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CRASHES OF UFOs IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Though reports and rumors of crashed UFOs have circulated widely since the beginning of the modern era, following **Kenneth Arnold's sighting** in 1947, it is less well known that comparable stories were being told over a century ago.

Giants from another world. The earliest known crash-landing of an extraterrestrial spacecraft is said to have taken place in 1862. The report was published as a letter to the editor in the *Houston Daily Post* for May 2, 1897, just as a wave of turn-of-the-century reports of mystery **airship sightings** (usually though not always assumed to be of secret terrestrial inventions) was winding down. The letter, written by John Leander of El Campo, Texas, and dated April 29, reads in part:

> There is an old sailor living now in El Campo with his daughter who has proclaimed that he had not only seen the vessel but had actually seen people from another world. His immediate relatives have known of the circumstances for some years, but he says the story has never been published. The name of the old gentleman is Mr. Oleson, and for many years he was a boatswain in the Danish navy, but at the time he saw the airship he was a mate on the Danish brig *Christine.*
>
> In September 1862, the *Christine* was wrecked in the Indian ocean on a desert rock or island several miles in size. This rock is set down on charts of the ocean, but is not mentioned in geographies.
>
> A furious storm had raged for hours and the ship was swept far from her course when this immense rock loomed ahead amid the deafening roar of the breakers. A great wave dashed Mr. Oleson high on the rocks and for a long time he was insensible. When he recovered he found five of his companions had been saved, though they were more or less injured, and one man died of his injuries.
>
> They collected their faculties and found themselves confronted by starvation, since there was not a vestige of vegetation or animal life on the rock. They found plenty of fresh rain water in holes, which revived them very much.
>
> They had given up all hope and had clustered at the base of a cliff waiting for the awful end, while the wind howled and the furious waves dashed on the rock.
>
> Suddenly another terror was added to the horrors of the scene, for high in the air they saw what seemed to be an immense ship driven, uncontrolled in the elements. It was driving straight toward the frightened mariners, who cried aloud in their despair. Fortunately, however, a whirl of wind changed the course of the monster and it crashed against the cliff a few hundred yards from the miserable sailors.
>
> Speechless with fear, they crept toward the wreck. It seemed a vessel as large as a modern battleship, but the machinery was so crushed that they could form no idea as to how the power was applied to the immense wings or sails, for they could plainly discern the fact that it was propelled by four huge wings. Strange implements and articles of furniture could be

seen jumbled in an almost shapeless mass. They found in metal boxes covered with strange characters what they afterward discovered to be very wholesome and palatable food which, with the water in the rocks, saved them from immediate death.

But their horror was intensified when they found the bodies of more than a dozen men dressed in garments of strange fashion and texture. The bodies were a dark bronze color, but the strangest feature of all was the immense size of the men. They had no means of measuring their bodies, but estimated them to be more than 12 feet high. Their hair and beard were also long and as soft and silky as the hair of an infant.

They found tools of almost every kind but they were so large that few of them could be used. They were stupefied with fright and one man, driven insane, jumped from the cliff into the boiling waves and was seen no more.

The others fled in horror from the fearful sight, and it was two days before hunger could drive them back to the wreck. After eating heartily of the strange food, they summoned courage to drag the gigantic bodies to the cliff and tumble them over.

Then with feverish haste they built a raft of the wreck, erected sails and gladly quit the horrible island. The sea had become as smooth as a lake and the experienced mariners made rapid progress. They tried as best they could to steer for Vergulen island, but fortunately in about sixty hours fell in with a Russian vessel headed for Australia. Three more of the old man's companions succumbed to their injuries and the awful mental strain and died before reaching port.

Fortunately as a partial confirmation of the truth of his story, Mr. Oleson took from one of the bodies a finger ring of immense size. It is made of a compound of metals unknown to any jeweler who has seen it, and is set with two reddish stones, the names of which are unknown to anyone who has ever examined it. The ring was taken from a thumb of the owner and measures 2 1/4 inches in diameter.

Now, Mr. Editor, many people believe those airship stories to be fakes. That may be so, but the story now told for the first time is strictly true. While Mr. Oleson is an old man, he still possesses every faculty and has the highest respect for truth and veracity. Quite a number of our best citizens, among them Mr. Henry Hahn, Mr. H. C. Carleton, Green Hill and S. Porter, saw the ring and heard the old man's story.

There is no reason to believe this story is anything other than melodramatic fantasy. It employs such standard devices of nineteenth-century adventure fiction as a shipwreck and marooning on a remote (and unmapped) rocky island (as Herman Melville says of Queequeg's fictional island home in *Moby-Dick* [1851], "It is not down on any map; true places never are"). Then there is the remarkable coincidence of a spaceship crash at the same unlikely location, followed by madness, suicide, and eventual escape via raft constructed from parts of the alien wreckage so fortuitously provided. The final detail is characteristic of much period science fiction (for example the pterodactyl that is freed at Queen's Hall in London at the conclusion of Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* [1912]), in which "proof" of the extraordinary experience is produced and doubters are silenced.

An alternative interpretation of the story's genesis has been suggested by Swedish writer Sven Rosén, who contends that the tale has its origins in archaic Scandinavian folklore. He writes that according to traditional belief, trolls—once thought to be giants—were mostly wiped out in a series of violent storms in the seventeenth century. Subsequent tales recounted discoveries of strangely clad, dark-skinned giants found dead after storms. "The folklore explanation is that these beings were killed by lightning because 'God uses thunder against the crew of Satan,' as one nineteenth-century informant said," according to Rosén, who adds that in the pre-Christian era the trolls' enemy was Thor, the god of thunder, who often attacked his enemies with lightning (Rosén, 1990).

Nebraska spaceship. The second earliest known UFO-crash claim was published in early June 1884, in the *Nebraska Nugget*, a weekly newspaper published in

Holdrege. As the story went, on June 6 a remarkable vehicle crashed near Benkelman in remote Dundy County, in the south-central part of the state.

Cowboys engaged in rounding up cattle heard a "terrifying whirring noise over their heads" and looked up to see a blazing object plunging to earth. It fell out of sight on the other side of a bank. When the cowboys got to where they could see it, they observed "fragments of cog-wheels, and other pieces of machinery lying on the ground, scattered in the path made by the aerial visitor, glowing with heat so intense as to scorch the grass for a long distance around each fragment and make it impossible for one to approach it." One witness, Alf Williamson, was overcome by the heat and collapsed senseless to the ground, his face blistered and his hair "singed to a crisp."

Unable to approach the craft, the *Nugget* related, "the party turned back on its trail. The sand was fused to an unknown depth over a space of 20 feet wide by 80 feet long, and the melted stuff was still bubbling and hissing. Between this and the final resting place there were several other like spots where it had come in contact with the ground, but none so well marked."

The cowboys left to secure medical help for Williamson.

Word of the strange visitor spread quickly, and as night fell, many people came to see the phenomenon, which continued to glow. The following morning, June 7, a party led by district brand inspector E. W. Rawlins arrived on the scene.

By this time, the *Nugget* reported, "the smaller portions of the vast machinery had cooled so that they could be approached, but not handled. One piece that looked like the blade of a propeller screw, of a metal in appearance like brass, about 16 inches wide, three inches thick and three and a half feet long, was picked up on a spade. It would not weigh more than five pounds, but appeared as strong and compact as any metal. A fragment of a wheel with a milled rim, apparently having a diameter of seven or eight feet, was also picked up. It seemed to be of the same material and had the same remarkable lightness. The aerolite, or whatever it is, seems to be about 50 or 60 feet long, cylindrical, and about 10 or 12 feet in diameter."

On June 8 the *Daily State Journal*, published in Lincoln, reprinted the story. Elsewhere in the issue an editorial note says of the story, "Unless the alleged facts are greatly magnified or distorted, this unusual object of wonder must be an air vessel belonging originally to some other planet which sailed too far from its orb and after wandering in space has at last been caught by the attraction of the earth and drawn to it. Further investigations will be hastily pursued and awaited with the liveliest interest."

Two days later the newspaper printed its follow-up, apparently from the same anonymous Benkelman correspondent. The story bore this title: "THE MAGICAL METEOR/ It Dissolves Like a Drop of Dew Before the Morning Sun/ The Most Mysterious Element of the Strange Phenomenon." The correspondent reported that he and a dozen other persons had seen the vehicle's remains vanish in a blinding rainstorm; the "queer object," he wrote, "melted, dissolved by the water like a spoonful of salt." For the benefit of slow-witted readers who had yet to get the joke (which evidently was that salt was the substance with which the story should be ingested), he added that though the unfortunate Williamson seemed to have been permanently blinded, "otherwise, he does not appear to be seriously injured."

By the next day the *Journal* editorial writer, who earlier had all but declared the story authentic ("The details are given with a fullness and a particularity that almost command belief"), was treating it as a joke: "It is believed the aerial visitor that recently descended from the sky in Dundy county was the democratic candidate for president the bourbons [opponents of the prohibition of alcohol] have been looking for. Its dissolution by contact with water would appear to support the theory."

In 1964 the (ostensibly serious) original story, though not the (clearly comic) sequel, was rediscovered by a Holdrege man, who sent a copy to the *Omaha World-Herald*. Reporter Russ Toler asked his mother, Ida Toler, a member of the Dundy County Historical Society, to investigate. Mrs. Toler, born in 1897 and a lifelong resident of the county, interviewed old-timers but could find no one who remembered it, though John Ellis, on whose ranch the event supposedly occurred, did exist. "I grew up hearing pioneer sto-

ries but never did I heard this one," she said. In her view the tale grew out of a "dull day at the newspaper office.... They needed a story so some person concocted this tale" (Toler, 1986). Nebraska historian and folklorist Roger Welsch also conducted inquiries in the area and found that "nobody had the foggiest notion" about it (Welsch, 1986).

An epidemic of crashes. Newspaper pranks as well as other kinds of hoaxes would play a significant role in the rash of crash reports published during the airship scare of 1896 and 1897. Some examples:

Stanford Heights, California, December 3, 1896: Late in the evening occupants of a dairy farm heard a loud noise, followed by cries for help. When they went outside to investigate, they found the wreckage of an airship in a gulch, along with the vehicle's two injured occupants, one of whom identified himself as J. D. deGear of San Francisco. DeGear would not identify the airship's inventor but denied that the wrecked airship was the one that had been observed over San Francisco recently. After examining the wreckage closely, one man at the site noted that the contrivance "had been freshly painted, but the paint was worn off, indicating that it had been dragged over the ground some distance.... [F]rom the flimsy appearance of the machine, I came to the conclusion that the whole thing was a fake, and that the airship had been dragged to that place" (*San Francisco Call*, December 4). A rival newspaper reported that "under close cross-questioning" deGear confessed that the bogus airship "had been hauled to the crest of the hill on a wagon, dumped over and dragged down into the gulch where it was found" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, December 4). The stunt apparently was cooked up by deGear and the director of a local amusement park.

Bethany, Missouri, early April 1897: Someone signing himself "A True Fakir" wrote that a collision between an airship and a flagpole had led the former and its two occupants to disaster. The bodies were so mangled as to render identification "next to impossible.... From letters found in the pockets of each it is believed that the men originally came either from San Francisco or Omaha" (*St. Joseph* [Missouri] *Daily Herald*, April 9).

Rhodes, Iowa, April 9: At 11 P.M. the appearance of a rapidly-approaching bright light brought a crowd into the street. As the object got closer, it got louder, its machinery making sounds "as loud as a heavy train of cars." Suddenly it descended and plunged into the "reservoir of the C[hicago], M[ilwaukee] & St. P[aul] railway, which is almost a lake, covering about eight acres of land. No pen can describe what followed. The boiling lava from Vesuvius pouring into the sea could only equal it. The light was so large and had created so much heat that the horrible hissing which occurred when the monster plunged into the lake could be heard for miles, and the water of the reservoir was so hot that the naked hand could not be held in it. As soon as the wreck is raised out of the water a full description of the machine will be sent" (*Burlington* [Iowa] *Hawk-Eye*, April 14). There was, however, no further word.

Near Lanark, Illinois, April 9: At 4 A.M., as a blizzard raged, an on-board explosion caused a cigar-shaped airship to fly out of control and plow into the ground near the home of Johann Fliegeltoub. Two of the occupants were killed. A third, dressed in robes "after the fashion of the Greeks in the time of Christ," shouted hysterically before lapsing into unconsciousness. Fliegeltoub wasted no time charging one-dollar admission to curiosity-seekers who wished to view the largely intact airship in his barnyard. When a correspondent came to the scene, he learned that the pilot was being kept in a room in the house. After fortifying himself with morphine and cocaine to steady his nerves, the writer entered the room, where he found the aeronaut still unconscious; he noted that the stranger "wore a white tunic reaching to his knees and on his feet were sandals.... The tunic was embroidered with a coat of arms over the breast, a shield with a bar sinister of link sausages and bearing a ham sandwich rampant." A few minutes later the aeronaut revived and told the correspondent ("in a language that I at once knew to be Volapuk") that he and his companions were from Mars. The two went out to the yard to examine the airship, which the Martian quickly repaired. He then retrieved the bodies of his fellow extraterrestrials, shouted farewell, and sailed away. The correspondent retired to a Lanark hotel and "sat up all night smoking opium and eating hasheesh to get in condition to write this dispatch" (*Sterling* [Illinois] *Evening Gazette*, April 13).

Pavilion, Michigan, April 11: A fast-moving airship

exploded as it passed over the town in the early morning hours. The next morning part of an electric device was found; elsewhere a "propeller blade of some very light material, in a partially fused condition," turned up. Later, when carpenters shingling a house came to work, they discovered that the roof was covered with "minute fragments which had in some instances penetrated the shingles and entered the boards beneath" (*Detroit Evening News*, April 13).

Decatur, Illinois, April 14: In the evening, as he was walking to the barn, a man noticed a bright moving light in the sky. He paid little attention to it, entered the building and sat down to milk a cow. Just as he was finishing, a loud crash sounded and much of the roof was ripped off. The frightened cow kicked the man in the head, knocking him out. After he was restored to consciousness, he told his wife he had glimpsed the airship as it plowed into the roof, then managed to sail on (*Decatur Evening Republican*, April 15).

Humboldt, Tennessee, mid-April: Riding along a stretch of the Forked Deer River, Sam McLeary saw an airship which had crashed in the woods. Its one occupant was encased in ice, apparently because his machine had "reached too high altitudes, and its manager had succumbed to the pitiless cold" of the upper atmosphere (*Nashville American*, April 18).

Highland Station, Kansas, April 15: "[T]he airship passed over that town ... and ... owing to an explosion of chemicals, the ship sank to the ground. Underneath the mass of debris, a man was found groaning, and unconscious. When sufficiently restored to talk, he said that his name was Pedro Sanchez of Cuba. He refused to tell anything further, shipped it to St. Joe and then went to Omaha" (*Atchison* [Kansas] *Daily Globe*, April 17).

Near Jefferson, Iowa, April 16: An airship plunged to earth, leaving a large hole in the ground (*Omaha Daily Bee*, April 17).

The Aurora Martian. By far the most famous nineteenth-century UFO crash—no other even comes close—is the one that is supposed to have occurred at Aurora, Texas, on April 17, 1897. Because this story was revived, with much hoopla, in the 1960s and 1970s, it needs to be told in detail.

It first appeared in the April 19 issue of the *Dallas Morning News*. A short account, datelined Aurora (in Wise County 45 miles northwest of Dallas) and bylined S. E. Haydon, reported that at 6 A.M. two days earlier, residents saw an airship flying in a northerly direction over the town. It was traveling so close to the ground that observers thought it might be experiencing mechanical difficulty. "It sailed gradually over the public square and when it reached the north part of town collided with the tower of Judge Proctor's windmill and went to pieces with a terrific explosion," according to Haydon, "scattering debris over several acres of ground, wrecking the windmill and tower and destroying the judge's flower garden." In the wreckage searchers found the "badly disfigured" body of a being whom one T. J. Weems, identified as the "United States signal service officer at this place and an authority on astronomy," declared to be a "native of the planet Mars." Papers found with the body contained undecipherable "hieroglyphics."

Haydon's account continues:

> The ship was too badly wrecked to form any conclusion as to its construction or motive power. It was built of an unknown metal, resembling somewhat a mixture of aluminum and silver, and it must have weighed several tons. The town is full of people today who are viewing the wreck and gathering specimens of the strange metal from the debris. The pilot's funeral will take place at noon tomorrow.

Neither the *Morning News* nor any other paper published a follow-up, and there is no evidence that anyone took the story seriously at the time. The *News* was treating the airship scare as a hilarious joke, printing one preposterous story after another. The day before the Aurora report appeared, the paper had taken note of a Kaufman County airship which resembled a "Chinese flying dragon ... a monster breathing red fire through its nostrils.... The legs were the propellers." The same issue told of a Farmersville "eye witness" who saw "three men in the ship and ... heard them singing 'Nearer My God to Thee' and ... distributing temperance tracts." A few paragraphs later it is alleged that an airship that flew over Waxahachie "seemed to be operated by a woman who was running a patent [sic] resembling a sewing machine."

The story was forgotten until June 1966, when Frank Masquelette of the *Houston Post* rediscovered it, along with other Texas airship reports of the period. Through the editor of the *Wise County Messenger* Masquelette was able to verify that a Judge J. S. Proctor had lived in Aurora in 1897. The first mention of the Aurora story in the UFO literature followed not long after, in an article by Donald B. Hanlon in the September/October 1966 issue of England's ***Flying Saucer Review***. In introducing the story, Hanlon remarked that he was "taking into consideration the various negative and positive factors inherent in the 1897 reports" and presenting the tale "cautiously."

At the request of J. Allen Hynek, the Northwestern University astronomer who then served as the chief scientific consultant for the Air Force's **Project Blue Book**, William F. Driskell of Dallas went to Aurora, by then barely more than a few houses. Driskell talked with a man named Brawley Oates, whose house and service station sat on what had been Judge Proctor's property. Oates said he knew little about the story but referred Driskell to Oscar Lowry of Newark, a few miles down the road.

Driskell subsequently wrote Hynek:

> [Lowry] was about 11 years old when this happened.... [He] said that Aurora was a busy little town until the railroads put down their new tracks and neglected to include Aurora in their plans. As a result, the town began to diminish as people moved to be near the railroad. E. [sic] E. Haydon was a cotton buyer and writer who lived in Aurora and wanted to do something to help keep people in town and to make it a tourist attraction. He got the idea, I suppose, from the actual sightings he had read about and made up his story. The T. J. Weems that [sic] was supposed to have been a U.S. Signal Service officer was actually the town blacksmith and, according to Mr. Lowry, the Proctor place never had a windmill on it.... [T]he cemetery is a Masonic cemetery and a chart is kept on who is buried there. There are no graves unaccounted for. Mr. Lowry said that Mr. Haydon later told others about his story and many went on letting people believe it (Driskill, 1966).

In 1967 Alfred E. Kraus of West Texas State University twice visited Aurora. He searched the alleged crash site with a metal detector but found only old stove lids, rings used on horse bridles, and several 1932 license plates ("The Aurora, Texas, Case," 1973).

In the late 1960s Wise County historian Etta Pegues looked into the story and confirmed Lowry's version. Among the old-timers she interviewed was Mrs. Robbie Hanson, who declared, "It was a hoax. I was in school that day and nothing happened." Moreover, Pegues wrote, if the "Aurora story had been factual rather than fiction Cliff D. Cates would have included it in his *Pioneer History of Wise County* which he published in 1907. It would have sold him a billion copies. Also, if it had been true, Harold R. Bost would have included it in his *Saga of Aurora*. It would have been the highlight of his theme. But neither men [sic] mentioned it because it had been forgotten as any other piece of fiction would have been forgotten" (Pegues, 1975).

Pegues believed Haydon had concocted the story to revive Aurora's fortunes. During the 1890s the town, established in 1873, had rapidly declined, not only because the railroad had passed it by but because a spotted-fever epidemic killed or drove away many residents, a fire destroyed the western half of the town, and the boll weevil wiped out the cotton industry.

But the story stubbornly refused to die. On March 25, 1973, *Dallas Times Herald* aviation writer Bill Case reported that Hayden Hewes, of the Oklahoma-based International UFO Bureau, had located the crash site. Case retold the original story, inserting errors in date and time and incorporating material from other airship accounts. Area newspapers picked up Case's version and soon reporters and curiosity-seekers were bedeviling the locals with questions.

