starting point came with a press conference held in Washington, D.C. in January of that year by Retired Admiral Delmer S. Fahrney.

The conference officially introduced this non-profit organization known as NICAP. Fahrney served briefly as chairman of the board of governors, which had originally been founded on October 24th of 1956 by physicist T. Townsend Brown who later resigned. By 1957 NICAP still had a very prestigious board of governors with noted figures like former CIA director—(retired) Vice Admiral R.H. Hillenkoetter; former commanding general of the First Marine Division—(retired) Lieutenant General Paul delValle; noted WWII submarine commander—(retired) Rear Admiral Herbert B. Knowles; president of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots association—J.B. Hartranft; a teacher in the department of astrophysics at Defiance College—Charles A. Maney; popular radio commentator—Frank Edwards; and Reverend Leon C. Le Van of Pittsburgh. Several years later the former Pentagon Blue Book liaison officer Dewey Fournet joined the board.

The nationally known writer Donald E. Keyhoe agreed to serve as executive director of NICAP. An Annapolis graduate, (Major) Keyhoe had began his writing career in 1927—kicked off by a first-person account of the national tour he made with Charles Lindbergh as his personal Marine Corps escort. By 1950 Keyhoe had many friends within the military. They, like Keyhoe, had become

very concerned over the increasing variety of unexplainable UFO events reported since the first flying disc sightings in 1947. A number of these insider friends began leaking confidential facts to Keyhoe. The first director of the CIA, Vice Admiral Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter, and the head of the Navy's guided missile program, Rear Admiral Delmer S. Fahrney, joined Keyhoe's list of confidants in subsequent years. Keyhoe, with his military contacts, became a key figure disseminating details of the early UFO events to the public via articles and two best selling books by late 1953. Over the next two decades Donald Keyhoe would research and continue to write about UFOs with a passion. In 1958 noted UFO writer/researcher Richard H. Hall joined as executive secretary of NICAP.<sup>11</sup> The statement that kicked-off their first press conference in 1957 read as follows:

**Reliable reports indicate that there are objects coming into our atmosphere at very high speeds . . . No agency in this country or Russia is able to duplicate at this time the speeds and accelerations which radars and observers indicate these flying objects are able to achieve.**

**There are signs that an intelligence directs these objects because of the way they fly. The way they change position in formation would indicate that their motion is directed. The Air Force is collecting factual data on which to base an opinion, but time is required to sift and correlate the material.**

**As long as such unidentified objects continue to navigate through the earth's atmosphere, there is an urgent need to know the facts. Many observers have ceased to report their findings to the Air Force because of the seeming frustration—that is, all information going in, and none coming out. It is in this area that NICAP may find its greatest mission. We are in a position to screen independently all UFO information coming in from our filter groups. General Albert C. Wedemeyer will serve the Committee as Evaluations Advisor and complete analyses will be arranged through leading scientists. After careful evaluation, we shall release our findings to the public.<sup>12</sup>**

NICAP's primary aim sought to

generate enthusiasm for congressional hearings regarding the conduct of the Air Force's UFO investigations. Members hoped that NICAP could bring to light government information on the phenomenon not previously disclosed. The hearings were also hoped to either push the Air Force into serious investigative work or convince it to step aside and let NICAP assume a leading role.

That "presumption" on NICAP's part so infuriated and worried Air Force officials that diligent attempts were made by the Pentagon over subsequent years to circumvent those congressional inquiries. In fact, nothing upset a military man more than an irate congressman questioning their conduct, especially when it concerned administrative matters. Thus the well intentioned efforts of NICAP only served to make the Air Force more vindictive toward the UFO phenomenon. As the Cold War intensified after the launch of Sputnik, the USAF wanted to focus on what it was good at—military aviation. In this, airmen were unequaled because they could train for it. UFOs, whatever they were, seemed too elusive and controversial to pin down.

Even though interest still existed among some high-ranking officers, the whole UFO problem had become more of a headache for the young service—still in the shadow of the more venerable Army and Navy. Their charter revolved around keeping American skies safe and therefore identifying anything of "foreign" origin. UFOs threatened that precept. The United States Air Force stands as an honorable institution, but unfortunately it never had a fair chance at cracking the UFO riddle—internal and external politics intervened.<sup>13</sup>

As the Air Force tried to withdraw from the controversy, NICAP's momentum grew over the next two years. It de-

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veloped a large membership and published a newsletter-like booklet entitled *UFO Investigator*. By 1958 membership increased to 5,000 and by 1966 reached 14,000. As the years passed, NICAP developed a network of investigators that documented many cases ignored by the Air Force. NICAP also gathered advisors like former Pentagon public relations man Al Chop. Keyhoe asked Ruppelt to serve as a special advisor and board member, but he had just suffered his first heart attack and, among other reasons not specifically known, Ruppelt chose to decline. Over the years many notable figures went on to become NICAP board members, including Senator Barry Goldwater in 1974.<sup>14</sup> The following letter from Ed Ruppelt to Donald Keyhoe gives an interesting insight on his initial impression of NICAP:

August 3, 1957

Dear Don,

Thanks for your recent letter.

If the situation were such that I could conveniently do it, it would be interesting to work at NICAP but as things stand right now I just can't. Northrop didn't have anything to do with my decision, it was strictly my own, incidentally. It's difficult to give you a good, solid reason why I've decided to stay as far out of the UFO controversy as possible because I can't get specific about my work. You'll just have to take my word that I have a good reason.

The other evening I read my first copy of your NICAP publication cover to cover and it was good. You have an impressive list of people on the board. I thought Dewey's statement was good and I admire him for pointing out that his conclusions were his own and that he has no association with the Air Force. I heard a rumble in New York about a magazine article on UFO's being killed at the request of the Air Force, nothing concrete, however. Was it LIFE?

Remember I told you about the picture of a split cloud similar to that old photo that was taken in Newfoundland in 1948 or 1949? I'm enclosing the slide. It was taken in Long Beach about a month ago. What it is or what caused it I have no idea except a flash of light drew the observer's attention to the sector of the sky where the cloud was. By the time he looked there was nothing but a split cloud. The split was much more pronounced when he first saw it. By the time he got his camera (he was watering in his

back lawn when he saw the flash) and light meter, took a meter reading, then the picture, the cloud had begun to blend together again. You can keep the slide and use it for whatever you want to. I hope to get to Washington within the next few months. If and when I do I'll give you a call.

Yours truly  
Edward J. Ruppelt<sup>15</sup>

By 1959 when Ruppelt was compiling his second edition, the infamous Air Force UFO debunker Major Lawrence J. Tacker of the Pentagon's Public Information Office and Major Friend at Blue Book both tried to exercise some influence over him. It was obviously, in part, a reflex action to the public excitement which NICAP had already stirred up. The last thing the Air Force wanted was another UFO book with many open ended questions in its text—especially one written by the former head of Blue Book!

Ruppelt's new book, however, was to be simply an update to *Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*. Its three new chapters dealt mainly with the 1957 wave of UFO sightings and the rise of NICAP. Apparently, the Air Force (via Blue Book) did attempt to make their provision of the release of new cases conditional on ATIC's "review" of his writing. A joint memo from Major Friend of Blue Book and Colonel Gordon C. Hoffman of Air Force Intelligence to Major Tacker and Major James F. Sunderman of the Pentagon's Office of Information Services, details everyone's concerns. The memo states in regard to releasing information to Ruppelt:

May 21, 1959

It is with the understanding that close control will be exercised on the Ruppelt manuscript, and that the ATIC will be allowed an active part in reviewing that the enclosed information is forwarded to your office for release to Mr. Ruppelt.<sup>16</sup>

Yet, in the final analysis, the Air Force *did not* ask Ruppelt to correct any-

thing in his previous chapters which remained unchanged. Barring minor factual errors in his three additional chapters, Major Sunderman *did not* exert censorship as this letter proves:

17 July 1959

Office of the Secretary

Dear Ed:

Following our telephone conversation this morning I am inclosing a copy of the comments to your manuscript. These were accrued during its coordination.

The three chapters have been forwarded to Tim Seldes at Doubleday. They have been cleared for publication just as you wrote them, with no amendments.

The comments are sent to you just for your information and use, if you see fit. They revolve about several minor factual inaccuracies. You are in no way required to make any changes in your manuscript as a result of these comments. In several instances you have inferred ATIC knowledge of cases. ATIC has no official knowledge of these cases. There is no record of them in their files.

I hope you can drop by the office during your next trip to Washington.

Sincerely,  
James F. Sunderman  
Major, USAF  
Chief, USAF Book Program  
Office of Information Services<sup>17</sup>

It seems doubtful that Ruppelt ran into trouble writing his updated book other than getting good information on the 1957 wave. It is obvious from Ruppelt's papers, for example, that he was attempting to attain more cogent answers on the Levelland, Texas, sightings than he was able to get from Blue Book.<sup>18</sup> Ruppelt eventually gleaned useful information on those sightings but had to go to private sources to do so.<sup>19</sup>

Today many people continue to believe that high ranking Air Force officials had asked Ruppelt during personal conversations to tone down his opinions on UFOs—leading directly to his much more skeptical views present in the additional three chapters of the second printing of *Report on Unidentified Flying Objects* published in 1960.

After Ruppelt's death his wife Elizabeth claimed that he had actually changed his stance due to constant agitation from the so-called Contactees and their followers. Contactees claimed to be in communication at will with UFOs. Such stories from people like George Adamski significantly hindered a serious study of UFOs in the late 1950s. To this day, their accounts still handicap even the most respected scholar. Combined with the fixation that contemporary leaders in the UFO field now have on abduction cases and the sensationalists researchers of the Roswell Incident, serious attention to the subject has never been revived since Ruppelt's heyday.

But did Ruppelt really lose interest in UFOs? Well let's back up. Let's return to Edward Ruppelt the man. There is still much to consider.

First, it is unlikely Ruppelt ever had fanatical beliefs on UFOs one way or another. Like many present day researchers, he wavered back and forth through a range of emotions—trying to understand a vastly complex phenomenon. Personal interviews with six of those who knew Ruppelt revealed to the authors that he never openly expressed any beliefs regarding UFOs during his tenure at Blue Book.<sup>20</sup> Dewey Fournet, who served as Pentagon liaison to Blue Book during Ruppelt's tenure, told the authors:

Aug. 16, 1999

Dear Mr. Hall

... I found Ed to be very objective, extremely competent technically... He was exceptionally qualified to handle his Blue Book assignment. And I also feel that all of this is reflective in the wonderful work that he did, and he certainly deserved the plaudits of the USAF, which unfortunately were not always forthcoming...

Sincerely,  
Dewey Fournet<sup>21</sup>

All his former associates admired him for the professional and objective approach he displayed in his duties. The

following letter from Donald Keyhoe suggests that Ruppelt actually retained a healthy skepticism on UFOs even before he began writing his memoirs. It addresses a number of issues that were still being talked about from the 1952 summer flying saucer flap. Although Keyhoe must have interjected some of these statements in order to try and get Ruppelt's reaction:

March 11, 1954

Dear Ed:

I am a double-barreled louse for not writing you long ago, thanking you for the help back in December; I intended to write immediately, but got in the usual jam—work piled up, several hundred letters unanswered, and things getting worse all the time. That is, from the standpoint of catching up on correspondence.

Thanks a million for the Gloria Swanson clips. I shall have to write her.

A lot of things have happened since we talked by phone last December. First, your wires played a big part in convincing Delos Smith of the UP that he'd been given some misleading information; he apparently thought none of my sighting reports from ATIC were genuine. Al wrote that Smith did finally write a piece, but that it wasn't too bad. I didn't see it.

I had quite a hassle with Jonathan Leonard, Time's science editor, on the Town Meeting of the Air. He turned out to be a supercilious jerk, and I was glad to find that most the audience ended up on my side.

Later, I visited the flying saucer observatory near Ottawa; it is on a small scale, but has some good instrumentation and may lead to accurate tracking and analysis, if a UFO should come in its range. The Canadians have a different attitude from our AF; they don't pooh-pooh the reports—simply say there must be something to them, and if they find out any definite answers they will inform the public.