In May a self-described treasure hunter named Frank Kelley appeared in Aurora and declared that a metal detector gave the same readings at a certain grave in the town cemetery as it did at the crash site. Metal fragments were unearthed at the site and sent out for analysis. That same month a local man who till then had refused all interviews told Case that he knew of the crash from firsthand experience; shortly after the incident his father had taken him to the site and shown him the wreckage. He said, however, that he

remembered nothing about a body. Except for that one detail, his account repeated detail for detail, error for error, the widely circulated Case version (Simmons, 1985).

Meanwhile, convinced that he had reason to believe an extraterrestrial being was buried where the metal was found, on a Sunday morning Hewes showed up in Aurora determined to dig—only to be thwarted by angry townsfolk who armed themselves and kept him from entering the cemetery. The cemetery association was able to prove the plot belonged to the Carr family (*Denton* [Texas] *Record-Chronicle,* May 25).

Stung by criticism from Aurora citizens and fellow ufologists (the *A.P.R.O. Bulletin* described him as a "gadfly who flits hither and yon as circumstances allow when the midwest area is infected with UFO reports"), Hewes withdrew from the case and pronounced the incident a hoax (*Daily Oklahoman,* June 8). The investigation was picked up by the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON). Two nonagenarian former residents of Aurora led MUFON's investigators to a heretofore-unnoticed grave site near the edge of the cemetery. Under the limb of a gnarled oak tree was a peculiar circular grave with a triangular headstone on which a crudely drawn image of a cigar-shaped object was inscribed.

Then two local persons claimed to remember the crash. Ninety-one-year-old Mary Evans recalled (*Dallas Times-Herald,* May 30) that her parents had told her about the incident. She claimed she had forgotten about it until the recent spate of newspaper articles jogged her memory. A 98-year-old man, G. C. McCurley, from nearby Lewisville said he had heard about the crash from two friends who had seen the wreckage (*Times-Herald,* June 1).

The analysis of the metal revealed it to be an aluminum alloy used during the 1920s to make cookware. Evidently the metal had been planted at the site. Not long afterwards the *A.P.R.O. Bulletin* remarked, "Dr. Kraus found no unusual metal, aluminum or otherwise, in 1967, yet it allegedly showed up on the crash site after the initial flurry of publicity in April of this year.... An examination of all the 'evidence' leads us to an obvious conclusion: The aluminum alloy arrived at Aurora after 1967 ... and therefore has no bearing on the mystery whatsoever. Whether the aluminum was brought to the scene by publicity-seeking UFO buffs or by people who wanted to inject some life into a ghost town ... we may never know but it seems certain that we should relegate the story of the 1897 Aurora, Texas, airship crash to the hoax bin."

The controversy created a furor within the community, splitting it between those who favored further investigation and those who opposed it. The latter held that the grave contained the body of a victim of a turn-of-the-century spotted-fever epidemic and that to exhume it would be to bring back the disease. Brawley Oates reported that he was getting calls from individuals who claimed to be associated with the Army or the CIA and who were expressing interest in the metal fragments and the occupant of the grave (*Daily Oklahoman,* May 31). Eventually the district court blocked the exhumation effort. The affair was over.

By 1979 the very mention of the subject was enough to "send many residents into profound depression," a writer for the *New York Times* observed (February 26).

In 1985 a feature film, *The Aurora Encounter,* was produced in Texas by Jim McCullough, Sr., using a mostly local cast but also including veteran character actor Jack Elam and country singer Dottie West. A sort of *ET* set in the Old West, *Encounter* has the editor of the (nonexistent) *Aurora Sentinel* (played by Carol Bagdasarian) investigating reports of a little alien being (Mickey Hays) who has befriended a local character (Elam) and a little girl (Mindy Smith). In the end she and fellow Aurorans signal the airship to land, but when it does, a trigger-happy Texas Ranger (Will Mitchell) wounds its occupant. The alien staggers back into the ship and crashes it into the windmill. He is buried in the Aurora cemetery.

When the movie premiered in Dallas in March 1986, reviewer Steve Smith wrote:

> *Aurora Encounter* looks like a film you or I might make if somebody bought us a couple of movie cameras and gave us enough money to hire marginal actors, except I hope you or I might do a bit better. It is reminiscent of the cheap science fiction movies of the 1950s when flying saucers looked like pie plates tossed through

Mutual UFO Network (MUFON)

In 1969 Walter H. Andrus Jr., a regional officer of the Tucson-based Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (APRO), led a breakaway faction into a new organization, the Midwest UFO Network, which would be based until 1975 in Andrus's residence in Quincy, Illinois. That year Andrus and MUFON moved to Seguin, Texas, and the group took a new name, Mutual UFO Network (MUFON), to reflect its national and international membership.

In terms of sheer numbers, MUFON would become one of the most successful UFO organizations ever, claiming nearly 3,000 members by 1991. It publishes a monthly magazine, *MUFON UFO Journal* (before 1976 called *Skylook),* edited by Dennis Stacy, and hosts a conference held in a different U.S. city every year. Besides printing annual conference proceedings, MUFON has a *Field Investigator's Manual* which it revises and updates periodically.

Though nominally uncommitted to any one interpretation of UFO origin, MUFON clearly prefers the extraterrestrial hypothesis. The *Journal* occasionally publishes theoretical pieces advocating other theories, from skepticism to psychological or natural phenomena. As its membership has grown, so has the tolerance of this once relatively conservative organization for exotic beliefs and practices, such as conspiracy theories and channeling, which are popular among New Age-oriented saucer enthusiasts. It also has championed UFO cases that conservative ufologists regard as hoaxes. Nonetheless, alongside belief-oriented material, the *Journal* continues to publish serious research and analysis and so is considered essential reading for ufologists.

lights and ball lightning) were seen as no more than unusually vivid dreams; abductions by extraterrestrials, for example, were just a Space Age variant of what earlier ages would have experienced as kidnappings by fairies.

Jerome Clark and Loren Coleman's *The Unidentified* (1975) was the first book to argue this position; later books by French authors Michel Monnerie, Gerard Barthel and Jacques Brucker, and – most influentially – England's Hilary Evans would make the "psychosocial hypothesis," as it came to be called, a major force in world ufology, especially in Europe.

Crashes, cover-ups, and controversies

In the United States, however, the enthusiasm for occult and psychosocial approaches had mostly passed by the late 1970s. One reason was that the release of many heretofore classified UFO reports, retrieved through the Freedom of Information Act, reminded ufologists of the radar/visual cases and other impressive sight-

J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies

The Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) was formed in October 1973 by J. Allen Hynek, the head of Northwestern University's astronomy department, and Sherman J. Larsen, a businessman and director of a small UFO group in suburban Chicago. In the mid-1960s Hynek, who for over fifteen years had been the chief scientific consultant for the Air Force's Project Blue Book, had parted company with his employers and publicly complained that the military had done a poor job of investigating reports. Unlike the Air Force, Hynek thought UFOs were likely to be something other than misidentifications and hoaxes.

CUFOS was conceived as a forum for scientists and other trained professionals to deal with UFO research in a sober, responsible fashion. Hynek hoped for major funding, but that failed to materialize, and CUFOS, in common with other ufological organizations then and since, remained a low-budget operation. Nonetheless, for a time it was able to hire a full-time investigator, Allan Hendry. It published a newsletter, *International UFO Reporter (IUR)*, and a refereed periodical, *Journal of UFO Studies (JUFOS)*, plus occasional monographs on specific issues and cases. CUFOS was and is one of the two major UFO groups in the United States; the other is the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON).

When Hynek moved to Scottsdale, Arizona, in 1985, he resigned from the CUFOS directorship and handed it over to designated successor Mark Rodeghier. Under Rodeghier, CUFOS underwent significant reorganization. The moribund *JUFOS* was revived under the editorship of Michael D. Swords of Western Michigan University. Jerome Clark, the new *IUR* editor, turned the publication into a bimonthly magazine focused less on sightings (which had declined significantly in recent years) and more on analysis and debate. The headquarters were moved from Glenview, Illinois, to Chicago to accommodate the organization's enormous holdings and to make them available to individuals doing research on UFO issues. Its name was expanded to J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies after Hynek's death on April 27, 1986, though the acronym CUFOS was retained.

In the late 1980s CUFOS sponsored a major reinvestigation of the alleged July 1947 UFO crash in Lincoln County, New Mexico, and directed a project to obtain psychological profiles of persons claiming UFO abductions.

ings that had excited their interest in the subject to start with. Related to this was revived speculation about an official cover-up.

Keyhoe and other early critics of the cover-up suspected the Air Force of hiding dramatic sightings by interceptor pilots as well as films and radar trackings of UFOs. Few credited widespread rumors that the Air Force possessed more positive proof of extraterrestrial visitation, such as the remains of crashed saucers

Major Jesse Marcel holds debris of a supposed flying saucer found by rancher Mac Brazel in Roswell. *(Courtesy Mary Evans Picture Library.)*

and the bodies of their occupants. Reports of this nature had figured in a notorious hoax perpetrated on a gullible writer, Frank Scully, who passed them on in a best-selling book, *Behind the Flying Saucers* (1950). Launched as part of a scam by two confidence artists, the hoax subsequently was exposed in the then-popular magazine *True.*

Yet the stories refused to die. In the 1970s veteran ufologist Leonard H. Stringfield started collecting reports and interviewing individuals who claimed knowledge, sometimes firsthand, of such events. Two other ufologists, Stanton T. Friedman and William L. Moore, concentrated their attention on one particular episode, the alleged crash of a UFO in Lincoln County, New Mexico, in early July 1947, and pursued the first in-depth investigation of what Stringfield had dubbed a "retrieval of the third kind." They interviewed nearly three dozen individuals who were directly involved and also spoke with another fifty or so who had indirect involvement. A few years later a Chicago organization, the J. Allen Hynek Center

for UFO Studies (CUFOS), conducted its own inquiry, bringing the total of sources, ranging from area ranchers to Air Force generals, to three hundred. The "Roswell incident" – so called because the Air Force's initial investigation was conducted out of Roswell Field in Roswell, New Mexico – emerged as a central concern of American ufology.

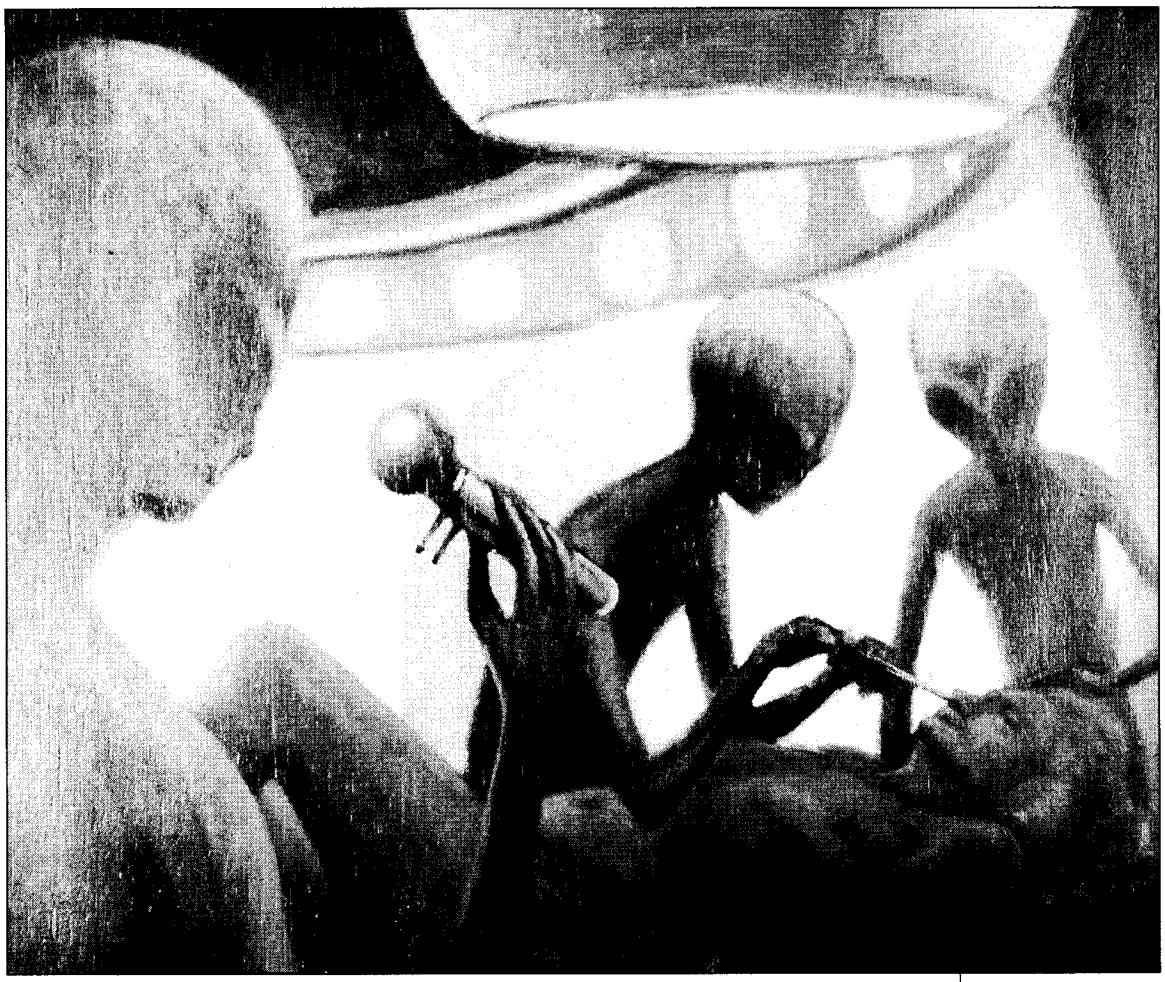
By the mid-1990s the Roswell incident had become a staple of popular culture, playing a crucial role in the wildly successful 1996 invasion-from-space movie *Independence Day.* Roswell itself has exploited the legend for all it's worth, most prominently with a museum that has brought hordes of tourists from all over the world. The U.S. Air Force has responded with two official reports claiming that the incident grew out ofa misunderstanding about a secret balloon project known as Mogul; the idea that bodies were recovered comes out of people's faulty memories of test dummies used in parachute experiments in the 1950s.

Eventually, the debate about what did or did not happen at Roswell in July 1947 has stalemated, with each side pointing to a body of evidence that it believes validates its particular interpretation. Within both camps some key informants changed their stories, either intentionally or unconsciously, and it became painfully clear that, without access to relevant government and military documents from the period, investigations dependent upon decades-old memories are doomed to frustration.

Though the Roswell incident itself seemed, if impossible to resolve, certainly genuinely puzzling, it carried with it a host of questionable claims. Moore reported that his investigation of the Roswell incident brought him into contact with cover-up insiders within military and civilian intelligence agencies. These individuals, to whom he assigned various avian pseudonyms and whom he dubbed "the birds" (Falcon, Condor, Sparrow, and so on), related fantastic tales not only of spaceship crashes but of face-to-face contact between aliens and U.S. government representatives. The birds promised, in their words, a "truckload of documents" to support these incredible allegations but produced only a handful of pieces of paper, including pages from a briefing book supposedly prepared for President Jimmy Carter. Few serious ufologists regarded these as anything but fraudulent, though it was not always clear who was doing the forging.

The most notorious document arrived one day in December 1984 in an envelope, postmarked Albuquerque and sent to Moore associate Jaime Shandera with no return address. Inside the envelope was a roll of 35mm film that, when developed, was found to contain a portion of a presidential briefing document dated November 18, 1952. Allegedly written by Vice Adm. Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter, it purported to inform President-elect Dwight D. Eisenhower of two UFO crashes – one in Roswell in 1947, the other along the Texas-Mexico border in 1950 – and of the existence of an "Operation Majestic-12" (MJ-12 for short), consisting of prominent figures in intelligence, science, and the military, who oversaw the study of the wreckage and the corpses of "extraterrestrial biological entities" (EBEs).

When a copy of the briefing paper came into the hands of British ufologist Timothy Good (who claimed an unnamed intelligence source had given it to



An artist's rendering of a typical incident during abduction: the aliens insert an implant in the abductee's nose. *(Painting by Michael Buhler, courtesy Mary Evans Picture Library.)*

him), Good announced as much to the British press. Moore and Shandera released their copy at the same time – May 1987 – and the result was furious controversy and massive publicity, including coverage in the *New York Times* and on ABC television's *Nightline.* The FBI launched a probe out of its offices in New York City and Los Angeles but was as unsuccessful as ufologists were in getting to the bottom of the matter. For technical reasons having to do with a suspicious signature and format problems, the document is dismissed by all but a few diehard defenders.

The future of ufology

Recent years have seen the growing professionalization of UFO study. This is partly the result of a natural maturation process, but it also has to do with the influx into ufology's ranks of social scientists and mental-health professionals intrigued by UFO-abduction experiences reported by apparently sane and sincere

1987 a copy of the same document was given to British ufologist Timothy Good, who released it to the British press in May, at the same time Moore and Shandera released theirs to American media. The result was ceaseless controversy, charges, suspicion, ambiguity, and dead ends. By mid-1991 no conclusion about the document's origins, much less its authenticity, could be declared with certainty, though enough legitimate questions had been raised to generate widespread skepticism (Eberhart, 1991).

Yet all the while, where the Roswell incident itself was concerned, the investigation was making significant headway. In 1980 Moore, with popular occult author Charles Berlitz, wrote a premature and sketchy book on his and Friedman's research up till then (Berlitz and Moore, 1980). Fortunately Moore and Friedman continued to locate and interview persons who were in some way, directly or indirectly, involved in the episode. Within five years they had talked with over 90 persons, one-third of them direct participants (Moore, 1985a). In the late 1980s Donald R. Schmitt and Kevin D. Randle of the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) started an independent investigation and added considerably to ufologists' knowledge through extensive archival research and interviews with some 300 persons, ranging from on-site witnesses to Air Force generals (Randle and Schmitt, 1991; Schmitt, 1990).

A hoax and its aftermath. In August 1949 stories began to circulate in Hollywood to the effect that a soon-to-be-released science-fiction movie, *The Flying Saucer*, would contain actual footage of a spaceship the U.S. government had captured in Alaska. Mikel Conrad, the producer, director, writer, and star, even produced an alleged FBI agent, one "William McKnight," to attest to the authenticity of the footage. When an agent of the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) interviewed him, Conrad admitted he had invented the story to publicize his movie.

Not coincidentally, around this time a veteran confidence artist, Silas Newton, was introducing to well-heeled acquaintances a mysterious "Dr. Gee," identified as a world-class scientific authority on magnetics. According to Newton, Gee, who worked on top-secret projects for the U.S. government, had a magnetic device from a crashed flying saucer. With this device he could detect oil deposits. In reality Gee was no scientist but a swindler with a long arrest record, Leo GeBauer, and the flying-saucer story was thrown into what otherwise would have been a routine oil scam to add extra authority to Newton's pitch.

But the UFO angle took on a life of its own when a naive *Variety* columnist, Frank Scully, published Newton and GeBauer's tale in a best-selling book, *Behind the Flying Saucers* (1950). In 1952, however, *True* magazine commissioned reporter J. P. Cahn to investigate the claims, and Cahn devastatingly exposed the hoax in a long article (Cahn, 1952).

Nonetheless, the **Scully hoax** led to questions and some extraordinary answers at a Washington meeting, the minutes of which did not come to light until the early 1980s. On September 15, 1950, a group of Canadian government scientists and engineers conferred in the office of Robert I. Sarbacher, a physicist associated with the U.S. Defense Department's Research and Development Board. One of the Canadians, **Wilbert B. Smith**, said, "I am doing some work on the collapse of the earth's magnetic field as a source of energy, and I think our work may have a bearing on the flying saucers." Smith asked if there was any truth to stories, such as those in Scully's book, about crashed and recovered UFOs. Sarbacher said there was, adding, "We have not been able to duplicate their performance.... All we know is, we didn't make them, and it's pretty certain they didn't originate on the earth." But the subject "is classified two points higher even than the H-bomb. In fact it is the most highly classified subject in the U.S. government at the present time." He would say no more.

In the early 1980s Canadian ufologist Arthur Bray found the memo in Smith's files (Bray, 1982; Maccabee, 1986), and subsequently Sarbacher, then living in Florida (he would die in 1986), confirmed to several inquirers, including Friedman, Bruce Maccabee, and Jerome Clark (Clark, 1985), that he had said these things. Pleading poor memory, explaining that he had not been personally involved but knew of the events because he was acquainted with the scientists, including President Truman's chief science advisor Vannevar Bush, who worked directly on the problem, Sarbacher was hazy on details. He was not sure where the crashes had occurred, but that the recovered

debris was "extremely light and very tough" (which is how those who saw it described the Corona debris). "There were reports that instruments or people operating these machines were also of very light weight, sufficient to withstand the tremendous deceleration and acceleration associated with their machinery. I remember in talking with some of the people at the office that I got the impression these 'aliens' were constructed like certain insects we have observed on earth, wherein because of the low mass the inertial forces involved in operation of these instruments would be quite low" (Maccabee, *op. cit.*). (For further details see the entry on Robert Irving Sarbacher in *UFOs in the 1980s.*)

If Sarbacher's testimony had been made known in the 1950s, it is likely that ufologists would have been far more willing than they were to take crash claims seriously. But even before Cahn's exposé the Scully book generated little enthusiasm among the more sober early ufologists, largely because of the book's manifest lack of documentation—it was clear, for example, that Scully had done little more than transcribe Newton and GeBauer's account and made no attempt to verify it—and also because of the story's almost comically pseudoscientific overtones. According to the Gee-headed "division of top scientists," the dead occupants were deduced, by virtue of their size, to be from Venus. Since Martians "would probably be three or four times as large as human beings on this planet, and since people on the grounded disc ship [allegedly found near Aztec, New Mexico] ranged in height from 36 to 42 inches, that ... ruled out Mars" (Scully, 1950).

Typical of the ludicrous hoaxes occasionally surfacing in print was one printed in the February 12, 1950, edition of *La Hora*, a Quito, Ecuador, daily. *La Hora* reported that a small flying saucer had crashed at the Laredo, Texas, airport. As its sole occupant, a badly injured little man, was administered oxygen in an effort to revive him, he suddenly leaped up and struck a National Guardsman in the face. He collapsed again, was revived again, and fought again, but eventually died. Despite his small size, *La Hora* related, he weighed 300 pounds (Barker, 1982a). This was a story the Laredo newspapers somehow managed to miss. In 1950 a Belgian newspaper, *Burgerwelzijn*, reported that a flying saucer with 26 occupants had landed in the center of the city of Bruges and that the beings, believed to be Martians, were taken to a camp to be interrogated. Accompanying photographs, apparently the creation of a community gag, showed citizens standing in front of the saucer and also the Martian captain dressed in a rubber suit with a breathing apparatus.

As rumors continued to circulate, ufologists responded to them in print from time to time. In 1952 Ed Sullivan of the Los Angeles-based **Civilian Saucer Investigation** (CSI) wrote that "we do not believe that any facts are in anyone's possession to support such claims." In CSI's view such stories "are damned for the simple reason, that after years of circulation, not one soul has come forward with a single concrete fact to support the assertions. If there were one single iota of fact, certainly someone, somewhere, would be willing to bring it into the open ... We ask you to beware of the man who tells you that his friend knows the man with the pickle jar. There is good reason why he effects [sic] an air of mystery, why he 'has been sworn to secrecy'—because he can't produce the friend—or the pickle jar" (Sullivan, 1952).

If Sullivan/CSI's sentiments were an understandable response to a notorious hoax and to fantastic tales which may have seemed then to be no more than carbon copies of it, it would turn out to be the wrong response. By the time serious investigators were willing to reconsider the crash question, nearly three decades later, many potential witnesses to seemingly plausible cases, notably the Roswell incident but possibly others from the early 1950s along the Texas/Mexico border and in the Kingman, Arizona, area, would be dead or untraceable. Yet even ufologists such as **Donald E. Keyhoe** who were convinced the Air Force was hiding significant UFO secrets paid crash tales no heed.

Though the Corona/Roswell event has rewarded those who belatedly concluded it was worth looking into, it was ignored or shrugged off by persons who heard of it when it could more easily have been investigated. An apparent reference to the incident appears in a 1957 letter from Los Angeles ufologist Max B. Miller to a New York colleague, **Ted Bloecher**. Bloecher had mentioned Scully in passing, leading Miller to remark that he had heard stories of crashes

and retrievals but "made no notes or special effort to remember." For example, "a close friend of mine—an engineer now employed by NAA [National Aeronautics Administration] at Patrick [Air Force Base]—once told me that he was riding on a train between some city an[d] Wash[ington] about 1949 when he struck up a conversation with an Army Sergeant sitting next to him. He was told—and this was apparently prior to publication of [the] Scully book—by this fellow that he had driven part of the saucer that had landed in the SW [southwest] to a specific AFB (unrecorded); that several tourists nearby photog's [sic] the FS [flying saucer]; that he did not know what had become of them. That is just about that" (Miller, 1957). A number of informants in the Roswell case have since testified that a group of civilians came upon part of the landing site, though nothing has been reported about their taking pictures (Moore and Berlitz, *op. cit.*; Randle and Schmitt, *op. cit.*).

Edwards enigma. On February 17, 1954, President Eisenhower went to California on what his spokesman said was a vacation trip, even though only days earlier he had come back from another such outing, this one spent shooting quail in Georgia. On February 20 he disappeared from Smoke Tree Ranch near Palm Springs, where he had been staying. Rumors quickly circulated that he had suffered a serious illness, and Associated Press even reported, very briefly, that he was dead, only to have to retract when Eisenhower's press secretary James Haggerty vehemently denied it. Soon it was announced that the President had "knocked a cap off a tooth" while eating and had slipped away to be treated by a local dentist, C. A. Purcell.

Though reporters and the public were satisfied with this explanation of the President's whereabouts, another kind of rumor began to circulate in southern California: that Eisenhower had been secretly taken to Edwards Air Force Base, near Palm Springs, to view alien wreckage and bodies. The origins of the rumor are obscure, but the allegation that saucer wreckage was being stored at a "West Coast military field" was noted as early as January 13, 1954, by Mutual radio broadcaster Frank Edwards ("'Object' Studied," 1955). The story of Eisenhower's visit made it across the Atlantic Ocean by April 1954, when British writer Harold T. Wilkins received a letter from an unnamed "friend in California." In a book published the next year (Wilkins, 1955), Wilkins wrote:

> I am assured that these five saucers actually did land *voluntarily* at this Edwards Air Force base. They were discs of different types and their entities invited the technicians and scientists to inspect their aeroforms and witness a demonstration of their powers.

Wilkins's informant claimed to have the story from three sources, but none are named. Nonetheless from some of the references it is clear that one source was Gerald Light, a mystic also known as "Dr. Kappa."

On April 16, 1954, Light wrote N. Meade Layne, the director of an occult organization called Borderland Sciences Research Associates, to claim that he and three prominent men had actually been at the base and seen "human beings in a state of complete collapse and confusion as they realized that their own world had indeed ended with such finality as to beggar description. The reality of 'otherplane' aeroforms is now and forever removed from the realms of speculation and made a rather painful part of the consciousness of every responsible scientific and political group.... [I]t is my conviction [Eisenhower] will ignore the terrific conflict between the various 'authorities' and go directly to the people via radio and television" (Crabb, 1959).

Light's letter fails to make clear that he was claiming not to have visited the base in his physical body, as the reader would assume, but to have gone there in an out-of-body state ("Ike and Aliens," 1985). If the Edwards story began with him, it could be dismissed easily as a hoax or fantasy, but apparently it did not. In the opening paragraph of his letter to Layne, Light declares, "The report is true—devastatingly true!"—suggesting that Layne knew what the "report" referred to. Frank Scully's widow told William Moore that in June 1954 a carpenter who had been at Edwards came to work on their house and asserted that Eisenhower had secretly visited the base earlier in the year (Berlitz and Moore, *op. cit.*).

Unfortunately no serious investigation of the rumor was conducted until many years later, when Moore interviewed Dr. Purcell's widow. Moore found that

she was "curiously unable to recall any specifics relating to her husband's alleged treatment of the president.... Yet her memory appeared flawless when asked to relate details of her and her husband's attendance (by presidential invitation) at an outdoor steak fry the following evening, where her husband was introduced as 'the dentist who had treated the president.'"

This in itself may not have meant much, except that in the course of further research conducted at the Eisenhower Library, Moore delved into the former President's extensive health records, including a file titled "Dentists," and uncovered nothing that would confirm dental treatment in February 1954. Another file consisting of thank-you notes to various persons connected with the Palm Springs trip had nothing addressed to Purcell. Yet, Moore noted, there were letters to "people who sent flowers, people who met the airplane, people who had offered to play golf (or even chess) with the president, etc., etc. There is even a thank-you note to the minister who presided over the Sunday service attended by the president." Secretary Haggarty's private diary, however, mentioned that on February 20 "Pres broke cap off tooth–had it fixed at local dentist–Dr. C. A. Purcell."

Moore concluded that, barring unexpected developments, the investigation could proceed no further ("Ike and Aliens," *op. cit.*).

Capt. Nash's story. On the morning of July 15, 1952, in the wake of a dramatic encounter with UFOs over Norfolk, Virginia (*see* **Nash-Fortenberry Sighting**), **Project Blue Book** investigators interviewed the two principal witnesses, pilot William Nash and co-pilot William Fortenberry. Prior to the interview Nash and Fortenberry agreed to ask the Air Force men if there was any truth to persistent rumors about one or more crashed discs in custody at Wright Field. But when the two were interviewed separately, in the excitement Nash forgot to raise the issue. According to Nash, however, Fortenberry did not, and one of the investigators replied, "Yes, it is true." When the two pilots and the investigators met together, Nash suddenly remembered what he had intended to ask. In a written account Nash recalled, "They all opened their mouths to answer the question, whereupon Maj. [John H.] Sharp[e] looked at them, not me, and said very quickly, 'NO!' It appeared as if he were telling them to shut up rather than addressing the answer to me."

Later Nash appeared on a show on radio station WJZ in New York City, where he was to debate three scientists convinced of the nonexistence of UFOs. Before the show started, he wandered into the hallway to get a drink of water. He was unable to find a fountain until he met a man who seemed to know his way around and who led him via a complicated route to his destination. According to Nash, "From his voice timbre he might have been a commentator, but he said that he could not identify himself, even though I specifically asked for his name. He was about 6'1", 200 lbs., intelligent in appearance. He told me that he had just returned from Washington, and had been given the whole story, said the flurry of sightings over Washington [*see* **Washington-National Radar/Visual Sightings**] was due to Air Force operation of a radio that had been found in a saucer.... He said the Wright Field story (about having a saucer) was true; that he and a New England reporter, along with a *Life* reporter, had just been briefed, but were told to keep it quiet until they were given permission to break the story. He appeared quite excited and sincere. He would not or could not tell me if the radios they found would send only a carrier wave signal, or if words were transmitted" (Nash, 1955).

When Nash spoke to the Greater Miami Aviation Association in February 1954, he was asked why he thought the Air Force was withholding UFO information. In his reply he speculated that a statement attesting to extraterrestrial visitation would be followed by a demand for proof. If that proof consisted, as Nash suspected, of hardware, the Air Force would be reluctant to produce it, since then Soviet agents would know of its existence and do everything they could to learn its secrets. One month later the Air Force issued a heated denial that it possessed such evidence or that it deemed UFOs anything out of the ordinary (Haugland, 1954).

Other ultimate secrets. In 1952 an airman confided to Jim and Coral Lorenzen, directors of the newly formed **Aerial Phenomena Research Organization**, that four years earlier, while stationed in Arizona, he and other

members of a scientific-military team were ordered to go to a site in New Mexico, where a flying saucer had crashed. At the heavily guarded site the airman saw a metallic disc with a small cabin at top center. The bodies of "little men" had been removed from that cabin, he was told. He and his associates were to find a way to dismantle the ship. In due course they learned that the vehicle consisted of interlocking sections pinned together at the bottom center, but the power source remained a mystery; the only clue, according to the Lorenzens's account, was a "ring of components resembling electromagnets mounted in a protuberance directly below the perimeter of the cabin where the airfoil joined the central core." The Lorenzens discounted the story, assuming it to be a yarn inspired by Scully's book, but a few years later they learned of an Albuquerque resident's claim that in 1948, while driving near Taos, New Mexico, he heard–apparently via a radio report–that a "strange aircraft" had crashed in the area. Not long afterwards he came upon a military guard who ordered him to get out of the area. As he prepared to do so, he spotted a large flat-bed semi-trailer truck carrying a tarpaulin-covered load. Jim Lorenzen wrote: "Other reports have come from various sources to support the actuality of the above incident but that's another story" (Lorenzen, 1958).

Another story set in New Mexico concerned a "Father Lux" who gave last rites to little men at a crash site ("Could the Scully Story Be True?", 1956). In 1990 Schmitt and Randle went through Roman Catholic Church records but could find no record of any such priest in the Southwest in the late 1940s.

Army Intelligence took note of a story related by a stranger to M. Sgt. Ralph E. Brown of Fort Hayes, Columbus, Ohio. There is no evidence, beyond an official report written on April 27, 1953, and sent to the Chief of the Security Division at Army headquarters in Washington, of a follow-up investigation, so the incident is no more than an anecdote, but possibly significant in the context of tales like the one immediately following this one. On April 24 Brown was waiting for the bartender at Columbus' Deshler-Walleck Hotel when a man at the bar asked him where he was stationed. In the conversation that followed, the man, who claimed to be associated with Wright-Patterson AFB, said he knew, having seen them himself, of three crashed spaceships held at Wright-Patterson. One was badly damaged, but the other two were relatively intact. Bodies of UFO occupants were also being kept there. Deeply disturbed and unsure how to release this information to the public, the Air Force had given the problem to a small group of prominent Columbus residents. Brown asked if he could meet them, but the stranger said that any meeting would have to be arranged by them; they would know how to get in contact with him. The man was sober and refused Brown's offer to buy him a drink. Nonetheless, after the stranger left, Brown asked the bartender if he knew him. The bartender said yes and described him as a "drunk." Brown felt, however, that the man seemed knowledgeable and convincing (Gross, 1989). Probably the exchange was somebody's idea of a practical joke, but it is interesting to note that in 1951 the Air Force brought its UFO problem to the Columbus-based Battelle Memorial Institute, a scholarly think tank, and asked for its classified assistance in dealing with UFO data. The result was **Project Blue Book Special Report 14**, released four years later. The report, of course, says nothing about crashed saucers.

In May 1954 **James W. Moseley**, editor of a UFO magazine titled *Nexus* (later ***Saucer News***), heard a tape recording made by UFO buff George Wolfer. It was of a telephone conversation with the wife of a salesman who worked at the Miami office of a Wisconsin-based cookware company; Wolfer worked in a managerial capacity for the same company but out of Milwaukee, making occasional business trips to Miami. Wolfer told Moseley that the salesman was a new employee to whom recently he had happened to mention his fascination with UFOs. When later the salesman remarked on Wolfer's interest to his wife, she had surprised him with her response: that she knew a great deal more about the subject than Wolfer. She told her husband a story about her knowledge of a recovered UFO. Her husband passed the story on to Wolfer, who subsequently phoned her and had her relate it as his tape recorder ran without her knowledge.

Moseley, who spent much of the 1950s exposing flying-saucer charlatans and was not easily impressed, wrote in his private notes, "I listened to this tape recording very carefully, and could not detect any-

thing that would indicate that the woman knew she was being recorded or that it was a fixed conversation. She seemed uninterested in the subject of saucers, and also very hazy on details as apparently she had not paid a great deal of attention to the incident at the time" (Moseley, 1954b). Wolfer refused to give Moseley her or her husband's name and likewise would not tell him who "Joe", a coworker who also knew about the crash, was, though Wolfer said he knew.

Through some intricate and clever detective work in Milwaukee and Miami, however, Moseley learned that the couple were Ray and Vivian Walton. He was able to interview Mrs. Walton and get a fuller account. As a Signal Corps employee working the night shift, so her story went, she handled decoded teletype messages inside a high-security building at the Columbus Army Supply Depot. One night in the late summer of 1952, she walked into the photography laboratory, where "Joe" (whose last name she could not remember but thought might be "Hershey") was developing photographs relevant to her work. But she noticed some other pictures of a strange object, and when she asked him what it was, he told her that it was a flying saucer which had come down in the hilly country north of Columbus. At first she assumed he was joking, but he turned out to be serious. Mrs. Walton was told the saucer was 30 feet in diameter and unoccupied. Military personnel had had a hard time finding a way to enter the ship, which apparently had sustained minimal damage.

A few days later a two-week "red and white" alert was sounded. At one point either during or immediately afterwards, military authorities briefed her and others in the building and explained that the alert was related to a fear of attack by UFOs, following the recovery of one such craft. The alert was terminated only after it appeared no such attack would occur.

Mrs. Walton also said the UFO had gone through the Columbus depot on its way to Wright-Patterson AFB. She heard nothing more about it after that. Around that time, though, "rumors" circulated of other recoveries, some involving bodies of five-foot beings who look much like us. The government keeps all this secret out of fear of panic.

Moseley thought she seemed sincere, with no apparent reason to concoct such an unlikely tale, and so he went on with the investigation. In Columbus he learned that "Joe Hershey" was really Joe Sheehy, who, Moseley found when he met him in person, was exactly as Mrs. Walton had described him: the depot's staff photographer and an older man suffering from recent eye trouble. Though they admitted having known "Viv," as they called her, Sheehy and his superior, Clarence Thorne, disputed her claim that she had worked with classified decoded messages or that they knew anything about flying saucers. They said they had no idea why she might want to lie about this, but they were going to report her, according to Moseley's notes, to the "CIA." Moseley noted, "When I spoke to Sheehy alone, he made one statement that may or may not have been a significant slip. He said, 'She's been talking out of turn,' which would imply that she is telling the truth, without the right to do so. When I pointed this out to him, he corrected himself" (Moseley, *ibid.*).

And so, all leads exhausted, nothing conclusively established one way or another, the investigation ended.

Another story from the 1950s concerns Nicholas von Poppen, an Estonian said to be of aristocratic background. UFO publisher **Gray Barker** claimed to have learned of him after George Tyler, a Los Angeles subscriber to Barker's *The Saucerian*, died in October 1954. Tyler had given Barker a manuscript marked, "Do not open except after my death." When opened, it was found to consist of 50 typed pages titled *The Flying Saucer Reports of Dr. George Tyler, U.S.A.* One of these reports was from von Poppen, with whom Tyler had been involved in a mining venture in the 1930s. Just before the war, according to Tyler's story, the two were about to embark on a project in Estonia when the U.S. State Department warned them not to go, because intelligence reports indicated that Stalin's armies were preparing to invade the small Baltic nation. Von Poppen went anyway; the invasion occurred, and Communist troops murdered every member of his family except him. He managed to escape and returned to the United States after the war, to set up a small photography business.

"During 1949," Tyler wrote, "I received an unusual phone call from the Baron. His voice sounded agitat-

ed and I sensed the matter was urgent. He said he must talk with me immediately. I was to meet him in the coffee shop of the Alexandria Hotel in Los Angeles, and I had to promise him I would tell nobody of the meeting either before or after it took place. I was to keep the meeting secret and not to ask for him by name at the hotel" (Steinman and Stevens, 1987).

As Tyler's account had it, von Poppen fearfully confided that the week before, two intelligence agents, warning him that he would be deported if he talked, asked him to participate in a photographic project for the government. They drove von Poppen to an airport, where the three boarded a military aircraft and flew to a base that von Poppen was told was Los Alamos (in reality Los Alamos did not have an air field). There von Poppen saw several hundred men milling around a large flying saucer. Over the next two days he took numerous pictures from every conceivable angle. These included pictures of the interior and of the four dead occupants, all still strapped in swivel-back seats. Von Poppen, according to Tyler, reported that the beings were four feet tall, albinolike, with "intellectual and refined" faces. The captain's hand was on something that resembled a book, perhaps the ship's log, on which symbols like hieroglyphics were written. On the wall was a device that looked like a "large electronic tube" which emitted a beep every seven minutes. Von Poppen also photographed the mangled remains of two other craft.

Barker determined that a Nicholas E. von Poppen did exist in Los Angeles. Barker would claim that he wrote von Poppen twice, with no response. In January 1955 he flew to Los Angeles, and he and an associate called on von Poppen at his apartment. When Barker introduced himself and mentioned Tyler, von Poppen, a frail old man, shouted, "Tyler! Tyler! Tyler had told in death! Please, go away! I have been troubled enough!"