After my book came out, the AF OPI put out a so-called "fact sheet" with some "facts" which certainly looked dubious. One was a statement that all sighting reports were a matter of public record—after they had turned me down on a request to go to Dayton and see them. Finally, Col. Hugh Day admitted that the 1952 policy had been reversed and no sightings would be given out; no one could go to the project and see anything, and the AF would not answer questions on any specific sightings. So I was surprised when Gen. Joe Kelly, legal aide to the Secretary, wrote a letter to Senator Case (in response to a query from a constituent of Case's) and said all information was available to

the public. I have just checked with Day again, and he said it's not available, and he's going to talk with Kelly and try to straighten it out.

You probably know that MATS Intelligence had a meeting with members of the Air Line Pilots Ass'n at Los Angeles recently, to speed up reports on UFO's. Pilots are to radio in at once, to MATS if possible, otherwise the nearest AF base, so that jets can be sent up if the UFO or formation is near enough to any base.

Also, Dr. Lincoln La Paz and Clyde Tombaugh, discoverer of Pluto, are working under contract with Army and AF to try to locate hitherto unknown and invisible satellites circling the earth. Tombaugh says it's practically certain that such small satellites exist, "tiny moons" which could be used as space bases, or for launching missiles or guiding them if launched from the ground—long range stuff. Now this is a complete reversal of previous statements by astronomers; they had said—or some of them—that no object could be orbiting around the earth and not be seen by them. Tombaugh explains why the "tiny moons" wouldn't be seen unless special cameras were used. If this is true, it would also apply to space ships orbiting at high speeds under the same conditions. It's interesting that the armed services have hired these two men to look for such "moons;" and it is quite possible that this sky-search may be for the additional purpose of trying to locate any orbiting space bases.

Another item: Some time ago, a top editor of one of the big news chains asked the Pentagon if they could see the Utah pix. He wrote me the results. After some stalling, their Washington man was told okay, a representative could see them at Dayton. So a staff writer was assigned to the job, from Columbus. When he contacted Dayton, he was told that "by coincidence" the only film they had had been burned out from over-use, and to ask the Pentagon to see the master film there. The Pentagon said no, they didn't have any copy, or master film, but they were sure Dayton did, and to try again. So back went the other guy. No soap. Dayton said they guessed Newhouse had the only one left. (Incidentally, he got a very poor copy—and not one word of the analysis.) I'd say this was a typical example of the recent runaround policy.

I'll be interested in seeing your True piece; I knew it was coming. As I understand it, you play down the saucers, but leave a loophole. As you know, we don't agree on many angles about UFO's but I do wish we could get together and talk them out. I am frankly puzzled, since you undoubtedly saw the Gulf of Mexico report (Dec. 6, 1952) and others in the book (you cleared them, I know) and I honestly don't understand why the weight of evidence hasn't convinced you. It occurred to me that maybe the AF encouraged you to do the True piece, to help

play down the present public interest, and if so I can readily understand it, especially if you are still in the Reserve. But I do remember our talk, and although your comments could have been inspired by the official policy, I wasn't sure. Regardless, I hope we can talk the whole thing over some time.

You mentioned the idea of turning some of your knowledge into cash. It's possible you could do a book, but having gone on record with the True piece, you'd have to follow that theme—unless you discovered some new information which warranted a drastic change. If you happen to come East, I'd be glad to talk it over with you—the writing possibilities, I mean, even though we do seem on the opposite sides.

I have heard some interesting things which I can't put in writing here, but which indicate that 1954 will see some more UFO excitement. One thing I'm sure about: the general public is more and more skeptical of the AF denials. I think the AF is doing itself a lot of harm with its present policy; one day they say everything is wide open, then they clamp down and admit it, then a general says it's wide open—then I find that air line pilots are told to keep mum on sightings they report to MATS. From the mail I get—and I've hundreds of letters now—90% or more of the public are aware of this double-talk. I've given a few lectures, and I find the same attitude with audiences. Also, I'm getting letters from Service pilots, both AF and Navy, and from ground officers in AF, some of them radar experts. They ask me to keep their names out of it, but give me details on new sightings, and also orders not to talk to the press. All of this adds up to future trouble, I'm afraid—if people decide the AF is hiding or twisting facts on the UFO situation, they may suspect any statements from the Pentagon. The best thing they could do—AF—would be to open up all UFO files, the Utah analysis, including opinions by pilots who've seen the things. Then let the public decide—at least weigh the facts.

By the way, this guy Desvergers [sic DesVergers] has told people that you took his hat back to Dayton to be analyzed, and that it was never returned. Is this straight, or did he make it up?

To go back to the idea of your turning your ideas into cash... If you should stumble on brand-new information, which backs up my belief, I would of course be interested in working with you—although you're perfectly capable of writing the material yourself. But since you apparently have presented the negative side, in True, it might be easier to collaborate if you ever do find reason to support the affirmative. Right now, I don't plan another book—I don't intend to go on just repeating myself. But if I find any strong, new facts, I'll do a book or some articles. I've already had some offers, but I'm hold-

ing off. And I want to get back to other writing—after all, I am a professional writer, and I don't want to stick with just the one subject.

I found a memo in my letter-file yesterday—"book to Ed Ruppelt." More embarrassment—I thought I'd sent one long ago. I haven't any on hand but my working copy, but I have ordered a few from Henry Holt and they should be along soon. This time, I'll make certain you get one.

Didn't mean to write such a long letter, Ed, but maybe a few ideas will be of interest. If you have time, I'd be glad to hear from you—and I won't take so damned long to answer, next time.

Meantime, best of luck in everything.