Supposedly, Barker also learned that on October 16, 1954, the day after Tyler's funeral, a man visited the apartment building where Tyler had lived. Speaking in a formal English "with a slight Oriental accent of a sing-song quality," he showed a room key to Tyler's landlady Eliza Bates and said he was there at the request of relatives to pick up some of the deceased's belongings. An hour later Mrs. Bates checked on him, only to discover the room had been ransacked, though valuables had not been stolen. She phoned William Conway, executor to Tyler's small estate, and Conway came over to investigate. According to Barker's account, only Tyler's UFO writings were missing (Barker, 1960).

Von Poppen, who really existed, died in Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital on March 16, 1976 (Barker, 1982b). A sensationalistic book would assert that he was murdered (Steinman and Stevens, *op. cit.*), but there is nothing in the coroner's report to support this lurid interpretation. The cause of death was officially listed as arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease. Von Poppen had been in the hospital nearly five weeks after falling and breaking his hip in his home.

Though still in circulation, this story is mostly fiction. Jim Moseley says Tyler wrote a partially completed science-fiction tale in which he made an acquaintance, von Poppen, a central figure. When Barker was given the manuscript following Tyler's death, he added his own imaginative flourishes. In later years hoax photographs of an humanoid said to have been recovered in New Mexico and photographed by von Poppen excited impressionable UFO buffs in Europe and North America ("More About," 1991).

Crashes elsewhere. According to a story published six years later ("Has the Air Force Secured," 1955), an automobile dealer named Ernest Gates, driving near Flint, Michigan, one day in 1949, heard a strange story on his car radio. A program he was listening to was interrupted by an announcement that a flying saucer had crash-landed near Mexico City. Inside it the bodies of dead little men were visible. The area was roped off as authorities tried without success to find some way to enter the craft. There was no follow-up.

On March 9, 1950, the *Los Angeles Herald-Express* reported that a local businessman, Ray L. Dimmick, claimed to know of a flying saucer crash near Mexico City. His sources were two unnamed "mining engineers"—Newton and GeBauer?—who supposedly had seen the craft and its 23-inch occupant before U.S. Air Force personnel had taken them away. A prominent Mexican executive had taken him to a base to see the saucer. Dimmick further claimed to

know of other crashes in America and Mexico (Gross, 1983).

Two crash stories, both hoaxes of murky origin, came out of northern Europe in the early 1950s. One supposedly took place on the German island of Heligoland, 28 miles off the West German coast, the other on the island of Spitzbergen, 400 miles from Norway. Both apparently were inspired by the Scully account, and the latter probably was the invention of a German tabloid (Bontempo, 1989; Gross, 1986; Keyhoe, 1953). In its October 15, 1954, edition the newspaper *Le Lorrain*, published in Nancy, France, reported that the Spitzbergen disc was a remote-controlled German experimental aircraft which had crashed in February 1945. The source for this allegation was indentified as a just-published document from the Swiss Territorial Air Defense (Moore, 1990). There is, however, no independent evidence that such a document—or such an aircraft—ever existed.

On May 23, 1955, popular newspaper columnist Dorothy Kilgallen wrote: "I can report today on a story which is positively spooky, not to mention chilling. British scientists and airmen after examining the wreckage of one mysterious flying ship are convinced that these strange aerial objects are not optical illusions or Soviet inventions, but are actual flying saucers which originate on another planet." Her source, she said, was a "British official of cabinet rank who prefers to remain unidentified" (Jessup, 1956). Kilgallen had no more, then or later, to say on the subject, and nothing has surfaced in the years since to substantiate it. Gordon Creighton, a retired British foreign officer who now edits *Flying Saucer Review*, has claimed that Kilgallen got the story at a May 1955 cocktail party hosted by Lord Mountbatten; at least one of the crashes, she was told according to Creighton, took place during World War II. Mountbatten's private secretary at the time, Mollie Travis, denies this claim, according to Timothy Good, who has written extensively on the British government's involvement with UFO research (Good, 1988).

Another story, first circulated in South America where it is supposed to have occurred, is unique in that it alleges a crash but not a retrieval; the UFO disappeared before the U.S. or any other Air Force could claim it. The tale seems to have appeared first in *El Universal*, a Caracas, Venezuela, newspaper, on May 7, 1955. Its next major appearance in print was in a 1956 issue of the Swiss UFO magazine *Le Courrier Interplanetaire*, in which a November 1, 1955, letter from the alleged witness was translated into French.

The story goes like this: Driving on a rural road in Argentina on May 10, 1950, the witness saw a flying saucer on the ground not far away. He stopped his car, got out, and approached the object, then entered it through a side door. Inside he found various instruments and the bodies of three little men. After touching one of the beings, he panicked and fled. The next day he and two friends returned to the site, only to find a pile of warm gray ashes where the craft had been. In the sky they saw a cigar-shaped object and two smaller discs nearby. The latter entered or merged with the former, which then turned a blood-red color and shot off at a rapid rate of speed (Lorenzen, 1962).

A review of the various versions of the story uncovers some contradictions (Smith, 1986), though these may be more the fault of reporting inaccuracies and poor translation than the failings of a hoaxer who could not keep his story straight. Little is known of the claimant, and even his name varies from account to account. **Leonard H. Stringfield**, who received a registered letter from him in the fall of 1955 through the assistance of Horacio Gonzales, APRO's Venezuelan representative, identifies him, presumably accurately, as Dr. Enrique Caretenuto Botta (Stringfield, 1977). Gonzales, the only ufologist to interview the man face to face, described him as an "architectural engineer with a well-known real estate company in Caracas" (*ibid.*). The names of the two friends who are supposed to have accompanied him on the return trip to the landing site are not given in any of the accounts, and they—if they ever existed—were never contacted for verification. Of the story all that can be stated with certainty is that it was never investigated properly.

The February 14, 1957, issue of *La Prensa*, a Lima, Peru, daily, related an outrageously improbable crash tale. The event is said to have occurred in Chile, a few miles from the Bolivian border, where authorities discovered on a volcanic slope a 3000-foot-long, slender, translucent craft. Inside it were various ob-

jects, including an oval object one foot in circumference and of an aluminumlike substance. Though the authorities supposedly were investigating, no further announcements followed ("UFO Found," 1957).

Contact? One theme of crash lore, more prominent in the 1980s (Clark, 1990) than in the 1950s, is that the Air Force's recovery of interplanetary wreckage led to direct communication between the U.S. government and alien beings.

Those stories began to circulate in the early 1950s, mostly but not exclusively in contactee circles. **George Adamski**, for example, alleged that Washington had on-going communications with "Space Brothers." Adamski associate and fellow contactee **George Hunt Williamson** asserted:

> Some people are wondering if our government is attempting contact with Saucers. They [sic] have already had contact, but they are still working at it as evidenced by the fact that at Edwards Air Base in California there is a highly secret operation known as Project NQ-707. This project and its personnel is [sic] concerned with nothing but radio-telegraphic contact with Saucers. They have been successful in their work and have attempted to get the Saucers to land at a rendezvous point near Salton Sea in Southern California (Williamson, 1953).

Outside contactee circles these stories rapidly became a form of UFO-age urban folklore, though printed references to it are scant. In his dismissal of crash reports, Ed Sullivan cryptically referred to rumors of a "mysterious top-level rendevous [sic] in the Australian Bush" (Sullivan, *op. cit.*). In 1955 Ohio UFO enthusiast Thomas M. Comella claimed to have "astounding information concerning a flying saucer landing. The exact date is not known although it is put near the middle of 1948. If the information is correct, a giant 150 feet (diameter) flying saucer landed near Juneau, Alaska. The president (at that time it was Truman), his top aides and generals were supposed to have attended.... [L]ive humanoid space men emerged from the craft and took part in an interplanetary parley. The meeting was supposedly the first with the saucer race.... [T]he earth members of the meeting could not understand some of the space people's humble beliefs and actions" ("Report Tells," 1955).

In January 1956 two magazines with the same name, *Flying Saucer Review*, reported two versions of the contact rumor. In each case its source was an anonymous contributor citing an anonymous source. In the American *Flying Saucer Review*, edited by Robert J. Gribble, a writer identified only as a radio executive stated that in 1949 he worked at the Los Angeles ABC affiliate and in that capacity joined a "research expedition ... which was slated to explore the upper reaches of the Amazon River in search of some proof of the origin of civilization on that continent." Members of the expedition, the author said, included a number of prominent scientists (none named), one of whom told him that "flying saucers exist in fact" and "they are from another world, possibly 5000 years advanced from ours." The UFO beings "are definitely akin [to] the Earthlings in appearance." The article goes on:

> He [the scientist] and his associate geophysicist ... had been connected to Project Saucer as civilians, and had become disgusted with the manner in which the officials were handling this greatest of world developments since the Birth of Christ. He described how the government agency in charge of the saucer information planned, over a course of many years, to purposely "leak" bits of authoritative information to the public in the form of official statements, novels, "sightings," and even through the medium of motion pictures. This, he explained, was their way of "indoctrinating" the country into a state of mind whereby the people could accept the full truth about the space visitors without literally [sic] flipping their collective lids ("A Newsman's," 1956).

Rumors of an indoctrination program are still heard, but a story related at the same time in English's *Flying Saucer Review* is mostly forgotten. A writer identified only as a "special correspondent" wrote of his alleged conversation with a "highly placed American who was in touch with Air Force Intelligence and in a position to know the facts about flying saucers." Through communications with the aliens, the U.S. government knew UFOs to be "visitors from another

planet... completely friendly... undoubtedly trying to work out a method of remaining alive in our atmosphere before landing and establishing friendly communications." On three occasions the spaceships had tried to land, with disastrous consequences; "breathing the heavily oxygenated atmosphere of this Earth had literally incinerated the visitors from within and had burned them to a crisp" ("Let's Talk Space," 1956).

Nine years later *Flying Saucer Review* identified the "special correspondent" as "Rolf Alexander, M.D.," and "Alexander's" source as the famous American general and diplomat George C. Marshall (Creighton, 1965; "Rolf Alexander, M.D.," 1965). Though the magazine assured readers of "Alexander's" credibility, characterizing him as a prominent medical scientist, "Alexander" was in fact Allan Alexander Stirling, a New Zealand seaman who had jumped ship in 1920 and entered the United States illegally. To support himself he promoted various dubious health cures, meanwhile concocting a fictitious personal and professional history. His activities were interrupted by occasional prison sentences, including one for mail fraud and grand embezzlement (Hyman, 1949; Carpenter, 1955). Alexander/Stirling also claimed the power to break up clouds with his psychokinetic powers (Ross, 1955).

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SAUCERIAN BULLETIN. *See* Gray Roscoe Barker.

SAUCERS

The first issue of *Saucers* appeared in June 1953. A digest-sized quarterly edited by Max B. Miller of Los Angeles, it published a wide range of material, from scientific analyses of UFO evidence to contactee material. *Saucers* was one of the few periodicals in which both conservative mainstream ufologists and contactees, who ordinarily occupied separate mental and literary universes, found a home. Miller managed to be friends with everyone from **Donald E. Keyhoe** to **George Hunt Williamson**, and he was the first to publish the claims of celebrated 1950s contactee **Truman Bethurum**. *Saucers*' parent company, Flying Saucers International, sponsored the first **Giant Rock Spacecraft Convention** between August 16 and 18, 1953. The magazine was one of the best-edited and most interesting of the period. It folded with the Fall 1959/Winter 1960 issue, and Miller left the field to pursue other interests.

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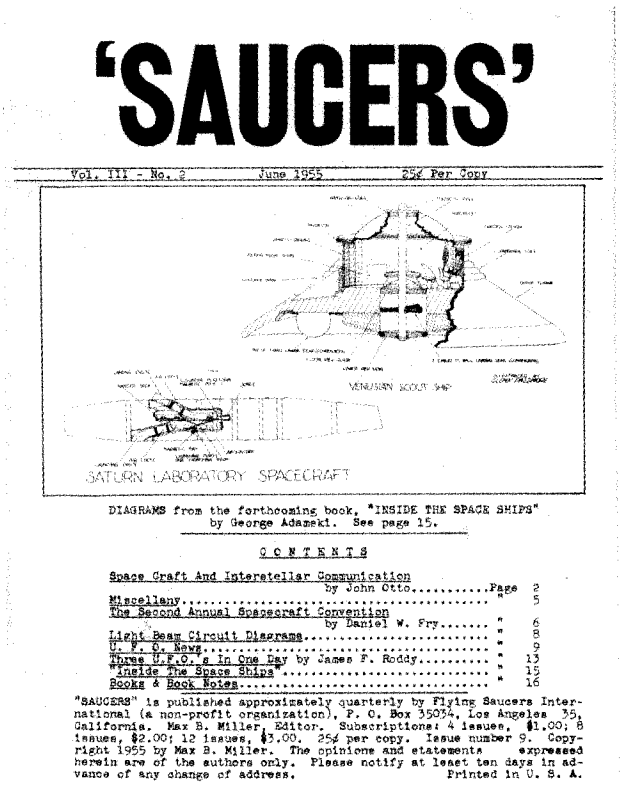
SCHMIDT, REINHOLD. *See* Reinhold Schmidt Contact Claim.

SCULLY, FRANK. *See* Scully Hoax.

SCULLY HOAX

On October 12, 1949, *Weekly Variety* columnist Frank Scully reported that the U.S. government had recovered crashed spaceships in the Southwestern desert.



'SAUCERS'

Vol. III - No. 2 June 1955 25¢ Per Copy

SATURN LABORATORY SPACECRAFT

DIAGRAMS from the forthcoming book, "INSIDE THE SPACE SHIPS" by George Adamski. See page 15.

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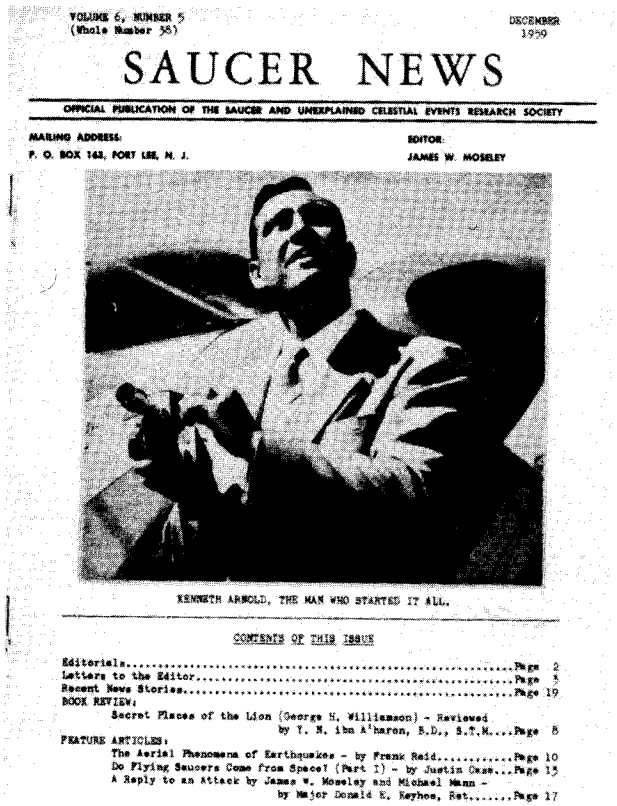
-1-

The June 1955 issue of *Saucers*, edited by Max B. Miller, depicts interiors of two spacecraft allegedly boarded by contactee George Adamski.

He elaborated on these sensational allegations in a best-selling 1950 book, *Behind the Flying Saucers*.

Scully wrote that on March 25, 1948, a flying saucer crashed on a rocky plateau east of Aztec, New Mexico. When Air Force investigators and government scientists arrived on the scene, they crawled through a broken porthole and came upon the bodies of 16 small humanlike beings dressed in the "style of 1890." Their skin was charred a chocolate color, apparently as a result of the rush of terrestrial air through the shattered window.

After a thorough study the scientists concluded that the vehicle "probably flew on magnetic lines of force." It was, they decided, most likely from Venus "because," Scully was told by his source, the pseudonymous "Dr. Gee," who said he had participated in the recovery operation, "they would probably be three or four times as large as human beings on this planet, and since the people on the grounded disc ship



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MAILING ADDRESS: P. O. BOX 163, FORT LEE, N. J. EDITOR: JAMES W. MOSELEY

KENNETH ARNOLD, THE MAN WHO STARTED IT ALL.

CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE

In its December 1959 issue James W. Moseley's *Saucer News* paid tribute to Boise, Idaho, businessman Kenneth Arnold, whose sighting over Mount Rainier, Washington, on June 24, 1947, ushered in the UFO age.

each other in print. Moseley and his associates picked fights even with ufology's most revered figures, such as Maj. **Donald E. Keyhoe** (Mann, 1959), with attacks that were often more outrageous than factual. The magazine was on firmer ground with its detailed, informed exposés of controversial characters such as **George Hunt Williamson** (Moseley and Mann, 1959), Otis T. Carr (Durant, 1958-1959; *see also* **Otis T. Carr Hoax**), and Lee Childers, better known as "**Prince Neosom**" (Mann, 1960).

In *Saucer News*' early days Moseley committed the ultimate heresy, one that bewildered or infuriated even those who were cheering his attacks on the contactees: he believed—or at any rate represented himself as believing—that flying saucers are of earthly origin. He claimed that "both the cigars and the saucers of today are merely improvements on the rocket work that was done in Germany during World War Two, notably at Pennemunde. The 'flying cigars' reported over the free world in recent years are guided missiles, constructed in the United States with the help of German scientists who came over here after the War. The saucers are also an improvement on the V-2, and are in some cases piloted and in some cases not. Similar craft are built in Russia with the help of German scientists who are now over there" (Moseley, 1955). None of this is supported by any evidence, and Moseley subsequently abandoned the notion.

In 1963 Moseley bought out Barker's *Saucerian Bulletin.* In 1967, with public interest in UFOs at a peak and Moseley a popular East Coast radio and television guest with a busy lecture schedule, *Saucer News* claimed a peak circulation of 10,000. The following year Moseley sold his magazine to Barker. The final issue appeared in 1972.

In 1976 Moseley started an eight-page newsletter which picked up where *Saucer News* left off, with a volume number that continued from the last issue of the former magazine. The newsletter's title always began with *Saucer* and followed it with a word that changed with each issue. Eventually it settled into the permanent title *Saucer Smear* ("Dedicated to the Highest Principles of Ufological Journalism"). A typical issue consists of Moseley's usually good-humored, always opinionated commentary on current issues and gossip about UFO personalities, followed by angry or amusing letters from readers. The spirit of *Saucer News* lives on in the pages of *Smear.*

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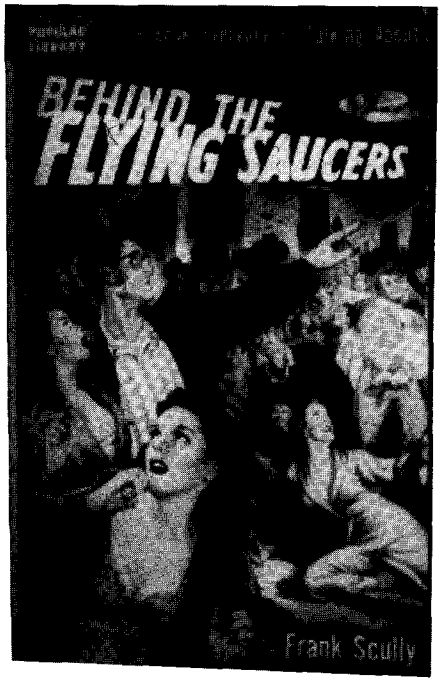

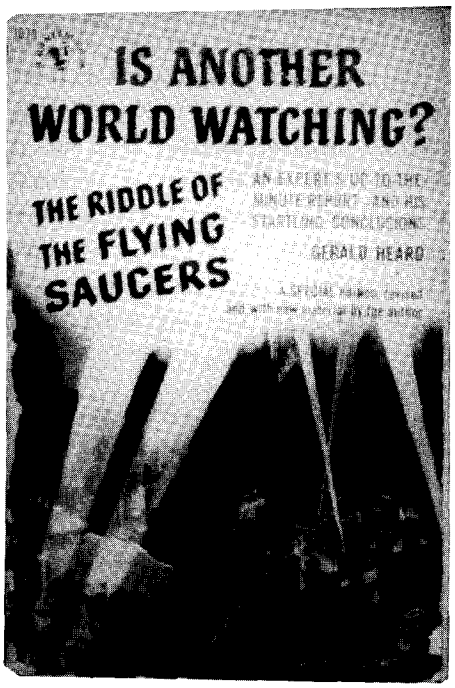

Two of the first UFO books, published in 1950, were Frank Scully's *Behind the Flying Saucers*, which claimed that spaceships had crashed in Arizona and New Mexico, and Gerald Heard's *Is Another World Watching?*, which speculated that UFOs are piloted by giant insects from Mars.

ranged in height from 36 to 42 inches, that ... ruled out Mars." The Venusians were human in every respect except for their size and apparent immunity from tooth decay.

Soon afterwards a crash occurred in Arizona, and 16 bodies were taken from the wreckage. A third spaceship went down near Phoenix, leaving two dead occupants. All three craft had dimensions divisible by nine.

Though Scully represented his sources as a Texas oilman and a government scientist specializing in magnetics, both–as *True* revealed in a 1952 exposé–were in fact veteran confidence artists. Writer J. P. Cahn reported that the flying-saucer story was a ruse to attract the attention of potential investors in a bogus oil-detection scheme allegedly linked to extraterrestrial technology (Cahn, 1952, 1956). Years later, in the early 1980s, William L. Moore conducted an exhaustive investigation of the hoax, uncovering a great deal of additional information (Moore, 1985).

Moore determined that the hoaxers, Silas Newton and Leo GeBauer ("Dr. Gee"), got their inspiration from an obscure 1949 science-fiction film, *The Flying Saucer*, whose producer, a flamboyant character named Mikel Conrad, claimed that the movie's spaceship scenes were of an actual saucer in government captivity (Parsons, 1949). To bolster the story, Conrad produced an "FBI agent" who swore that this was so. Conrad succeeded in fooling even his own press agents, who subsequently found that the "agent" was an actor. They resigned, publicly apologizing for their unwitting role in the scam. Meanwhile the Air Force launched its own investigation. When confronted by Air Force Office of Special Investigations officer James B. Shiley, Conrad confessed that he had concocted the tale to promote the movie.

Newton, who followed the controversy in the Los

Angeles newspapers, knew, too, of a recent report by two Death Valley prospectors who allegedly saw a UFO spin out of control and crash into a sand dune. Two humanoid occupants emerged and fled the scene, with the prospectors in hot pursuit. After giving up the chase, the miners returned to the scene of the crash, only to discover that the craft was no longer there. When Newton told his story to Scully, he changed its location to Phoenix, Arizona, and turned the prospectors into "scientists" who had forced the UFO down using sophisticated instrumentation. He also said he had the story from the "scientists" personally.

There seems no doubt that Scully was a victim, not a perpetrator, of the hoax. At the same time, however, there is no reason to believe his protestation that Dr. Gee was a composite of "eight men who had given me pieces of the story" (Scully, 1963). His response to Cahn's charges amounted to little more than an *ad hominem* attack on the reporter's character and a studied avoidance of substantive issues.

In late 1953 Newton and GeBauer went on trial in Denver for conspiracy to commit confidence crime. They were given suspended sentences and ordered to make restitution to investors. In February 1955 Newton was back in court, this time for selling $15,000 in worthless securities in a Utah uranium claim. Another uranium swindle, in this case involving $100,000, landed Newton and two associates back in a Denver court in March 1958.

Newton's legal troubles went back at least as far as 1928. When he died in Los Angeles in 1972, according to Moore, "there were no fewer than 140 claims filed against his estate by individuals who in most instances claimed Newton had 'borrowed' money from them in order to exploit a variety of oil or mining claims. Numerous others inquired, but when they discovered that Newton's estate totalled only about $16,000 (and that based mostly on arbitrary valuations of an assortment of mining leases), they did not pursue the matter. The total of the claims that were filed exceeded $1,350,000, with many of the accompanying affidavits alleging salted mining claims or oil having been pumped into the ground by night in order to be pumped back by day for the benefit of investors. As late as 1970, he was under indictment in Los Angeles on two counts of grand theft, and civil lawsuits came and went with considerable regularity" (Moore, *op. cit.*).

Moore suggests that Aztec, a town of 5000 persons in northwestern New Mexico, was chosen as the location of the tale because in August 1949, just as the UFO hoax was being generated, Newton sent GeBauer there—and specifically, according to the recollection of GeBauer's widow, to a "canyon east of town" (probably Hart Canyon, the alleged site of the crash) where he was to demonstrate the oil-detecting device for the locals.

The Aztec hoax is revived periodically. In 1974 Robert Spencer Carr, a retired State University of South Florida professor of mass communications, got national publicity when he retold the tale, with some embellishments (Barker, 1977; McClellan, 1975). In 1987 William S. Steinman and Wendelle C. Stevens released a thick book, *UFO Crash at Aztec*, which draws on speculation, rumor, unnamed informants, and paranoia to defend and elaborate on the original story. In the Steinman-Stevens version Newton and GeBauer were honorable men whose good names were destroyed by an unscrupulous journalist and by a sinister government agency which "was determined ... to set an example for anybody else who might decide to divulge information covering this very sensitive subject to the public, and to divert public attention completely away from the story of the crashed saucers and little bodies."

Despite repeated inquiries by ufologists and journalists, no resident of the Aztec area had professed to remember the crash of a flying saucer in 1948 or any other year ("Little Frozen Aliens," 1975).

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STRAITH LETTER. *See* **George Adamski; Gray Roscoe Barker; Hoaxes through 1959; James Willett Moseley.**

STRINGFIELD, LEONARD H. (1920-)

Leonard H. Stringfield was born in 1920 and worked professionally all his adult life as an advertising executive for a Cincinnati-based corporation for the manufacture of chemicals. During World War II he served with Army Air Force Intelligence. On August 28, 1945, while he and other Fifth Air Force personnel were flying from Ie Shima, near Okinawa, to Iwo Jima, their C-46 abruptly developed engine trouble and started to lose altitude. As it dipped, Stringfield and others looked out the windows and saw three "unidentifiable blobs of brilliant white light ... traveling in a straight line through drifts of cloud, seemingly parallel to the C-46 and equal to its speed" (Stringfield, 1957). The objects disappeared into a cloud bank, and the aircraft's engine functioned perfectly the rest of the flight. Stringfield was to wonder not only what the objects were but whether there was a connection between the engine failure and the strange aerial phenomena.

Later, when flying saucers and UFOs became something everyone had heard about, Stringfield followed reports closely and on July 25, 1952, in the midst of a huge nationwide wave, had his second sighting. He announced to the press that he was forming a group called Civilian Investigating Group for Aerial Phenomena which, if it accomplished nothing else, brought him publicity and attracted like-minded people. On March 10, 1954, he founded Civilian Research, Interplanetary Flying Objects (CRIFO). Two months later Mutual Broadcasting System newscaster **Frank Edwards** gave CRIFO's address over national radio, and within two weeks he and his wife Dell were sorting through 6000 letters. The monthly *CRIFO Newsletter* first saw print on April 7, 1954; it became *CRIFO Orbit* on July 1, 1955, and folded with the March 1, 1957, issue.

In September 1955 Stringfield, who had developed a reputation as a sensible man in a field loaded with nonsense (Ruppelt, 1960), was approached by Capt. Hugh McKinsie of the Air Defense Command and told that the Ground Observer Corps in the area had been instructed to forward reports to him. He was to evaluate these and pass on the best ones. He was given a telephone code number, Fox Trot Kilo 3-0 Blue, which would connect him with the command filter center.

"I'd pick up the phone and in a matter of a few seconds," he recalled, "I'd be in touch with one of the staff people. He in turn would tape my screened report and send it in five different directions—to CONELRAD and to area radar bases. If the UFO showed up on radar, then jets would be scrambled. Everything from that point on, I was told, was classified, and I was not to ask any questions. That was the agreement. It was an oral one, I might add. They were careful never to put anything in writing" (Clark, 1980b).

From his two-year experience he learned that what the Air Force was doing privately and what it was admitting to publicly were two entirely separate matters. The Air Force was covering up significant UFO reports. His experiences and observations were chronicled in his self-published *Inside Saucer Post ... 3-0 Blue* (1957).

In the late 1950s he was president of the Cincinnati UFO Society, and from 1957 to 1970 he was a public-relations officer of the Washington-based **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena**, headed by his friend **Donald Keyhoe**, a retired Marine Corps major and prominent critic of the cover-up. In the 1970s Stringfield joined the Board of Directors of the Mutual UFO Network, based in Illinois and later in Texas. The University of Colorado UFO project, usually known as the Condon Committee after its director, physicist Edward U. Condon, made him its Early Warning Coordinator for southwestern Ohio. He screened and sent on all significant area UFO reports to the project.

By the 1970s Stringfield had begun to seem more like a historical figure than a significant presence in current ufology, many of whose advocates were dismissing extraterrestrial UFOs and Air Force cover-ups as relics of an earlier, more naive era. In 1977 Doubleday published Stringfield's *Situation Red, The UFO Siege!*, which one young ufologist called a "curiously old-fashioned kind of book which ... might have been written ... 20 years ago.... Stringfield is still fighting

the old battles" (Clark, 1977). Particularly noteworthy, even heretical, was Stringfield's suggestion that reports of **crashes of UFOs**, rejected by serious investigators ever since the **Scully hoax** of 1950, be reexamined in the light of testimony from such seemingly reliable sources as a Presbyterian minister and a former Wright-Patterson Air Force Base employee. Despite criticism from some ufologists, the next year Stringfield presented the first in a series of papers on "retrievals of the third kind" at the annual MUFON conference (Stringfield, 1978).

Soon such claims were occupying Stringfield's full attention, and he developed a number of sources, most of whose names he insisted on keeping anonymous. One of them was a physician who claimed to have performed autopsies on humanoid bodies for the Air Force. Though some of Stringfield's cases were later proven to be hoaxes (Clark, 1980a), in time other investigators overcame their resistance to the idea of crashed discs, after one alleged crash, a July 1947 episode known as the "Roswell incident," became the subject of extensive investigation and documentation (Moore, 1985; Randle and Schmitt, 1991; Schmitt, 1990). If Stringfield is proven right, history will record that he was a pioneer who reopened ufology's most important, albeit most-long-neglected, question.

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SWAN/CIA CONTACT STORY

If Frances Swan of Eliot, Maine, had not lived next door to retired Navy Adm. Herbert B. Knowles, practically no one would ever have heard of her. And if practically no one had ever heard of her, a UFO legend would never have been born.

The legend has it that on July 6, 1959, a Naval Intelligence officer established psychic contact with beings from another world. The incident occurred at CIA headquarters in full view of three high-level agency functionaries. Challenged to prove their reality, the aliens flew a UFO past the building. As three CIA men watched it through the window, the radar center at Washington National Airport was puzzled to find that its returns from that area of the sky had been "blocked off" in some mysterious fashion.

This is the story told in Robert Emenegger's *UFOs Past, Present and Future* (1974), based on testimony from those who participated in the event. The story, like all good stories, was one that grew in the telling. The real story goes like this:

In 1954 Mrs. Swan, a woman with a life-long interest in psychic and spiritual phenomena, confided to Adm. Knowles and his wife Helen that she was in contact with beings from another world. She traced

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CRASHES AND RETRIEVALS OF UFOs, 1960-1979

As ufology left the early—post-1947—era and entered the 1960s, ufologists generally agreed on three matters: (1) UFOs were probably extraterrestrial spacecraft. (2) Humanoid crews piloted them. (3) The U.S. Air Force and no doubt other official agencies as well possessed significant evidence of otherworldly visitation but are covering it up. Of a fourth matter which should have followed logically from the first three, however, there were practically no advocates.

The rumor that government agencies had secretly recovered wreckage and bodies from crashed UFOs began to circulate as early as July 1947, in the wake of an episode which took place in eastern New Mexico. For a few hours radio broadcasts and newspaper headlines all over the world reported the incredible news that remains of a "flying disc" had been picked up on a ranch in Lincoln County—until military spokesmen deflated the story with an announcement that the "disc" was nothing more than a misidentified weather balloon. Nonetheless some individuals, including several stationed at Roswell Army Air Field (from which the recovery of the alleged balloon was directed), confided to family members or trusted friends that strange bodies had been found at a second crash site near the first one; the two crashes apparently involved a single craft and occurred at about the same time.

The "Roswell incident," as it is now known, attracted little notice from ufologists, who—if they knew of it at all—saw no reason not to credit the official explanation (Bloecher, 1967). That view did not begin to change until the late 1970s, when ufologist Stanton T. Friedman interviewed retired Maj. Jesse A. Marcel, the first military officer on the residue site. Over the next decade and a half investigators such as Friedman, William L. Moore, Kevin D. Randle, Donald R. Schmitt, Karl T. Pflock, Thomas J. Carey, and others would interview hundreds of persons connected in some way with the incident, and the Roswell incident would become the subject of books, articles, films, and videos as well as the focus of renewed government inquiries and official explanations.

But no one could have foreseen any of this during ufology's formative years, when crash/retrieval claims acquired an unsavory guilt-by-association reputation after they figured prominently in Frank Scully's 1950 bestseller *Behind the Flying Saucers*; Scully's informants turned out to be notorious con artists. (See *The Emergence of a Phenomenon*, pp. 300-03.) After that the subject was addressed rarely; most such treatments were either cautious or skeptical. (See *Emergence*, pp. 113-26.) Nonetheless as late as 1974 UFO buff and retired college professor Robert Spencer Carr revived Scully's yarns as if they were a new discovery, and his pronouncements got considerable press coverage, much of it of the tongue-in-cheek variety (Barker, 1977; Beckley, 1989; Baumann, 1974; "Hidden Body," 1974; McClellan, 1975).

Crash stories of various sorts continued to circulate, and though no one was offering any proof, not all informants were so obviously disreputable—or so publicity-hungry or profit-conscious—as Scully's. For example, Isabel Davis, among the most intelligent and critical-minded of the first-generation ufologists, could not help being intrigued when an acquaintance, a medical doctor and physiologist, related what she said was an experience she had undergone in the late 1950s. The doctor had been taken to a secure facility, given special clothing, and directed to study portions of bodies which she quickly recognized as humanlike but not human. Her supervisors told her nothing about what these beings were or how they came to be there. After her work was completed, her clothes were returned, and she was ordered not to talk about the incident—which was hardly necessary, she remarked to Davis, since no one would have believed her anyway (Maccabee, 1991).

Davis, who understood the limitations of purely anecdotal testimony in these areas, never published the story. In a 1962 book another conservative ufologist, Coral E. Lorenzen of the Aerial Phenomena Re-

search Organization (APRO), recounted a generally comparable tale:

> In 1952 a young meteorologist told me that in 1948 at Wright Air Development Center [now Wright-Patterson Air Force Base] . . . when he had stepped off en route to California, a buddy of World War II days had showed [sic] him space suits ranging from 3 to about 5½ feet in height and diagrams of a circular ship which bore a strong resemblance to a "flying saucer." He said that people who laughed about flying saucers were going to get a big jolt some day—these suits had been taken off the bodies of men who had apparently perished in the crash of their saucer-shaped ships. If true, this story indicates that the "little men" were known to officialdom at an early date [Lorenzen, 1962].

Two years later APRO related another tale of an alleged retrieval. This one took place, we are to believe, in the wake of the **Socorro CE2/CE3**, a New Mexico incident in which a police officer briefly encountered a landed UFO and its two occupants on April 24, 1964. The Socorro event attracted international publicity and remains an impressive UFO case. The rumors APRO committed to print are neither well known nor impressively documented but undeniably interesting.

According to APRO, on April 30 the pilot of a B-57 bomber from Holloman Air Force Base, Alamogordo, New Mexico, radioed the base control tower to say he was watching an "egg-shaped and white" UFO with markings "the same as the one at Socorro" (an arrow pointed vertically from a horizontal base to an umbrellalike half-circle). As he continued to observe, the UFO landed on the base.

Jim and Coral Lorenzen, APRO's directors, said they had their story from a "very reliable source." A few phone calls elicited the information that others had heard the story, including a ham-radio operator who supposedly had monitored the exchange between the pilot and the control tower. When another reporter who learned of the alleged sighting called Holloman, he got a denial that any such event had occurred. The Lorenzens swore that they had a separate source for the report; thus, they wrote, "we had three entirely independent, unconnected sources of information."

Around this time an airman entered an Alamogordo clothing store, and as he was doing business, he blurted out an incredible story to a small group of listeners. A UFO was parked in a hangar at Holloman and was under heavy guard, he said. A day or two later, however, he returned to the store to insist he had made a "mistake" and there was no such thing as an alien spacecraft at Holloman ("UAO Landing," 1964).

Other crash episodes were set in South American landscapes and found their way into print in newspapers of uncertain reliability. Some, such as an incident which supposedly occurred in Peru in 1975 ("International," 1975; "Lima," 1976), seem to be press inventions. Moreover, the new Space Age reality of plummeting satellites provided an alternative explanation for crashes to earth of craft from space. Recoveries of such objects were typically clouded in secrecy; thus when an incident was reported to have occurred in a location inaccessible to Western ufologists, it was impossible to tell what, if anything, really happened. For example, in January 1965 *La Cronica*, an Argentine newspaper, asserted that a "mysterious artifact" had fallen near the village of San Miguel in a remote rural district. The provincial government allegedly sent a small aircraft over the site, and the investigators observed a cigar-shaped object on the ground. It was said to be eight meters long and one meter in diameter. According to the press account:

> It can be seen from a long way off as it is giving out an intense brilliant white luminosity. In the rear part, the capsule has what seems to be a turbine or something of that kind; it seems to be half buried.

The crew took numerous photographs (one, of a tube-shaped object resting on desert sand, appeared in a press account), and later police and other official personnel went to the site for a closer look. *La Cronica* suggested that the object could be "part of an artificial satellite," but it also reported:

> The local inhabitants declare that the strange object is a flying saucer, and many of them also declare that they have seen little individuals walking about around the craft in strange uniforms like divers' suits that gave off a green phosphorescence! One thing is quite certain:

> the people of the district are terrified and nobody ventures out of doors.

Reportedly the capsule was taken to Air Force headquarters in Mendoza and from there to the Center for Space Investigations in Cordoba. Now the newspaper was describing it as four, not eight, meters long, without explaining the discrepancy (Bowen, 1965). Nothing more is known of the incident, if incident it is.

Another crash incident attributed to space junk is set in Pitipui, Colombia, where on February 12, 1968, witnesses saw a metallic disc and heard explosions. After a search they found a large, lightweight piece of metal. They tried to cut it but could not. So the material was put aboard an airplane and flown to Bogotá, where allegedly scientists from a dozen countries examined it ("Remains," 1968). It was then turned over to the U.S. Air Force and to **NASA**, which identified it as from the Apollo 5 mission ("Crashed UFO Investigation," 1969).

In 1961 the U.S. Air Force established the classified Project Moon Dust to "locate, recover and deliver descended foreign space vehicles," as a November 1961 Air Force document puts it. Recoveries of satellite debris in Sudan (August 17, 1967), Nepal (March 25, 1968), New Zealand (April 7, 1972), and Bolivia (1978, 1979) are mentioned in official documents. Moon Dust's possible role in recoveries of other kinds of "foreign space vehicles"—those of presumed unearthly origin—would fuel controversy in later decades, after the project's existence became known (Good, 1988; Fawcett and Greenwood, 1984; Allan, 1994; Randle and Schmitt, 1994a, 1994b).

Sometimes even when an incident was reported in the United States, it was not always clear exactly what, if anything, took place. A case in point is a complex but ultimately unconvincing series of claims focused on the proposition that a strange construction crash-landed near Kecksburg, Pennsylvania, in the late afternoon of December 9, 1965. Though the story would become a staple of crash/retrieval lore in the late 1980s and beyond, it suffers from fatal conflicts in testimony. Local people, for example, do not even agree on whether the incident happened at all—though, if (as several accounts had it) an acorn-shaped structure plummeted into a nearby woods and brought an armed military contingent to the site, one presumes everyone in the small community would have noticed ("After," 1990; Templeton, 1991). The full truth may never be known with certainty, but it probably is safe to say this is not a UFO incident. More likely, as separate investigations by Kevin D. Randle (Randle, 1995) and Robert R. Young (Young, 1991, 1995) indicate, it began as an undeniably real event (the appearance of a spectacular bolide, which in later tellings became a UFO observed over several states [Sanderson, 1966]) triggered the imaginations of the impressionable and loosed the tongues of the yarn-spinners.