Cordially,  
Don Keyhoe"

Keyhoe obviously wanted to help Ruppelt write the book. But Ruppelt went on to do it himself, maintaining a very objective position even though he expressed his own great personal interest in between the lines. Although as said, some of those nuances were undoubtedly attributed to Jim Phelan. Next came a movie (*UFO* by Greenhouse Productions in 1956) based on Ruppelt, and Pentagon assistants to the Blue Book project—Dewey Fournet and Albert Chop. The film focused on the great summer saucer wave of 1952. The following three letters talk about the early stages of those projects, but also show that Ruppelt expressed eager interest in UFOs. Admittedly, this does stand in great contrast to his more guarded attitude just four years later.

December 8, 1954

Dear Don [Keyhoe],

Thanks for the letter. Sorry to hear that you are having some bad luck, wife ill and all that. We've just had a siege of these darn California colds. We had thought that if we got out of Dayton and got out here that we would leave all of that behind, but I think that it has been worse out here. My goal is to get to Denver, I think that that is about the nicest place I've ever been. I didn't hear anything from the Air Force [referring to the controversy over the release of UFO Intelligence files to Keyhoe in 1952 and Lt. Col. John O'Mara's erroneous public accusation in 1954 that Keyhoe never really did get a look

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at ATIC's UFO files as he had claimed.] I assume that the mess that you spoke about is all cleared up. I hope so. I have been dickering with a publisher for a book, but it isn't firmed up as yet. I have about seven chapters finished. I think that the book will surprise you. It will tell the whole UFO story, which, I can assure you, has never been told before. This is providing that I can get it by security review, but I think that I have this all figured out. As you know the True piece wasn't cleared and I had a different outlook on things then. The movie is coming along slowly. I'd say that it will also be a bang up deal. They have some stuff that will shock a lot of people.

I had hoped to get to D.C. within the near future, but my plans fell through so now I don't know when I'll make it. If I do get anywhere in the area I'll give you a buzz.

This seems to be all for tonight. I'll keep you posted on anything new.

As ever  
Ed.<sup>23</sup>

February 21, 1955

Dear Dr. Hynek,

I've been meaning to drop you a line for at least a year and a half to say hello but it took the vision of a dollar sign to spur me on.

Not to be outdone by Frank Scully, Donald Keyhoe or George Adamski, I have signed a contract with Doubleday and Company to write my flying saucer memoirs. Along these lines I have two questions that I thought you possibly would answer. They are:

- 1) When we were in Washington early in 1953 attending the week long meeting sponsored by that hush-hush organization, the Tremonton, Utah, movies were thoroughly discussed. The verdict was that they were sea gulls. Do you go along with this theory? You don't have to speculate as to what they were, I'd just like to know what you think of the sea gull theory.
- 2) Recently, when Mars came close to the earth there was a good deal of talk about getting a good look at it. Most of the UFO nuts have played this up big. Was there anything of importance seen that would enhance the theory that Mars is inhabited?

I give you my solemn promise that unless you specifically give me an O.K. I won't quote you on the above questions. Also if for some reason you don't care to give me an answer, that's all right too. Mainly the answers to the questions are for my own "education". Since I've been out of the Air Force I've been working for Northrop Aircraft as an operations analyst. It's very interesting work and I thoroughly enjoy it. The whole family is sold on this California

weather. I was back in Dayton two weeks ago and got caught in a blizzard and ice storm. That's all it takes to make one a solid booster for sunny California. I understand that Bob Olssen [sic Olsson] is in law school at OSU, also Kerry Rothstein. Max Futch, my sergeant, is taking law at LSU. I don't understand this apparent correlation between flying saucers and lawyers.

Yours truly  
Edward J. Ruppelt<sup>24</sup>

This third letter really is an amazing document of history. It is written to Frederic Durant who had worked for the CIA, compiling information during late 1952 in preparation for the Robertson Panel meeting. Obviously, Durant and Ruppelt had become friends in those earlier days preceding the Robertson Panel.

January 25, 1955

Dear Fred,

I am in the process of writing a book on UFO's for Doubleday and Co. There seems to be a "flying saucer" outbreak in Europe at the present time, consequently I would like to include something about these sightings in my book. I have read that you were in Europe not too long ago and thought that possibly you had picked up some fairly recent information.

I fully realize your position and am asking only for what you may have picked up in "bull-sessions" and would care to pass along. I would be honored to be able to use your name as a personal friend who is merely interested in UFO's for interest's sake. But if this doesn't appeal to you for any reason, I assure you that there will be no hint of where the information came from.

If you feel that you could help me please let me know and I'll either try to get to Washington to see you or detail more of what I'd like to have in another letter.

Yours truly  
Edward J. Ruppelt<sup>25</sup>

In following years Ruppelt began receiving invaluable leads on some significant UFO events which he had earlier tried to research. Many of these came from eyewitnesses who were corresponding with him after reading his accounts or hearing him speak. One of those letters provide new insights on a very

famous UFO case known as the Chiles-Whitted Sighting

July 19, 1957

Dear Mr. Ruppelt,

I'm not sure of the spelling of your name but this is the way it sounded on "I've Got A Secret."

At any rate, I think perhaps you will be interested in knowing that I also saw what I imagine was Captain Chiles' flying saucer or what have you.\*

We live in Andalusia, Ala, which is almost half-way between Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery and Eglin Air Force Base in Florida.

I know nothing about aviation (my husband is an army engineer) but it is said that two "beams" cross over Andalusia. At any rate, planes pass over us day and night and usually seem to be in the same general air lanes. As a matter of fact, squadrons of trainers fly over us at intervals a great deal and early night flying training goes on above us.

At any rate, on this particular night or early morning, I should say, I woke up extremely thirsty and went into the bathroom (upstairs) to get a drink of water. The bathroom window faces north and I stood looking out of the window drinking the water when this (I don't know what to call it) passed across the sky. It went very swiftly and I was not able to tell much about it because I was so startled, but I was aware of a tremendous light coming from it. It moved across the sky in the general direction most of the planes do, and disappeared.

The next morning, I told my husband about it and said, "Don't tell anyone about it. They'll think you've lost your mind." But there in the morning paper (We take the Montgomery Advantage) was the story of Capt. Chiles seeing the strange craft—I can't help but believe it must have been the same one. I've mentioned this to several people since that time and they've all laughed and looked at me as though I might be a little crazy.