The Las Vegas case. A more intriguing and evidential case occurred on April 18, 1962, in Nevada and Utah. There can be no question that it happened; numerous witnesses and a radar tracking attested to the passage of an unusual flying object. Reporters interviewed witnesses, as did the Air Force (which also conducted a desert search for the object) and—years later—ufologist Kevin Randle. **Project Blue Book** officially explained the object as a bolide, but aspects of the incident belie this interpretation.

The episode apparently began with a sighting of a westward-moving glowing red object over Oneida, New York. The original observers saw it for no more than a few seconds. Though this certainly sounds like a meteor, the object began to be picked up on radar as it headed through the Midwest into the Southwest. The Air Defense Command alerted bases along the object's trajectory. At least one of them, Luke Air Force Base near Phoenix, sent interceptors after it. When the UFO passed over Nephi, Utah, observers on the ground heard the rumble of jet engines in its wake.

At Eureka, Utah, the object was seen to land. The witness described the UFO as a glowing orange oval which emitted a low whirring sound. At the same time electrical service from a nearby power plant was disrupted. The object then rose and headed west toward Nevada. It swept toward the south, and radar lost it east of Las Vegas. Witnesses said the object, which looked like a "tremendous flaming sword," vanished in a red explosion in the direction of Mesquite, Nevada, according to a headline story in

the April 19 issue of the *Las Vegas Sun* (Stalmaker, 1962).

In a terse summary Blue Book files confirm a radar tracking at Nellis AFB in Nevada:

> Radar sighting. Speed of object varied. Initial observation at 060, no elevation. Disappearance at 105 [degrees] az[imuth at] 10,000 feet altitude. Heading tentatively NE, however disappeared instantly to S. Observed by search and height radars. No visual.

These last two words are misleading. Apparently they mean that the personnel attending the radar did not see the object. The change in speed is further indication that the object was not a meteor. Blue Book further noted:

> Obj. came in over Cuba and apparently landed in rough terrain West of Eureka, Utah. Bright enough to trip photo electric cell which controlled city street lights.

Air Force Capt. Herman Gordon Shields provided this testimony in an interview conducted at Hill AFB:

> I was flying a C-119 aircraft from the left seat [captain's seat]. We were approximately two miles west of La Van, Utah[,] flying 8500 feet MSL. Our true airspeed was a little less than 170 knots. We were making a right turn from a heading of about 068 degrees to 165 degrees. We were approximately 25 degrees of bank on the aircraft and we had turned for about 30 degrees to a heading of about 098 or 100 degrees, somewhere in there, when it began to get very bright in the cockpit.
>
> The illumination was from above. It built up slowly. My first impression while the intensity was low was that it was the landing lights of another aircraft. Of course, when the intensity increased this was ruled out automatically. The cockpit was illuminated from above. In the C-119 aircraft there is an instrument panel in the middle of the cockpit up above on the ceiling of the cockpit. The light source was coming from this area that was blanked out, in other words, straight behind this instrument panel because neither Lieutenant Larson, who was in the right seat[,] nor I saw the source of the illumination.
>
> We continued the turn. The light intensity increased until we could see objects [on the ground] as bright as day for a radius of five to ten miles from the aircraft. This would probably be a diameter of twenty miles or so. Objects on the ground, on the hills around us, were clearly distinguishable. Colors were distinguishable. It was as bright as daylight. The intensity of the light diminished faster than it had increased. After the light had decreased in intensity we were still looking for the light source, and I noticed an object to my left between the wing and the lower part of the fuselage of the aircraft against the hills.
>
> By this time the light had decreased so that the hills were dark. It was night again. And this object which I saw was illuminated. It had a long slender appearance comparable to a cigarette in size, that is, the diameter with respect to the length of the object. The fore part, or the lower part of the object, was very bright, intense white such as a magnesium fire. The second half, the aft section, was a clearly distinguishable yellowish color. I would say the object was just about divided in half, the fore part being intensely white, the aft section having a more yellow color to it. . . .
>
> I saw only a slender object. I don't know what the shape was. . . . There was no exhaust, no trail following after it. It was clearly defined. I saw it for a period of maybe one to two seconds.

Military interviews of civilian witnesses filled a single-spaced, seven-page report. A number mentioned that even after it was no longer visible, they heard booms in the sky and saw a trail of gray smoke. According to one witness:

> As the object passed over Robinson [Utah], it slowed down in [the] air, and after, [a] gasping sound was heard, the object spurted ahead again. After this procedure was repeated three or four times, the object arched over and began descending to earth after which the object turned bluish color and then burned out or went dark.

> After the object began to slow down it began to wobble or "fishtail" in its path.

Douglas M. Crouch, head of Hill AFB's criminal-investigation division, concluded:

> Preliminary analysis indicates that each of the observers interviewed were [sic] logical, mature persons, and that each person was convinced that he had observed some tangible object, not identifiable as a balloon or conventional type aircraft. The theory that the object was a manned aircraft was abandoned due to the described shape and color and flaming tail of the object, plus the fact there are no reports of missing aircraft in this area. No unusual meteorological or astronomical conditions were present which would furnish an explanation for the sighting. No missile test firings are conducted in the immediate area other than static tests. The hypothesis that the object was a falling meteor is questioned due to the statements of three observers describing the flat trajectory, plus the description of sounds emanating from the object. Due to the inaccessibility of the valley, ten miles wide by 15 miles long in which the object apparently came to earth, no further search for the object is contemplated. With the completion of this initial report, no explanation has been developed for the brilliant illumination of the area, the object itself, or the explosion in the wake of the object [Randle, 1995].

A search-and-rescue party led by Clark County Deputy Sheriff Walter Butt headed in jeeps into the Spring Mountain, Nevada, area. Though the search continued all night and at one point aircraft were brought in, nothing was found. Then, Crouch's recommendations notwithstanding, the Air Force did conduct a search on May 8, flying Blue Book director Lt. Col. Robert Friend and its scientific consultant, astronomer J. Allen Hynek, to the area. Accompanied by Crouch, they interviewed witnesses in central Utah over a one-day period. At the end of it, the two had persuaded Crouch that a bolide was responsible for the sighting.

In fact, the object could have been no such thing. When seen over Reno, it was heading from west to east. Over Utah witnesses insisted without exception that it was moving southeast to northwest. It had changed direction, in other words, indicating that it was under intelligent control. Randle collected witness accounts from, among others, Sheriff Raymond Jackson of Nephi. Jackson heard a roar, looked up, saw a westbound yellow-white flame, and heard booming sounds. At that moment all the town's lights went out temporarily.

At both Eureka and Reno the UFO was seen *under* two aircraft by those aboard them. As Randle remarks, "Coupled with the testimony of three witnesses in Utah who said the object was about five hundred feet above them, [the aircraft sightings] tended to rule out the bolide theory because the meteor would have been too low for too long" (Randle, 1995). Moreover, according to a statement made to the press by a Nellis AFB spokesman, radar would not have tracked a meteor. At best it would have picked up, briefly, its ionized trail, and that would not have appeared as a single moving point.

In the Air Force file on the case, Randle found this assessment by an unidentified intelligence officer:

> On April 18, 1962, the Air Force Defense Command was puzzled by an aerial object that exploded and seemed to be a meteor, but had the unique distinction of being tracked by radar 70 miles northwest of Las Vegas, Nevada[,] in a blinding flash. An Air Force Defense Command alert reported the object was tracked and traced over New York, Kansas, Utah, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Wyoming, Arizona and California, so that its light covered almost as much area as that created by the big hydrogen space bomb test held later in the Pacific hundreds of miles high.

The UFO, which crossed several time zones in its flight across much of the continent, was in view for something like 32 minutes, the incident ending around 7:30 P.M. Las Vegas time. As Randle remarks, this was "much too long for a meteor. A meteor would cross the United States much faster. And it means that the object, whatever it was, was not a meteor" (*ibid.*).

Though this extraordinary case was covered in a number of Southwestern newspapers at the time it took place, ufologists mostly ignored it. Only Frank

Edwards, a radio personality and author of several "true mystery" books, wrote about it, basing his account entirely on the *Las Vegas Sun* article (Edwards, 1964). Randle, the only ufologist to conduct a serious inquiry, interviewed witnesses, collected press reports, and uncovered Air Force documents in the late 1980s.

In the course of his investigation, Randle received a letter from a man who asked to remain anonymous. The correspondent, who claimed to have been an officer stationed at Nellis AFB when the incident happened, said he and 30 fellow officers were driven into the desert early the following morning. There, using flashlights, they were directed to clean a debris-filled field. As the day dawned, they were loaded into a bus whose windows were blacked out with dark paper. One piece of paper, however, did not entirely cover the window, and the correspondent glimpsed quickly through it to see a damaged saucer-shaped machine (Randle and Schmitt, 1991). This is the only known allegation of a retrieval of remains from the UFO's descent, and unless independent confirmation comes to light, it must be viewed with skepticism. On the other hand, if something did indeed crash, presumably it left some evidence of its fate.

Retrieval in Arizona? An interesting but flawed crash/retrieval story came to the attention of prominent ufologist **Raymond E. Fowler** in 1973. Fowler learned that two years earlier the Framingham, Massachusetts, edition of the *Middlesex News* had interviewed Jeff Young, a boy who was writing a book on UFOs for youthful readers. In the resulting article the boy said he had spoken with a man who, while working as a Project Blue Book consultant, participated in the recovery of a crashed UFO.

Fowler contacted the young man and learned further details. The man—to whom Fowler subsequently would assign the pseudonym "Fritz Werner"—said he had been an engineer in the Office of Special Studies of what was then the Air Force's Air Materiel Command Installations Division at Wright-Patterson AFB. Later he designed landing gear and alighting devices at the Aircraft Laboratory at Wright Air Development Center. For a while Werner was on temporary assignment with the Atomic Energy Commission at the Atomic Proving Ground in Nevada. Once, he told Young and the latter's friend Paul Chetham, he and some associates had had a UFO sighting during an atomic test. He had experienced another while in Thule, Greenland.

Werner further claimed that in 1954 (or 1953, as he would revise the date in subsequent testimony), when he was back at Wright-Patterson, he received a call from the base commander instructing him to fly to Chicago, then on to Phoenix, to investigate a crashed UFO. Werner said the UFO looked like a "teardrop-shaped cigar" made of a dull material. While at the site, he caught a glimpse of the body of the alien occupant, four feet tall and humanoid, lying in a tent.

As if this were not already fantastic enough, Werner went on to state that he later had actual contact with UFO beings.

When Fowler interviewed Werner, he heard a story that was different in some particulars. For example, Werner now said the incident had happened while he was assigned to the Frenchman Flats area of Nevada. The evening before—May 20, 1953—Dr. Ed Doll, his superior, ordered him to report for special duty the next day. He was driven to nearby Indian Springs AFB and with 15 other specialists put on a military plane and flown to Phoenix. The passengers were not allowed to speak with one another.

At Phoenix they boarded a bus with other personnel and rode for about four hours. Because the windows were blacked out, the passengers could not tell where they were going. The only explanation they got was from an Air Force colonel who said a supersecret Air Force vehicle had crashed and the specialists were to study it from the points of view of their respective disciplines.

When the bus stopped, the men were summoned by name one at a time and escorted to the site, which Werner thought he recognized as being near Kingman, Arizona, not far from the proving grounds where Werner was working. Apparently the trip to Phoenix and back was part of an elaborate ruse to keep the participants from knowing the location of the incident.

The object, heavily guarded and illuminated by two brilliant spotlights, was oval-shaped and 30 feet in diameter. As he expressed it in an affidavit he prepared for Fowler, it looked like

> two deep saucers, one inverted upon the other. . . . My particular job was to determine, from the angle and depth of impact into the sand, how fast the vehicle's forward and vertical velocities were at the time of impact. . . . Questions having nothing to do with our own special areas were not answered.
>
> An armed military policeman guarded a tent pitched nearby. I managed to glance inside at one point and saw the dead body of a four-foot, humanlike creature in a silver metallic-looking suit. The skin on its face was dark brown. This may have been caused by exposure to our atmosphere. . . .
>
> As soon as each person finished his task, he was interviewed over a tape recorder and escorted back to the bus. On the way back . . . I managed to talk with someone else going back to it at the same time. He told me that he had glanced inside the object and saw two swivel-like seats, as well as instruments and displays. An airman, who noticed we were talking, separated us and warned us not to talk with each other.
>
> After we all returned to the bus, the Air Force colonel who was in charge had us raise our right hands and take an oath not to reveal what we had experienced. I was instructed to write my report in longhand and not to type or reproduce it. A telephone number was given me to call when the report was complete. I called the number and an airman picked up the report.

Werner showed Fowler an old calendar diary which contained an entry marked May 20, 1953. It read in part, "Got a funny call from Dr. Doll at 10. I'm going on a special job tomorrow." The next day: "Got picked up at Indian Springs AFB at 4:30 P.M. for a job I can't write or talk about." In Fowler's estimation the paper and ink looked "aged."

Fowler was prepared to dismiss the obvious inconsistencies as deriving mostly from "memory lapses." He noted Werner's academic background—two bachelor's degrees in mathematics and physics and a master's in engineering—and positive character references from former employers and professional associates. Through the Atomic Energy Commission, Fowler confirmed the dates and names of the tests Werner had mentioned. In *Casebook of a UFO Investigator* (1981) Fowler essentially endorses the claim and glosses over credibility problems he had earlier discussed more frankly in a private report prepared for the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP).

At one point Fowler had questioned Werner about his conflicting descriptions of the crashed UFO. In his report to NICAP, Fowler wrote:

> [T]he witness appeared flustered for the first time and said that he had described the object he had seen over Thule, Greenland, to the boys. I reminded him that he had described the Thule sighting to me as having been a black disc seen at a distance. He started to insist until I produced the copy of the transcript, which clearly indicated that he had described the crashed object, not the Thule object, to the boys. At this point, he backed down and admitted that he had lied to the boys. He said that the description given me was accurate because I was really conducting a serious investigation into the matter. In my opinion, this is the most significant and damaging contradiction without a completely adequate explanation.

Werner said he had been drinking when Young and Chetham interviewed him. When he drank, he explained, he exaggerated things. He had been under the influence of four martinis, he said. When Fowler checked with the boys, they said they had seen Werner consume one beer in the course of the interview. It is possible, of course, that Werner drank the martinis *before* the boys showed up, but nothing about this aspect of the story inspires confidence.

Equally disquieting is the undeniable similarity Werner's story bears to elements of Scully's discredited *Behind the Flying Saucers*. Consider these "coincidences":

(1) Two of Scully's fictitious crashed saucers came down near proving grounds in the Southwest. Werner's saucer did, too.

(2) In one of Scully's cases researchers were dispatched from Phoenix to study the vehicle. So were the specialists in Werner's story.

(3) Scully's saucers appeared to be composed of an aluminumlike substance, as did Werner's.

(4) Inside one of Scully's craft were two "bucket seats" in front of an instrument panel. Inside Werner's were two "swivel seats" in front of "instruments and displays."

(5) The skin of Scully's humanoids was "charred a very dark chocolate color . . . [apparently] as a result of [terrestrial] air rushing through that broken porthole window." Werner's humanoid's skin was "dark brown. This may have been caused by exposure to our atmosphere."

Had Werner read Scully? It is hard not to suspect as much. Kevin Randle also cites the story's curious portrayal of security procedures. Why, after the occupants of the bus were ordered not to speak with one another, would an officer call out their names once the bus reached its destination? Such an action "would provide those involved with a way of learning more about the assignment after they were returned to their regular duties because they had the names of others on the bus." Randle, a former Air Force intelligence officer, characterizes this as a "major breach" in security.

Randle also wonders why Werner "would note in his unclassified desk calendar that he was involved in a special project" (Randle, *op. cit.*). But even if authentic, the entries do not specifically mention a UFO-related project. A man working in sensitive areas, as Werner is supposed to have done, surely must have participated in a number of jobs he "can't write or talk about."

Fowler was able to establish that Ed Doll existed and that he had been employed by the Atomic Energy Commission. Fowler's efforts to locate him, however, were unavailing. William Moore, who interviewed him in California on October 9, 1981, had better luck. When he asked Doll about the incident, Doll denied knowing anything about it. Questioned about Werner (whose real name Moore knew and mentioned), Doll replied that he had never heard of him (Moore, 1982). Two former Blue Book heads said the same thing.

A case for the Werner story can be made, even if only shakily. Why, one may ask, would a liar have mentioned Doll's name, knowing that he could deny the story (as indeed he did)? A proponent would further argue that Doll's denial is only to be expected; after all, he may have taken his security oath more seriously than Werner seems to have done. Moreover, other persons have spoken of what may be the same event.

One of these was an individual identified only as "an Air Force Major, named Daly . . . a metallurgist stationed at Wright-Patterson AFB in 1953" (Stringfield, 1978). Daly was a friend to the father of Charles Wilhelm, a Cincinnati UFO enthusiast. In 1968 Daly told the senior Wilhelm that in April 1953 he was flown blindfolded to a "hot and sandy" area. Once there, he spent two days examining a metallic disc-shaped craft 25 to 30 feet in diameter. Perhaps, assuming for the sake of argument that the Daly and Werner stories are true in some sense, Daly's memory of the month is slightly off.

Another story came from a woman named Judy Woolcott. In 1965, she told ufologist Donald Schmitt, she got a letter from her husband, a professional military officer serving in Vietnam, a week before he was killed in action. Unfortunately, sometime before she met Schmitt a dozen years later, she misplaced the letter and thus was forced to reconstruct its contents from memory.

Supposedly her late husband had been on duty at an air base control tower in the Southwest when an unidentified object appeared on radar. Soon the object dropped off the screen, and a white light flashed in the distance. Woolcott and other base personnel set out in jeeps and eventually came upon a domed disc, with no apparent external damage, embedded in the sand. But before they could get any closer, a military convoy showed up at the scene, ushered them off the site, and drove them back to the base, where they were sworn to secrecy. Later Woolcott heard talk from military policemen that bodies had been found inside the craft. The crash took place somewhere near Kingman.

Randle heard an interesting story from a woman who had worked in the Parachute Branch at Wright-Patterson in the early 1950s. At some point in 1952 or 1953 (the woman had only a general sense of the time period) a sergeant had entered the office where she worked. He said he had just flown in from the South-

west on a plane carrying the bodies of alien beings recovered in a UFO crash. The woman and her workmates did not believe the story. Within the hour, however, the base commander, Col. C. Pratt Brown, arrived to insist that the sergeant's story was no more than a rumor which should not be repeated. To ensure that it was not repeated, he had everyone sign an official form. The form stated that if they did not keep their silence, they would be subject to a $20,000 fine and 20 years in jail (Randle, *op. cit.*).

Randle offers this cautionary note:

> The problem is clearly that the secretary did not remember the exact time frame or location. To suggest this was part of the Kingman case, we must resort to speculation based on the limited documentation of her employment experience at Wright-Patterson. The only reported crash that fits into the time frame is the Kingman event, and the connection is very weak.

In 1964 ufologist Richard Hall heard a secondhand account of a 1953 crash in the Arizona desert. His informant, a future Vietnam commander and in Hall's assessment unlikely hoaxer, said his Air Force training officer had informed him of the incident, in which four small bodies were recovered (Randles, 1995).

After speaking to a group of pilots in Cincinnati in 1977, crash/retrieval investigator Leonard H. Stringfield (see below) was approached by a former Army warrant officer who was now a flight commander in the Air National Guard. The man told Stringfield that one night in 1953, when he was stationed at Wright-Patterson AFB, a DC-7 flew in carrying five crates. From a distance of about 12 feet, Stringfield's informant claimed, he looked inside three of them and observed in each the body of a four-foot-tall humanoid lying on a fabric covering a bed of dry ice. The skin looked brown, and the hairless head was narrow but oversized. The eyes were open. The nose was small, virtually indistinct. One body, which had what the observer took to be breasts, apparently was of a female. The informant further claimed to have learned from a member of the plane crew that one being had survived the crash but died soon afterwards. The crash allegedly happened in the Arizona desert (Stringfield, 1980a).