However, it was a very real thing and I thought that even at this late date you might be interested in it.

Sincerely,  
Mrs. Richard H. Cobbs.\*\*

This next letter was written by Ruppelt in response to an inquiry from a physicist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His commentary gives invaluable insights on the Battelle Memorial Institute think tank project known as Stork. Part of Project Stork was to

provide computer analysis of UFO data but by 1953, for reasons unknown, the survey became unduly biased toward the subject. Ruppelt's words give additional proof of that as well as insight into the scientific community's interest into UFOs:

April 15, 1956

Dear Mr. [Cliford M.] Witcher,

Thank you for your letter of March 26, I am most honored that you enjoyed my book.

In answer to your question about withholding the names of scientists who helped the Air Force on Project Blue Book, there seems to be a bit of hesitation on part of many professional people to be publicly associated with the word UFO or "saucer." I always considered this to be a bona fide hesitation because the press is always after sensational stories and if they knew that some rather newsworthy personalities had flown to Washington or Dayton to discuss UFO's, they would play it up all out of proportion. Secondly, since the subject of UFO's is one of great interest and intrigue, as soon as one publicly associates himself with the subject—especially if he has had official contact with the Air Force—this seems to be all that people will discuss with him, including his colleges. For your own information, people from Los Alamos, Rand, Brookhaven and aircraft companies, and many others, did help us considerably. Some were very much outspoken against the UFO's—other weren't. I briefed the MIT Beacon Hill group several times and discussed our problems with them.

As far as anyone in the Boston area is concerned, I don't know of anyone who is there right now. At one time we did consult with someone from MIT Radiation Lab but I don't recall who it was. The man came to Washington shortly after the Washington National Sightings to talk to us.

In regard to your comment on ATIC "Project Blue Book Report." I can heartily concur. That report was started while I was in charge of Blue Book and I had no intention of trying to prove anything—the data from reports were put on punch cards merely to facilitate record keeping. But later on it was decided to "prove that the UFO's couldn't be anything"—decided by the people who had a contract to keep the punch card files for us. The report was completed and thrown out as anything of value in late 1953. The data were such that you could interpret it any way you pleased. I was quite amazed when I read the report when it was released several months ago; the "typical cases" they quoted were ones that we had discarded as not even being worth bothering with.

As you say, the radar-visual reports were not even mentioned. They were written off as "unusual coincidences" in which some radar anomaly "just happened" to be on the same bearing as a light (star, unidentified airplane, etc), and the anomaly "just happened" to move in the same apparent flight path as the light that being observed by a pilot or ground observer. I always maintained that since we had a goodly number of these reports, probabilities were being pushed quite far if all of them were written off as coincidences.

I could go on about this for hours--

I haven't heard anything that could be called reliable about radio or TV interference and reported UFO's but I'd be interested in hearing more about it

Yours truly  
Edward J. Ruppelt<sup>28</sup>

With the new wave of sightings in 1957, Ruppelt's book gained wide readership. Although after NICAP stirred up the waters and the Air Force cracked down even harder on UFOs, Ruppelt chose to leave "the UFO controversy."<sup>29</sup>

Several events led to Ruppelt's statement. First, he had become agitated because Keyhoe and NICAP were not only pushing hard for Congressional review of the Air Force's conduct in UFO investigations—but it seemed that a formal hearing was imminent in 1958. This infuriated Ruppelt, who considered it bad timing with the social problems going on in America. Civil rights had become an inflammatory issue beginning in September of 1957 when President Eisenhower was forced to order the 101st Airborne into Little Rock to allow nine black students their opportunity to an equal education under desegregation.

Ruppelt's own book tells us that during November of 1957—before a more well-known unofficial hearing the next year—the United States Senate Committee on Government Operations began an inquiry concerning UFOs.<sup>30</sup> Admiral Hillenkoetter also announced publicly that "two committees on Capitol Hill" were then investigating the UFO controversy.<sup>31</sup> Ruppelt was called to give

testimony before Senate committee members in November 1957. It must have been during that time he came to the opinion that the uproar which NICAP was generating was unwarranted.

He considered this especially true in light of the many other issues then at hand. A serious intensifying of the Cold War after the launch of Sputnik-I on October 4th headed that list. That feat shocked American scientific and government officials, who feared that Western rocket technology had been forever surpassed. The Soviets' early leap into space did more to cause a reevaluation of American science and education than any other single event in our history.

America was changing—and changing fast. UFOs were being pushed further out of the mainstream of serious discussion. Yet, some like Keyhoe, who dedicated themselves to a serious although at times over-enthusiastic study of the subject, would not let the issue die.

The pressure of pending Congressional hearings had led the Air Force to believe it was to some extent Ruppelt's writings which had contributed to the situation. This, in combination with other more vocal and speculative books like Keyhoe's, was thought to have over exaggerated the importance of the UFO phenomenon. Ruppelt's work was viewed as a "kiss and tell book." This was largely due to the fact that by the summer of 1958 Keyhoe had drummed up even more interest within Congress.

About this same time Ohio representative John E. Henderson began urging congressional oversight. Henderson, to Ruppelt's consternation, sent a list of questions to the Air Force—based on his book. The Air Force in turn was forced to provide a briefing for Henderson and other interested congressmen. At this meeting the full text of the Robertson

Panel was first revealed and subsequently impressed Congressional leaders that UFOs could possibly be exploited by the Soviets to slow American response time in the event of an attack. As a result, most Congressmen became much less eager to respond to the growing demand from their constituents for open hearings on the subject of UFOs.

For that reason the one House (unofficial) hearing conducted on UFOs in 1958 became closed to the public and went unrecorded barring some minor transcripts. Held on August 8, John McCormack, a strong NICAP advocate, chaired a session of the House Subcommittee on Atmospheric Phenomena. (This was part of the House Select Committee on Astronautics and Space Exploration and was more of a briefing by the Air Force to Congressional members than an actual hearing.)

After interviews with Air Force officials the Congressional members felt satisfied, and in fact complimented the military on its approach to UFO investigations.<sup>32</sup> One reason for the glowing recommendations arose from the fact that the subcommittee merely took the Air Force at their word and undertook no private fact finding of their own. Captain George T. Gregory, Harding's successor and Friend's predecessor at Blue Book, did most of the testifying. He gave no indication of the lackluster manner in which ATIC was then handling UFO reports. Name dropping of scientists like Dr. Hynek were made to legitimize their "research." This is ironic because Dr. Hynek, who had by then become nationally known due to his work on satellite tracking with the Smithsonian project, quietly began pushing for a more intense study at Blue Book. Francis A. Arcier, General Watson's former personal science advisor and now ATIC's chief scientist, also had some influence. He

either appeared in person or had his name used to debunk UFOs. This is also ironic because confidential sources have indicated to the authors that he was privately very interested in the phenomenon. Gregory also drove home the point that UFO groups like NICAP were exaggerating the situation and threatened national security just as the Robertson Panel warned they could.<sup>33</sup>

It is more than likely that after Ruppelt's own testimony to congressmen the previous year, he *first* learned the *real* reason the Air Force was cracking down on UFOs. Just as during these latter 1958 hearings, it would have centered around the fear of the phenomenon generating hysteria and in turn disrupting national defense networks. Whether he was made privy to the fact that this was actually the real thesis behind the Robertson Panel conclusions and the true reason the CIA initiated a policy of debunking via the Air Force and key personalities within the media and entertainment field is unknown. But this does seem to be the point in time when Ruppelt had decided that he had had enough of UFOs—as reflected in the following three pieces of correspondence to and from Major Donald Keyhoe:

April 15, 1958

Dear Don,

Thanks for your letters. They were interesting but I have no comments. As I told you, I'm completely out of the UFO business.

I still believe you think that someone is forcing me out but this is not true. As long as the UFO subject stayed on a conversational plane I was willing to go along with it. But when it is pushed so far that a Senate sub-committee is devoting their valuable time and effort to it, I bow out. I think the chances of UFO's being real are a billion to one and there are other problems in this world that are far more important for a Senate sub-committee to look into.

According to the news you people have been having a rough winter. We've had a lot of rain but can use it.

Best of luck.

Yours truly  
Edward J. Ruppelt\*

July 17, 1958

Dear Ed:

I meant to write and thank you for your April 15th letter, but have been snowed under, as usual.

Since you wrote, I have received copies of letters you sent to Leon Davidson and others—other members of NICAP—and in one of them you state flatly that you now believe there is nothing to UFOs but balloons, meteors, mirages, etc., which is of course the usual AF explanation.

I confess I am puzzled, because this is so completely at variance with your book. I consider and have always considered that your book was a careful, honest job, and that you were completely convinced that UFOs were real—although you gave no hint as to what you thought they were. (At least not a hint which could be pinned down, though several people have said that you seemed definitely on the interplanetary side.)

Also, on the program, I'VE GOT A SECRET, you will recall that you said you were convinced the other men—that is, Chiles, Whitted, Mayher, and others mentioned—had actually seen something—and you emphasized the fact that ATIC had been unable to explain 20 percent of sightings. Going back to your TRUE magazine article I also recall that you said if the the UFOs are real they are interplanetary. These statements would seem to sum up to a definite conclusion.

Also, during the November sighting flurry in 1957 you told the press that the Air Force should not clam up but should release the facts and should go into a more thorough investigation. You debunked the temperature inversion mirage explanation offered by Menzel and also many times by the Air Force.

All in all, this seemed to add up to the fact that you firmly believed UFOs were real. Since you had access to a mass of evidence from 1951 up until the time you finished your book,—considerable evidence of course since then—I cannot understand why you would suddenly reverse your opinion because of two or three visits to ATIC since that time.

I know that if you have been advised, pressured, or ordered to stop talking about UFOs or to reverse your stand you could not admit this to me or probably to anyone else.

I can readily understand how it could come about and I fully sympathize if that is the case. Naturally your value to Northrop hinges to some extent upon your friendly connections with the Air Force, particularly at Dayton. However, this also was true in 1956 when your book was published, so that, if you have been pressured into silence, then obviously there has been some new development causing such pressure. Now, I would like to tell you of two or

three developments of which you may now know.

First, the Air Force is now flatly stating that they issued a disclaimer of fact when they cleared your book for security. I was given this information by Security and Review via the telephone. I also have it in a letter signed by Major Tacker. I have heard that it is being repeated through Washington newspapermen. This, of course, is not surprising, but I think you should know the exact situation.

And here is something more serious. A NICAP member who has been working in Cleveland has produced three signed statements which charge the Air Force with withholding facts about UFOs. Two were signed by Civil Defense officials and one by GOC official. The NICAP member made a tape recording for a radio broadcast and the radio station urged that this material be given to the Cleveland Press. The NICAP member has informed me by phone that the editor of the Press said that the Air Force has denied the key points in your book, especially a mention of the four documents we have frequently discussed. They also told the editor, according to our member, that you have been removed from active duty because of inefficiency, incompetence, and a wrong approach to the investigation. The actual words were a lot tougher and I am awaiting signed affidavits from the member of NICAP and two other witnesses.

As you must realize, these statements could form the basis for a law suit for slander. I shall send you copies of the material when it arrives. It appears to me that they are making a determined effort to cut you down and destroy you as an authority on the subject of UFOs. I can also tell you that there is an organized campaign to debunk the UFO story. It is being carried on at high levels and involves several persons on Capitol Hill, and also some top figures in the entertainment field and the writing field.

I am not urging you to do anything about this. If you wish to remain silent in spite of what seems to be an attempt to smear you, then I can only believe that you are indeed under very heavy pressure. If you care to write me confidentially, I shall certainly respect your confidence. You may address me by registered letter, marked personal and I assure you no one else will see the contents. If you plan to be in Washington in the near future, I certainly hope we can get together privately.