Taken alone, the Werner story has too many problems to merit serious attention. None of the other reports of an alleged mid-1953 crash/retrieval provides anything beyond circumstantial support; the only firsthand account, which in any case exists only as an anecdote, is not itself set at the Arizona site. Yet whatever their inadequacies, it is these other reports that leave the question open. Only other, better evidence—if it exists—will provide the answer.

Along the border. While serving at an Army outpost in Korea in 1964, W. Todd Zechel, an impressionable young noncom from Wisconsin, heard a story from a fellow soldier who claimed that his uncle, an Air Force colonel, had participated in the recovery of a flying saucer which crashed "somewhere in the Southwest" in the early 1950s. The body of a humanoid being had been found inside.

Zechel, who had never heard a story like this before, was duly wowed. After leaving the service, he devoted years to a notably unsuccessful effort to prove that the incident had really happened. Initially, his colleague's assertion notwithstanding, he placed the incident in 1948, then 1950. The colonel, who did exist, insisted with growing exasperation, after Zechel peppered him with phone calls and on one occasion showed up uninvited at his door, that he knew nothing about the episode. Eventually he was forced to threaten legal redress if Zechel did not stop bothering him.

Still, one interesting story from a seemingly credible source did emerge from this otherwise farcical episode. In the files of the Washington-based National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) Zechel found a 1967 clipping from a small Pennsylvania weekly. The article concerned a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel who headed the local Civil Air Patrol chapter. Toward the end, the reporter casually noted, "The Colonel, himself, saw [a UFO] crash in Mexico while serving with the U.S.A.F."

Zechel subsequently interviewed the man, whose name was Robert Willingham. Willingham related this incident, said to have occurred in December 1950, in an affidavit:

He and his radar man had been flying cover for a B-47 mission in an F-94 out of Dyess Air Force Base,

Texas, when they heard reports of a UFO moving at 2000 mph. First tracked over Washington state, the object streaked southward and remained on radar until it suddenly disappeared. Dyess radar operators concluded that the object had crashed about 15 or 20 miles across the border from Laredo.

Willingham returned to base and breathlessly related the story to another pilot (since deceased) with whom he borrowed a small plane and flew to the crash site. Soon they found what they were looking for: a large object covered with canvas and guarded by Mexican soldiers. After executing a quick landing, they attempted to approach the craft for a closer look but were ordered to leave, which they did—though not before Willingham secretly crammed a piece of metal into his pocket.

Shortly thereafter the two flew to Washington, D.C., for a debriefing at the Pentagon, where they were warned not to discuss the sighting and tracking of the UFO. Nothing was said about the crash, leaving Willingham and his companion to wonder if the Air Force even knew about the object's ultimate fate. Willingham gave the metal sample to a Marine Corps metallurgy laboratory in Hagerstown, Maryland, but a few days later, when he tried to find out the analysis results, no one would acknowledge that the piece had ever been there or that the man to whom Willingham had given it had ever worked there (Stringfield, 1978; Randle, *op. cit.*).

Beyond a few scattered rumors (and mention in the MJ-12 document, a notorious forgery which surfaced in the mid-1980s and which purports to be a briefing paper from the supersecret, high-level UFO project Majestic-12; see *UFOs in the 1980s*, pp. 64-69, 98-107), so far validating evidence for Willingham's claim has yet to come to light.

Crashes and/or retrievals. Retrievals did not follow necessarily from all crash stories. In a number of instances, UFOs allegedly were seen to plummet to earth or water, there to disappear. For example, a disc one meter in thickness and 15 in diameter allegedly fell into the Penopava River in Brazil's Sao Pao province on October 31, 1963. Divers repeatedly searched the muddy bottom but found nothing ("Disc Submerged," 1964). Something may or may not have crashed through the ice of a farm pond near Wakefield, New Hampshire, on January 10, 1977; whatever it was, if it existed at all, it was never recovered (Fowler, 1981; *see* **Wakefield Incident**).

On the morning of January 7, 1971, two boys, 12 and 13, independently observed a metallic object with an orange glow as it executed a horizontal flight over Dennis, Massachusetts, on Cape Cod. When it disappeared over some trees, it was descending at an oblique angle and looked as if it were about to fall into a small body of water known as Scargo Lake. One boy, who did not know anyone else had seen the UFO, dashed to a dock on the lake's edge. From there he could see a hole in the ice. From it steam rose, and the water visible inside the hole looked agitated.

Three days later **Walter N. Webb**, astronomer and NICAP field investigator, was at the site. He was able to confirm that the hole had not been there before the morning of the seventh. He wrote:

> After viewing the hole myself . . . I believe the hole was formed by a rather sudden melting process. There was no evidence of radial cracking or scattered ice fragments. To this investigator, and to the skin diver who inspected the hole, it would appear unlikely that an underwater spring could melt away a three-inch layer of ice at the subfreezing temperatures that existed on the night before the sighting ["NICAP Probes," 1971].

He considered and rejected theories that sought to explain the object as a star, planet, or fireball.

A skin diver searched the lake bottom on the twelfth—the first of a number of such efforts over a period of some weeks. All were unsuccessful ("No Trace," 1971).

A spectacular case involving a number of witnesses took place in Nova Scotia in the early fall of 1967. Beginning in late September, a number of Nova Scotians reported nocturnal-light UFOs cavorting through the skies. Then on the evening of October 4, two sightings of a bright orange light, an hour and 100 miles apart took place. The first was at Dartmouth, the second near Bear Point at Nova Scotia's southern extremity. In this latter instance two men in a car heading toward Shag Harbor spotted an orange light first; suddenly two more lights joined it, and the

three formed a 45-degree angle in the sky, with the first at the lowest point. A few minutes later five occupants of a second car at Shag Harbor spotted four objects—apparently the three joined by yet one more—moving in a horizontal line, flashing on and off in sequence. Then the objects positioned themselves at a 45-degree angle and descended toward the ocean. On making contact with the water, they made a faint whistling or hissing noise.

After parking the car, the five scrambled by foot to the shore. From that position they looked out half a mile to see not four objects but one bobbing on the waves. One of the witnesses called the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and three officers from the Barrington Passage station arrived 20 minutes later. "I saw a light floating on the water about a half mile offshore," Constable Ron O'Brien told the *Halifax Mail-Star and Chronicle-Herald.* "It was being carried out to sea by the tide and disappeared before we could get a boat to it" (MacLeod, 1967).

A Canadian Coast Guard lifeboat and eight fishing boats set out from nearby Clarke's Harbor and arrived less than an hour later at the spot where the light had been seen. An 80-foot-wide patch of bubbling water and yellowish foam covered the site, suggesting, the observers surmised, that something had submerged there. Capt. Bradford Shand, an experienced Shag Harbor hand, said that he had never seen anything like it.

The following day other witnesses reported their own corroborating sightings of the curious phenomenon to the RCMP. Some said they had seen a dark object, approximately 60 feet long, with a string of lights along its side. It had descended to the surface, floated for a short time, then disappeared into the water. No aircraft were missing.

Navy divers from the H.M.C.S. *Granby* scoured the ocean bottom, some 40 to 80 feet beneath the surface at that location. Though the floor was sandy and flat and the visibility was good, the search proved fruitless, even when other divers joined in and the area under scrutiny was expanded. The search was terminated on October 8. Three nights later several witnesses reported seeing the same or similar lights, stretching about 60 feet from end light to end light at 500 to 600 feet altitude and three-quarters of a mile offshore. After hovering for seven or eight minutes, they disappeared. Four reappeared soon afterwards, now positioned at a 35-degree angle, descending toward the horizon and changing from yellow to orange to red before vanishing. An hour later one of the witnesses saw what may have been the same lights, moving "faster than any plane" (Dawson, 1968).

A case which one might define as a temporary retrieval took place in May 1968 and was studied by the Brazilian Commission for Confidential Investigation of Unidentified Aerial Objects (CBPCOANI in its Portuguese acronym), a civilian group. The incident began at 5 A.M. on the seventeenth as a Caconde, São Paulo, man, Caetano Sergio Dos Santos, was returning home from his job as a night watchman. In the courtyard of his house, he noticed a cylinder-shaped object, about the size of a medium-sized powdered-milk can, stuck in the ground. At each end of the gray metallic structure were dials, one with a black hand, the other with a red one. They were encased under a glass or plastic lens with embossed figures arranged in a semi-circle. Above each figure was something like an arabic numeral.

Dos Santos carried the object, which weighed as much as a car battery, into the house. His wife, who (not unreasonably) feared it might be a time bomb, was not pleased. But undeterred, Dos Santos studied it for an hour and a half, then placed it on a windowsill in the bathroom and went to bed. The day passed, and he returned to his job. About 12:30 A.M., when he returned to check on his pregnant wife, he noticed that the object was glowing. On his way home again shortly after 1, some neighbors told him his wife had been calling for help. He ran the rest of the way. As he approached the house, he was alarmed to see that all the doors and windows were open and all the lights on. Mrs. Dos Santos, the couple's small son, and the neighbors stood outside.

Mrs. Dos Santos said that earlier a sound like the "buzz of a big transformer," along with a feeling of intense, stifling heat, had awakened her from sleep. She got up intending to switch off the main electric switches, then saw a bright bluish light emanating from the bathroom, which was where the sound was coming from. Too frightened to proceed any further in that direction, she called her neighbors, who were

rushing over to the yard when they heard what they thought was the breaking of tiles. At that moment the heat stopped, and the light went out.

Having heard this, Dos Santos went inside and found a hole in the roof, tile scattered over the floor, and the object gone. Apparently, as the strange cylinder made its escape, it crashed through the roof; either that, or something or someone broke through the roof in the course of a roughly executed retrieval.

There seems no question that this incident happened. Max Berezowsky and Methodius Kalkasieff, two professional men (a physician and an architect respectively) associated with CBPCOANI, interviewed the family and the neighbors and examined the damage ("Brazilian Object," 1968; Buhler, 1969).

Aliens fossilized and fresh. If a small number of crash claims seemed at least marginally plausible, others were patently preposterous. The most ludicrous by far appeared in an article, presumably though not certainly intended to be serious, that saw print in Ray Palmer's *Flying Saucers* magazine in 1970. The writer, identified as the executive director of a Kentucky-based UFO group, reported that in June 1968, while mowing his lawn, a man named Melvin Gray found a stone which after some months' scrutiny he determined to be an extraterrestrial artifact.

Gray passed the stone on to one Buffard Ratliff, who spent the next 10 months studying it. Ratliff's efforts convinced him that just as Gray had suspected, this was a fossilized spacecraft with

> seven very small creatures. . . . Three of the creatures are ape-like in appearance. The other four are humanoid. . . . All creatures are approximately three inches in height, are vertebrates, and have a physical build that indicates they were very strong for their size. . . .
>
> The [ape] creatures died in motion as if they were frozen in their last physical action as they met instant death. One . . . had obviously been critically injured and two of his companions are trying to rescue him. . . . Two of [the humanoids] are in a position for a crash landing. . . . The third humanoid is sitting in what looks like a bucket seat with one of his arms extended slightly forward and upward as though he was operating a control lever or device to try to bring the spaceship under control. . . .
>
> The fossilized alien spaceship . . . lay dormant practically preserved to be found 400,000,000 years later in Louisville, Kentucky[,] and to remain as a permanent record to all mankind of our planet Earth that we had tiny alien space visitors from out there long, long ago [Ratliff, 1970].

In 1967, while investigating UFO reports in the Ohio River Valley, John A. Keel met John Cole, described as a "retired newsman in West Virginia." Cole told Keel about an experience he allegedly underwent in 1924, over two decades before the onset of the UFO era. As Cole had it, a farmer near Gem in Braxton County reported seeing a huge, odd-looking airplane, wingless and silent, crash in a wooded area. Cole, the local sheriff, and others searched the forest until they found the wreckage, which was of a 75-foot-long structure "like the fuselage of a modern plane, with windows and all," but without propellers.

Other persons had preceded them to the site. They were a peculiar lot. They were about five feet tall and had an "Oriental" look: slanted eyes, dark skin, high cheekbones. They spoke in a rapid-fire foreign language to each other. Some were dressed in black business suits, and the rest wore shiny coveralls. These latter tried to hide in the wreckage when the search party showed up, leading the group to suspect they were spies. But one of the conventionally dressed strangers, speaking English, assured them that all was in order; no one had been hurt in the accident, and he would provide the sheriff with a complete report later.

Since no laws had been broken, the searchers withdrew—but not before Cole had snatched a small piece of wreckage which happened to lie close to where he was standing. Cole returned home to Weston and immediately went to bed, only to be awakened at 3 A.M. by a pounding on his door. The visitor was dressed in an Army uniform but otherwise resembled the "foreigners" Cole had encountered earlier. The stranger said, "You picked up something today. We need it back." Cole produced the piece, and the stranger grabbed it and left without another word.

How, Cole wondered, had the stranger found him? Two days later he returned to the crash site. Though the grass and bushes were crushed down, all direct physical evidence of the aircraft was gone. "I never wrote the story up," Cole remarked to Keel. "After that Army officer came by, I figured that maybe it was a secret Army deal of some kind and I thought it was better to leave it alone" (Keel, 1975).

Without supporting evidence and testimony this can be no more than a peculiar anecdote, but it is undeniably interesting. For one thing, there is its (alleged) early date (one would prefer, however, a contemporary, as opposed to retrospective, account). There is also the suggestion that the alien crew all survived the crash. Finally, the story is rife with themes which would become familiar decades later in **men in black** lore. None of this, of course, proves that the incident really happened.

In the late 1960s, as some ufologists began to suspect a link between **hairy bipeds** of the Sasquatch variety and UFOs, inevitably at least one crash/retrieval tall tale took advantage of this speculation. In an article in a pulp UFO magazine, an unnamed Army intelligence officer, part of a secret military UFO project, is said to have spoken of a 1967 incident somewhere in the Southwest desert. The officer and his unit were sent to a crash site where they found the bodies of hideous nine-foot-tall creatures which bore "a perfect likeness to what has been described as Bigfoot." One was still alive but died as one man tried to give it water. The creatures wore glowing belts and sandals but nothing else. The officer warned, "These beings are dangerous. They have no compunction about killing people" (Guttilla, 1977).

Rather more believable is an aeronautical engineer's report of an apparent UFO crash with no known retrieval. At 9:15 on the evening of July 3, 1967, Thomas H. Nicholl, his family, and another couple, Mr. and Mrs. John Dowd, were sitting on the Nicholls's porch in Leawood, Kansas, a Kansas City suburb, when they saw an unusual orange-red light approach from the north-northeast heading southward. Through binoculars the object resolved into a shallow, inverted-bowl shape, with a flat underside.

It was about 50 feet in diameter and traveling at 100 mph between 2000 and 3000 feet. "The edges were sharp and clear," Nicholl told University of Arizona physicist and UFO investigator **James E. McDonald**, "bright metallic in color, similar to stainless steel." It wobbled as it moved, with "a slight pitch and roll combined, much like a small boat moving slowly on gentle ground swells at sea." The red-orange light initially visible to the naked eye, the witnesses could now see, emanated from three brilliant lights on the nearer (rear) side. Faint lines of a vaporish substance rose from the top of the structure. They did not trail the object as smoke would have; instead they rose to a point above it ("Exploding Disc," 1969).

Five minutes into the observation, the UFO blew up, leaving in its wake a "nearly pure white" cloud which cleared up quickly. The witnesses saw fragments, mostly small, lightweight pieces but also two larger, heavier ones, raining down to earth.

Nicholl called a local television station, the Johnson County Sheriff's Office, and Richards Gebaur Air Force Base in Grandview, Missouri, a few miles to the southeast. An operator at the base asked him questions from a standard UFO-report form. Nicholl then headed for the site. "I figured that whether the craft was ours or whether it was alien," he recalled, "the Air Force in either case would be all over the area like a tent. I criss-crossed all the area by car—no military personnel—and few civilians. It was dark by now. No one had seen or heard anything."

On returning home, he learned that a police officer had interviewed his fellow witnesses. A spokesman at the Air Force base announced, "There were no planes in the area at that time, and there were no blips on radar." After repeated attempts on Nicholl's part to get a further response, Lt. Col. Paul J. Mercier finally conducted an interview with the principal witness, whom he informed that the preliminary report explained the UFO as "probably a comet." NICAP checked astronomical records and found no comet in the Northern Hemisphere, and the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory eliminated meteors, fireballs, and space junk as candidates.

Two weeks later Nicholl called Lt. Col. Mercier and asked if he had heard anything further from the Air Force about his sighting. "No," he said, "and you won't either" (*ibid.*).

Mystery on the mountain. On the night of January 23, 1974, something took place on a mountain in Wales. Though the occurrence was reported in the press of the period and was noted in the UFO literature (Buckle, 1974), the full significance of the event is only now being appreciated, and by the mid-1990s it was beginning to look as if this incident had the potential to be the most significant crash/retrieval episode since Roswell.

Residents of the remote village of Llandrillo heard an explosion overhead a few minutes after 8:30 P.M. The explosion came in the immediate wake of a violent shaking of the ground, on the order of a medium-sized earthquake—which it may well have been, since small, localized earthquakes are not uncommon in Wales. It is also possible that the explosion was in fact unrelated to the quakelike effect. In any case, the earth tremor was recorded at 8:39 at the seismological unit at Edinburgh University.

As they staggered out of their houses, the people of Llandrillo got a further shock, this one emotional rather than geophysical: blue and orange lights were floating in a circle above Cader Bronwen, a mountain just to the east of the town. A bee-buzzing sound filled the air.

The police took numerous calls. Some were from persons who claimed to have seen something crash into the mountain. The authorities responded almost immediately. The police were there first, followed by Royal Air Force representatives who arrived via helicopter. Though the region was only thinly populated, the mountainside was roped off, and no one was permitted inside for the next few days. Meanwhile official spokespersons assured inquiring reporters that no plane had crashed; the searchers were looking for a meteorite known or suspected to have fallen on the mountain. The media asked no further questions and duly printed the follow-up news that no meteorite had been found.

An unconfirmed story has it that shortly after the event, two scientists noted a high radioactivity in the area (Devereux, 1982).

In the mid- to late 1970s noted British ufologist Jenny Randles vacationed regularly at Llandrillo. One evening, sitting in a pub, she had a conversation with an elderly villager who brought up the incident, of which Randles was only marginally aware. He hinted that there was more to it; the authorities had not told the truth, he said. Later Randles tried to interview other residents, but no one was willing to talk. The people of Llandrillo tended to view the English as untrustworthy foreigners.

So matters rested until the early 1990s, when Margaret Fry, an Englishwoman with a keen interest in UFOs, retired to a village not far from Llandrillo. In 1993, after several television and radio appearances alerted locals to her involvement in ufology, Fry heard from a number of natives who spoke of the strange incident in the winter of 1974. They remembered the peculiar lights and the invasion of soldiers and police officers. One, who worked in a hotel in nearby Bala, recalled an influx of uncommunicative men who had stayed at the establishment until their work, whatever it was, was done.

The most striking account was provided by a nurse who lived at Llanderfel, another area small town. The Colwyn Bay police had called her that night to ask her assistance; a plane had crashed, they explained. Since she had no babysitter for her teenaged daughters, she took them with her on her drive to the location the police had described. As she drove up the mountain, she saw a sight that, as she would recall, "absolutely staggered" her: a large, circular craft, glowing orange. It was "quite intact." She had no doubt what it was: a UFO.

As she and her daughters sat and stared over the next 10 minutes, soldiers and police streamed down the mountain. No one would answer her questions. Finally, told that she had no authorization to be there, she and her daughters were escorted off the site.

The road was sealed for several days. She heard local shepherds complain that they were prevented from going up the mountain to tend their flocks.

Randles writes, "That Margaret Fry has found these people by accident suggests that a concerted effort in this remote part of North Wales would pay dividends. . . . It may not be too late to discover what really happened on the night the mountain exploded" (Randles, *op. cit.*).

Stringfield and the new era. The first major mainstream ufologist to declare crash/retrieval reports a matter of legitimate concern, even vital interest, was Leonard Stringfield, a widely respected figure whose history in the UFO field went back to the early 1950s. His advocacy of crash/retrievals would have enormous impact on ufology's subsequent direction. In the 1980s and 1990s crash/retrieval investigations and attendant controversies would stand at the forefront of UFO research.