It may be that I can be of some hope directly or indirectly if the Air Force does step up its campaign to discredit you. I am assuming that there is such a campaign because of the oral and written statements and because of the Cleveland incident. I am utterly convinced, as before, that your book was completely accurate and that it embarrassed the Air Force and that it has to be denied so long as the Air Force con-

tinues the policy of secrecy. Aside from the UFO business, I hope that everything is going well for you and your family, and I do hope that we shall have a chance to get together before long, even if you say that you are unable to go into the UFO subject in any way.

With best regards.  
Sincerely yours,  
Donald E. Keyhoe Major USMC\*

July 30, 1958

Dear Don,

Thanks for your letter of July 17th. Sorry I've taken so long to answer but I've been busy.

I was surprised to know that you weren't aware of my personal opinions regarding the UFO's. I have always been convinced that UFO's were nothing more than reports of airplanes, balloons, astronomical phenomena, etc. I'm sure that anyone who worked on Project Blue Book with me will confirm this. I was always a little hesitant to express my personal opinions because our orders on Project Blue Book were to carry out an unbiased investigation. We did our best to base any conclusions we made solely on the facts we had. This was the reason about 20% of our reports were concluded to be "unknowns." Incidentally, and I'm sure I've told you before, had we injected personal opinion into our investigations of UFO sightings we could have "solved" every one.

In the past I've said that "people are seeing something," meaning they weren't having hallucinations. I still go along with this, but these somethings people report seeing are airplanes, balloons, etc. The definition of a hallucination is the "perception of objects with no reality arising from disorders of the nervous system." I don't believe our pilots are suffering from nervous disorders.

My absolute refusal to become embroiled in any UFO controversy is not because of any one trying to intimidate me. It's simply a matter of not being interested. To be very frank, I'm too busy with other things. In addition, I do not condone any attempt to get Congress mixed up in UFO's. They have too many more important problems to solve. Regarding my book, I had my choice of injecting my own personal opinions or writing a straight, factual account of what I knew about UFO history. I didn't think anyone would be interested in my personal opinions so I chose the latter approach. The Air Force seems to dispute some of the things I said but this doesn't bother me. I can't see that it's serious enough to spend time getting my records photostated, writing letters, etc. Besides, Doubleday has a file of letters from Air Force Intelligence people who were familiar with Blue Book and who received copies of the book. They were very happy with the book and

most of them volunteered the fact that it was accurate. Doubleday is happy and as far as I'm concerned this is all that counts.

I find it difficult to believe that Major Tacker is telling newspapermen that I was "removed from active duty because of inefficiency, incompetence and a wrong approach to the UFO investigation." I have copies of letters of commendation, a copy of a memo from General Garland asking me to reconsider leaving the Air Force and a final letter of commendation the General gave me when I did leave. I agree, if the major did say this and you have documented evidence he did, it could be grounds for a libel suit.

Today's paper says Dr. Carl Jung has concluded that UFO's are "real." This is an interesting comment from such a famous person but I still don't believe it. Maybe I'll have to eat my words some day but until then I stick by my present convictions.

I haven't been in Washington for some time and doubt if I'll be there soon. If I do come east I'll give you a call.

Yours truly  
Edward J. Ruppelt\*\*

Although Ruppelt had his fill of the controversy generated by NICAP, he did not overly criticize Keyhoe. He wrote in his second edition:

NICAP Director Don Keyhoe has taken a beating, being accused of profiteering, trying to make headlines, and other minor social crimes. But personally I doubt this. Keyhoe is simply convinced that UFO's are from outer space and he's a dedicated man.<sup>37</sup>

Ruppelt had written the 1956 edition of *Report on Unidentified Flying Objects* to detail what was then a story with great national interest. At the time, his approach *perhaps* reflected his honest but naive Iowa farm boy heritage. Ruppelt never dreamed that his story would offend Air Force officials as the years progressed. Nor did he think it could ever become so controversial. Ruppelt above all else had taken pride in service to his country. Being a recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross in WWII, he had risked his life for his country in long hazardous B-29 missions out of India as a lead bombardier in the 677th Squa-

dron, 444th Bomb Group, 58th Wing of the 20th Air Force.<sup>38</sup> Later he flew off the small Pacific Island of Tinian where Ruppelt became involved in some of the worst low-level fire bombing missions over Osaka, Japan.<sup>39</sup> After his death, his wife commented that Ruppelt had confided in her that the Air Force had personally expressed its displeasure to him over his book. This apparently did not happen until the late 1950's—during the controversy generated by NICAP. But it obviously left Ruppelt deeply disappointed.<sup>40</sup>

By 1960, with a failing heart condition, he was also emotionally heart sick over what Air Force officials had felt he had done. He was certainly feed up with UFOs. Nevertheless he had not lost his taste for writing and recording history. This letter details what Ruppelt was working on just before his death. Ironically, in his introduction of himself he seems almost ashamed to make any mention of his landmark and world wide respected work on UFOs.

January 22, 1959

Dear Mr. de Hart,

My hobby is the history of the U.S. Air Mail Service and I'm in the process of collecting original narratives from the pioneers in hopes of doing a book someday.

In my research I've come across the following references:

1. The New York Times, September 17, 1918: "D.C. de Hart makes New York to Washington air mail trip in 1 hour and 23 minutes."

2. The New York Times, September 18, 1918: D.C. Hart makes the New York to Washington air mail trip on time despite storms."

3. Who's Who In World Aviation: "Citation from British Attache and Post Office Department for first flight in 80-mile gale on March 29, 1919."

If it wouldn't be too much of an imposition, I would be very happy to hear more about these flights in as much detail as your time permits. Could you describe these flights? What kind of troubles did you have? What kind of an airplane were you flying? What kind of navigation aids (if any) did you have? What was known about weather flying in those days?

I would appreciate anything else of in-

terest you might have to tell about your experience in the Air Mail Service.

Thank you.

Yours truly

Edward J. Ruppelt<sup>41</sup>

It is the authors' belief that Ruppelt had not lost all of his interest or objectivity in UFOs. Of all things, he even attended the eight annual "Giant Rock" contactee convention in 1960.<sup>42</sup> Who knows why he went. Obviously, Ruppelt had retained a natural curiosity about UFOs and the people who followed them

Apparently Ruppelt had quite a satirical wit to him. So the famous concluding word "Myth," which he so strikingly used in the very last line of his final edition on UFOs may not mean what many take it to mean. Myth, after all, has two very distinctly different meanings. Yes, most associate myth with fallacy. But another meaning infers legend. Certainly, most will agree that the history of UFOs has today become one of LEGEND as this last excerpt suggest:

November 26, 1957

Mr. Carlos H. Rolff

Eli Pueblo

Buenos Aires

Dear Mr. Rolff

Thank you very much for your letter . . . I personally have never seen any evidence to convince me that UFO's are real objects. However, I have talked to enough very responsible people who have seen some type of object and are convinced that they are an interplanetary vehicle that I am still willing to be convinced . . .

Yours Truly

Edward Ruppelt<sup>42</sup>

These authors, along with the personal wishes of the Ruppelt family, thank Captain Ruppelt for his contribution to Ufology and his devotion to the United States Air Force.

<sup>1</sup> Ruppelt's personal papers, File R027.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Professor Michael Swords, 25 June, 31 July 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Ruppelt's personal papers, File R022, courtesy of Professor Michael Swords, J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS).

<sup>4</sup> Ruppelt's personal papers, File R016.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., File R045.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., R076.

<sup>7</sup> To monitor the Russian developments in space after the October 4, 1957, launch of Sputnik-I, the United States called on the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory at Harvard for help. They had already been utilizing the expertise of one of its most valued scientific advisors, Dr. Hynek, who mobilized the aid of many amateur and professional astronomers under Operation Moonwatch. Because no space surveillance radar systems had been deployed on any scale, Hynek's army of astronomers were the primary resource available to keep track of the early satellites. Even the famous northern defense radar network known as DEW had not been completed yet—making North America very blind to space-based objects until the late 1950s. Dr. Hynek served as associate director of the Smithsonian project. As his Operation Moonwatch mobilized, their trained observers would on later occasions note some UFO activity. More importantly, they were able to weed out UFO reports from known sightings of the early Sputnik orbiters.

<sup>8</sup> Ruppelt's personal papers, File R076.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ruppelt's personal papers, File R042.

<sup>11</sup> Richard H. Hall, ed. *The UFO Evidence* (Washington, DC: National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena, 1964).

<sup>12</sup> *UFO Investigator* (July 1957): 28, 30.

<sup>13</sup> Edward J. Ruppelt, *Report on Unidentified Flying Objects* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1956), p. 25.

<sup>14</sup> David Michael Jacobs, *The UFO Controversy In America* (Bloomington, IN: IN University Press, 1975), p. 284.

<sup>15</sup> Ruppelt's personal papers, File R042.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., File R047.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., R075.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., R076.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Professor Michael Swords, 25 June, 31 July 1999.

<sup>20</sup> Telephone interview with Henry Metscher by Michael Hall, 4 February 1999; Personal interview with Col. Nathan Rosengarten by Michael Hall at the USAF Museum, 13 March 1999; Telephone interview with Max Futch by Michael Hall, 13 June 1998; Personal interview with Victor H. Bilek by Michael Hall at the USAF Museum, 29 July 1999; Telephone interview with Victor H. Bilek by Michael Hall, 22 July 1999; and Telephone interview with Kerry Rothstein by Michael Hall, 13 July 1999; and Letter to Michael Hall from Dewey Fournet, 16 August 1999.

<sup>21</sup> Letter to Michael Hall from Dewey Fournet, 16 August 1999.

<sup>22</sup> Ruppelt's personal papers, File R042.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., R086.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., R039.

<sup>26</sup> This case refers to the famous Chiles-Whitted Sighting of July 24th, 1948 when Eastern Airlines DC-3 Flight 576 took evasive action at 2:45 A.M. EST to avoid an air-to-air collision with a UFO! The frightened crew were at 5,000 feet and 20 miles southwest of Montgomery, Alabama, when the unknown flashed out of the northeast. It came as close as 700 feet to the right of their aircraft at a speed of at least 800 miles per hour but produced no propwash as a meteor might be expected to cause. The object then pulled up and flew into some light, broken clouds at 6,000 feet. But barring those patchy clouds, it was a bright moonlit night. In fact, it was so clear that the pilots, Captain Clarence S. Chiles and First Officer John B. Whitted, had an exceptionally clear view of the UFO. They described it as a 100 foot long, wingless cylindrical-shaped object. The craft appeared to have a "deep blue glow" to the underside, with "two rows of windows from which bright lights glowed" and a "50 foot trail of orange red flame" shooting out the back. One passenger on board, Clarence L. McKelvie, saw the object and described it as a "strange, eerie streak of light, very intense."

<sup>27</sup> Ruppelt's personal papers.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., R094.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., R044.

<sup>30</sup> Ruppelt, *Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*, p. 253.

<sup>31</sup> "Charges Cover-up On Flying Saucers." *Pittsburgh-Sun Telegraph*, 10 January 1958.

<sup>32</sup> Letter from John E. Henderson to Secretary of Defense Neil H. McElroy, 8 May 1958; and Major General W.P. Fisher, Director of Legislative Liaison, Memorandum for the Under Secretary of the Air Force, "Air Force Briefing for Subcommittee on Atmospheric Phenomena, House Select Committee on Astronautics and Space Exploration, on Unidentified Flying Objects," 11 August 1958, U.S. Air Force Historical Agency, Maxwell AFB, Montgomery, Alabama.

<sup>33</sup> George T. Gregory, Transcript, "UFO Program," 8 August 1958, U.S. Air Force Historical Agency, Maxwell AFB, Montgomery, Alabama.

<sup>34</sup> Ruppelt's personal papers, File R042.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.s

<sup>37</sup> Ruppelt, *Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*, p. 253.

<sup>38</sup> Ruppelt's personal papers, File R088.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., R090.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Professor Michael Swords, 25 June, 31 July 1999.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., R026.

<sup>42</sup> Tape recorded notes of Edward Ruppelt on the Giant Rock convention, courtesy of Professor Michael Swords, J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS).

<sup>43</sup> Ruppelt's personal papers, File R093.