Stringfield first declared himself in a 1977 book, *Situation Red, the UFO Siege!*, which sought to revive both the **extraterrestrial hypothesis** of UFO origin (a notion that had largely fallen out of favor among many ufologists) and the idea of an official cover-up (also judged passé). In doing so, he marshaled the usual evidence familiar to readers of 1950s UFO books, such as those by Donald E. Keyhoe. Less predictably, he dedicated 10 pages to crashed-disc stories.

One concerned the remarkable testimony of a Presbyterian minister. When he was a boy, he and his father, also a minister, were visiting Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry when they got lost in a labyrinth of corridors. Trying to find an exit, they entered a room with a large, glass-covered case. Inside the case they were startled to see a number of preserved bodies of small humanoid beings. At that moment they were discovered, and the father was taken into another room, where he was detained and forced to sign papers swearing him to silence.

Stringfield also related the Fritz Werner story and called it "extraordinary. This one case alone could melt down official UFO secrecy." He mentioned an unnamed informant who in April 1953, while serving as a technician at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, supposedly was shown a 30-minute, 16mm film of a crashed UFO, its interior, and its three dead humanoid occupants.

The treatment here afforded crash/retrievals would set a pattern Stringfield would follow from then until death ended his career as a collector of this variety of modern folklore. He collected and reported incredible tales, usually from anonymous informants. This practice, which he defended as essential to the protection of his sources, generated considerable criticism. No one questioned Stringfield's honesty, but some wondered about his judgment (Clark, 1980; Earley, 1981; Greenwell, 1980). If the identities of his sources were kept from other investigators, no independent assessment was possible. No one could accuse Stringfield of excessive skepticism; to the contrary, his critics complained that he was inclined to take at face value even wild claims, providing that the source appeared sincere enough.

To such criticisms Stringfield countered:

> I wish to emphasize that most of my firsthand sources just don't seem to fit the psychotic or weirdo types. Most, working initially through an intermediary, have shown a reluctance to talk too much until I assured them of anonymity and confidential treatment on other details relative to military or personal matters.
>
> Notably, almost all sources indicated no inclination to take an active part in UFO research for fame or fortune, either because they were fearful of reprisals based on their secrecy oath, or the desire for privacy for business or family reasons. Interestingly, most were not sufficiently attuned to the subject of UFOs to even keep up with the current literature [Stringfield, 1980b].

Nonetheless some of his informants proved to be hoaxers, including a man whose tape-recorded testimony was highlighted at Stringfield's well-attended lecture on July 29, 1978, in Dayton, Ohio, at a Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) conference. The claimant's testimony was exposed as dubious only after other researchers learned his identity and launched their own investigations (*see* **Hoaxes, 1960-1979**).

Beyond what little could be determined with reasonable certainty about the credibility of individual informants, how one felt about the stories Stringfield was collecting had a great deal to do with how one felt about crash/retrievals. If one considered such things possible, one found the testimony—whatever its undeniable problems (for example, only a minority of informants were, or claimed to be, firsthand sources)—at least suggestive. To those who rejected crash/retrieval claims as absurd, nothing Stringfield brought forth amounted to much as evidence. Indeed, real

evidence, in the form of a body of interlocking testimony from a wide range of independent informants, did not come to light until the Roswell investigation, in which Stringfield played only a marginal role.

Here are summaries of several representative cases discussed in his MUFON lecture:

A "reliable person in a technical position at a large General Electric plant" heard the story from his brother, a radar specialist at California's Edwards AFB. In 1952 the brother tracked a UFO on radar as it sped across the screen. Soon afterwards word came that it had crashed. The captain ordered him to pretend that he had seen nothing. Later "base officials" informed him that the disc had been recovered in a desert area nearby. The craft was over 50 feet in diameter and contained bodies of humanoids. It was held for a short time in an Edwards hangar, then shipped by truck to Wright-Patterson.

Stringfield had his informant contact his brother, who refused to speak with the ufologist, citing—according to the informant—his security oath. As supporting evidence Stringfield cited testimony from three individuals who said they had seen a tarpaulin-covered "strange cargo," rumored to be a flying saucer, being transported on a lo-boy to Wright-Patterson in 1952.

Possible additional evidence came from yet another source. The parents of ufologist and NASA engineer John Schuessler had a close friend who once had been a civilian guard at a receiving gate for internal security at Wright-Patterson. Sometime in 1952 a lo-boy carrying a tarpaulin-covered craft had arrived. On this or another occasion bodies of humanoids were delivered to the gate. They were said to have been recovered from a crash somewhere in the Southwest. The former guard turned down Schuessler's request for an interview.

In another alleged incident, this one set in Montana in 1953, Stringfield had an informant who claimed firsthand status. Cecil Tenney, 78, said that in the fall of that year, near dusk, he had been driving from Great Falls to Conrad when, close to Dutton, he saw a cigar-shaped object about 200 feet away. Apparently in trouble, it shook and belched fire and smoke. "It seemed to be trying to pull itself up," Tenney said, "but it couldn't." After a few minutes he heard an explosion, and balls of fire rained down from the sky.

Tenney repaired to an area bar, where a highway patrol officer and fellow witness got his name and address. That evening a colonel from Great Falls AFB called and gruffly instructed him to show up at the installation the following morning. When he arrived, two guards escorted him to a jail-like building and then to the colonel's office. After a 30-minute interrogation Tenney signed five copies of a document with a notary seal. On his way out the door, still accompanied by guards, he passed two guards carrying what he first took to be laundry bags. Suddenly one dropped his bag, and Tenney thought he could see the outline of a body with limbs. At that moment he was roughly shoved outside. "I can't swear they were bodies," Tenney told Stringfield, "but the bags contained something they didn't want me to see." His phone voice "sounded convincing," in Stringfield's judgment.

In July 1979, a year after the MUFON lecture, Stringfield received a typed statement from a source with whom he had been interacting for some months, mostly through an intermediary, a physician who "served on the staff of a major hospital." The composer of the statement was identified only as a "noted doctor . . . who had performed the autopsy" of an alien body in the early 1950s. He was, according to Stringfield, one of several "medical people" who were providing him with information on extraterrestrial physiology. The statement read in part:

> SIZE—The specimen observed was 4 foot three and three-eighths inches in length. I can't remember the weight. It has been so long and my files do not contain the weight. I recall the length well, because we had a disagreement and everyone took their turn at measuring.
>
> HEAD—The head was pear-shaped in appearance and oversized by human standards for the body. The eyes were Mongoloid in appearance. The ends of the eyes furthest from the nasal cavity slanted upward at about a ten degree angle. The eyes were recessed into the head. There seemed to be no visible eyelids, only what seemed like a fold. There were no human type lips as such—just a slit that opened into an oral

> cavity about two inches deep. A membrane along the rear of the cavity separated it from what would be the digestive tract. The tongue seemed to be atrophied into almost a membrane. No teeth were observed. X-rays revealed a maxilla and mandible as well as cranial bone structure. The outer "ear lobes" didn't exist. The auditory orifices present were similar to our middle and inner ear canals. The head contained no hair follicles. The skin seemed grayish in color and seemed mobile when moved.
>
> The above observations are from general anatomical observations. I didn't autopsy or study the head portion in any great detail since this was not my area of specialty. . . .
>
> The arms are oversized in length by human standards. There was no thumb. . . . The chest area contained what seemed like two atrophied mammary gland nipples. The sexual organs were atrophied. Some other investigators have observed female specimens. I have not had this opportunity. The legs were short and thin. The feet didn't have any toes. The skin covered the foot in such a way that it gave the appearance of wearing a sock. However, X-ray examination showed normal bone structure underneath [Stringfield, 1980a].

The informant later stated that under a microscope the alien skin tissue looked meshlike, in other words a grid's network of horizontal and perpendicular lines.

Stringfield published periodic updates as new information, third-, second- and firsthand, came his way. As he had done from the beginning, he tended to take the testimony at face value unless clear indications of a hoax were available. Though this approach left him open to criticism, by the time of his death (on December 18, 1994) his efforts as a collector of—depending on one's point of view—urban legends or raw data about UFO secrets, plus his unfailing personal decency, had won him many friends and admirers (Sparks, Hall, and Clark, 1995).

Rumors of the crash/retrieval kind. Stringfield was hardly the only conduit through whom rumors passed. Often the rumors were related as undeniable truths attributed to unnamed authority figures. This example comes from an April 14, 1979, lecture an American, James Hurtak, delivered to the London branch of the California-based occult organization Borderland Sciences Research Associates:

> I wish to share with you specific biological information regarding the physical bodies that were removed from space vehicles that crashed in New Mexico, Arizona, and Mexico proper in the late 40s and 50s. I wish to point out at this time an event which occurred in 1946, one prior to official UFO studies, when a space vehicle crashed just outside Great Falls, Montana.
>
> One of my colleagues was part of the Air Force retrieval team that carried out the bodies. The bodies were shipped to the Edwards Air Force Base facility in California. It was determined that the green hue on the bodies was due to the nature of the chemistry of the fuel system. After extensive studies the bodies were put on ice and sealed in aluminum canisters.
>
> Obviously this subject matter was placed in an area even beyond Top Secret classification, which cannot even be touched by computer information sources.
>
> In the early 50s, President Eisenhower asked Winston Churchill if this matter should be brought before the public—that there are physical evidences of extraterrestrial bodies held in military captivity. Churchill replied that the Western world was not prepared for it. So, due to conditions that the Air Force could not control the air-space over North America, and due to the various philosophies of science that it did not accept paraphysics and did not accept post-Einsteinian mathematics, it was decided not to make this matter public [Hurtak, 1979].

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CRASHES AND RETRIEVALS OF UFOS

The rumor that government agencies had secretly recovered wreckage and bodies from crashed UFOs began to circulate as early as July 1947, in the wake of an episode that took place in eastern New Mexico. For a few hours radio broadcasts and newspaper headlines all over the world reported the incredible news that remains of a "flying disc" had been picked up on a ranch in Lincoln County—until military spokesmen deflated the story with an announcement that the "disc" was only a misidentified balloon. Nonetheless, some individuals, including several stationed at Roswell Army Air Field (from which the recovery of the alleged balloon was directed), confided to family members or trusted friends that strange bodies had been found at a second crash site near the first one; the two crashes apparently involved a single craft and occurred at about the same time.

For a long time the "Roswell incident," as it is now known, attracted little attention from ufologists. The reconsideration of the Roswell/Corona event began in January 1978, when ufologists William L. Moore and Stanton T. Friedman compared notes from two separate interviews Friedman had conducted. The interviews were with a woman and a man who had been in New Mexico in July 1947 and who knew of the crash of a mysterious craft. The man, a retired Air Force officer, Maj. Jesse A. Marcel, claimed to have been involved in the retrieval of a great quantity of a strange material believed to be the remains of an extraterrestrial vehicle. The woman, Lydia Sleppy, had worked at Albuquerque radio station KOAT and remembered how the military had squelched coverage of a crashed saucer and the bodies of "little men," even to the extent of stopping the transmission of a teletyped news report.

Moore and Friedman linked these accounts with the obscure episode at Roswell and proceeded to look for living witnesses. In 1980 Moore, with popular occult author Charles Berlitz, wrote a premature and sketchy book on his and Friedman's research up till then. Moore and Friedman continued to locate and interview persons who were in some way, directly or indirectly, involved in the episode.

Within five years they had talked with more than 90 persons, one-third of them direct participants. In the late 1980s and early 1990s Donald R. Schmitt and Kevin D. Randle of the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) added considerably to ufologists' knowledge through extensive archival research and interviews with hundreds of persons, ranging from on-site witnesses to Air Force generals. Other investigators, including Thomas J. Carey and Karl T. Pflock, followed in their wake as research continued through the 1990s. All of this led to books, articles, films, videos, and renewed government inquiries (by the General Accounting Office and by the Air Force).

In 1994 the Air Force announced that the wreckage at the site was from the classified Project Mogul, a post-World War II operation in which balloons were sent aloft to monitor possible Soviet atomic tests. Though thought by some to be the solution to the mystery, the theory flew in the face of much of the witness testimony, and the Air Force was unable to produce a document confirming the connection or to link the wreckage with any specific balloon flight; nor could it explain the persistent reports of bodies.

The Roswell debate continues. On June 24, 1997, the Air Force released "The Roswell Report: Case Closed," which contended that the bodies were in fact "anthropomorphic test dummies that were carried aloft by U.S. Air Force high altitude balloons for scientific research"—an assertion that met with considerable skepticism, in part because these experiments did not begin until 1953. The Air Force could only speculate that the witnesses were wrong about the dates fo their alleged sightings.

A hoax and its aftermath. In August 1949 stories began to circulate in Hollywood to the effect that a soon-to-be-released science-fiction movie, *The Flying Saucer*, would contain actual footage of a spaceship the U.S. government had captured in Alaska. Mikel Conrad, the producer, director, writer, and star, even produced an alleged FBI agent (in fact an actor) to attest to the authenticity of the footage. When an agent of the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) interviewed him, Conrad admitted he had invented the story to publicize his movie.

Not coincidentally, around this time veteran confidence artist Silas Newton was introducing to well-heeled acquaintances a mysterious "Dr. Gee," identified as a world-class scientific authority on magnetics. According to Newton, Gee, who worked on top-secret projects for the U.S. government, had a magnetic device from a crashed flying saucer. With this device he could detect oil deposits. In reality Gee was Leo GeBauer, a swindler with a long arrest record; the flying-saucer story was thrown into what otherwise would have been a routine oil scam to add extra authority to Newton's pitch.

But the UFO angle took on a life of its own when *Variety* columnist Frank Scully published Newton and GeBauer's tale in a best-selling book, *Behind the Flying Saucers* (1950). In 1952, however, *True* magazine commissioned reporter J. P. Cahn to investigate the claims, and Cahn devastatingly exposed the **hoax.**

Nonetheless, the Scully affair led to questions and some extraordinary answers at a Washington meeting, the minutes of which did not come to light until the early 1980s. On September 15, 1950, a group of Canadian government scientists and engineers conferred in the office of Robert I. Sarbacher, a physicist associated with the U.S. Defense Department's Research and Development Board. One of the Canadians, Wilbert B. Smith, said, "I am doing some work on the collapse of the earth's magnetic field as a source of energy, and I think our work may have a bearing on the flying saucers." Smith asked if there was any truth to stories, such as those in Scully's book, about crashed and recovered UFOs. Sarbacher said there was, adding, "We have not been able to duplicate their performance. . . . All we know is, we didn't make them, and it's pretty certain they didn't originate on the earth." But the subject "is classified two points higher even than the H-bomb. In fact it is the most highly classified subject in the U.S. government at the present time." He would say no more.

In the early 1980s Canadian ufologist Arthur Bray found the memo in Smith's files, and subsequently Sarbacher, then living in Florida (he would die in 1986), confirmed to several inquirers that he had said these things. Pleading poor memory, explaining that he had not been personally involved but knew of the events because he was acquainted with the scientists, including President Truman's chief science advisor Vannevar Bush, who worked directly on the problem, Sarbacher was hazy on details. He was not sure where the crashes had occurred, but he remembered that the recovered debris was "extremely light and very tough" (which is how those who saw it described the Corona debris). He said:

> There were reports that instruments or people operating these machines were also of very light weight, sufficient to withstand the tremendous deceleration and acceleration associated with their machinery. I remember in talking with some of the people at the office that I got the impression these "aliens" were constructed like certain insects we have observed on earth, wherein because of the low mass the inertial forces involved in operation of these instruments would be quite low.

If Sarbacher's testimony had been made known in the 1950s, it is likely that ufologists would have been far more willing than they were to take crash claims seriously. But even before Cahn's exposé the Scully book generated little enthusiasm among the more sober early ufologists, largely because of the book's manifest lack of documentation—it was clear, for example, that Scully had done little more than transcribe Newton and GeBauer's account and made no attempt to verify it—and also because of the story's almost comically pseudoscientific overtones.

In its January 9, 1950, issue *Time* took sneering note of Scully's story as well as others about extraterrestrial wreckage and bodies. There was even a story afloat about *living* aliens, *Time* reported. As this one had it, aliens who had survived crashes were being kept alive in special rooms laced with carbon dioxide. Using sign language and drawings, the captives indicated that they came from Venus.

gible-like suspended cabin about 15 feet long," was composed of a brownish metal "so hard a hacksaw could not cut it."

The Oak Ridge, Tennessee, newspaper of September 18, 1950, recounted the alleged experience of NEPA employee Dave T. Keating. Two years earlier, so his story went, he had been flying with the 166th Fighter Squadron, Ohio National Guard, out of Lockburn. While executing a flip of his P-51 at 18,000 feet, he said, "I noticed something that looked like a silver dollar zoom past my plane under me." Upside down at the moment, he was looking up to see it. The moment he came out of his loop, he set out in pursuit of the UFO, some 8000 feet below him. He reduced his own altitude until he was level with it and as close as 80 yards—"as close as I wanted to be." He went on, "I would say the saucer was about 40 feet in diameter and about six feet thick. It had no jet exhausts, no prop, no markings." It did, however, have a thick vertical stabilizer rudder on the end. Coming out of the middle of it was an elliptical object that on its cross surface resembled a smooth manhole cover. The UFO looked as if it were made of aluminum.

For a time Keating chased it at 325 mph but then dropped behind as he saw the object slow down. Thinking it might land or crash, he continued to follow it as it gradually lost altitude. He kept flying even after the UFO was lost to view. "About 10 miles south of the Ohio River," he claimed, "I spotted a litter on a hillside and a path that had obviously been ripped up by a crashing plane or as it may have been a crashing saucer."

Short on fuel, Keating returned to Lockburn. His story was greeted with derision, but eventually he persuaded his major to go with him to the crash scene.

Artist Michael Buhler's depiction of an alleged UFO retrieval by government troops at San Augustin Flats, New Mexico, on July 3, 1947. (Fortean Picture Library)

"Before we left," Keating said, "we found there had been no plane crashes reported in the area." The two flew over the scene, then notified Wright Field. A truck was dispatched from that Air Force base to retrieve the remains. "I was then interviewed by the colonel for about 40 minutes," Keating recalled. "He didn't tell me to keep the thing quiet. As a matter of fact, he didn't give me any instructions." Keating heard nothing more about the incident.

On the morning of July 15, 1952, in the wake of a dramatic encounter with UFOs over Norfolk, Virginia (*see* **Nash-Fortenberry Sighting**), **Project Blue Book** investigators interviewed the two principal witnesses, pilot William Nash and copilot William Fortenberry. Prior to the interview Nash and Fortenberry agreed to ask the Air Force men if there was any truth to persistent rumors about one or more crashed discs in custody at Wright Field. But when the two were interviewed separately, in the excitement Nash forgot to raise the issue. According to Nash, however, Fortenberry did not, and one of the investigators replied, "Yes, it is true." When the two pilots and the investigators met together, Nash suddenly remembered what he had intended to ask. In a written account Nash recalled, "They all opened their mouths to answer the question, whereupon Maj. [John H.] Sharp[e] looked at them, not me, and said very quickly, 'NO!' It appeared as if he were telling them to shut up rather than addressing the answer to me."

Later Nash appeared on a show on radio station WJZ in New York City, where he was to debate three scientists convinced of the nonexistence of UFOs. Before the show started, he wandered into the hallway to get a drink of water. He was unable to find a fountain until he met a man who seemed to know his way around and who led him via a complicated route to his destination. According to Nash:

> From his voice timbre he might have been a commentator, but he said that he could not identify himself, even though I specifically asked for his name. He was about 6'1", 200 lbs., intelligent in appearance. He told me that he had just returned from Washington, and had been given the whole story, said the flurry of sightings over Washington [*see* **Washington National Radar/Visual Case**] was due to Air Force operation of a radio that had been found in a saucer. . . . He said the Wright Field story (about having a saucer) was true; that he and a New England reporter, along with a *Life* reporter, had just been briefed, but were told to keep it quiet until they were given permission to break the story. He appeared quite excited and sincere. He would not or could not tell me if the radios they found would send only a carrier wave signal, or if words were transmitted.

When Nash spoke to the Greater Miami Aviation Association in February 1954, he was asked why he thought the Air Force was withholding UFO information. In his reply he speculated that a statement attesting to extraterrestrial visitation would be followed by a demand for proof. If that proof consisted, as Nash suspected, of hardware, the Air Force would be reluctant to produce it, since then Soviet agents would know of its existence and do everything they could to learn its

secrets. One month later the Air Force issued a heated denial that it possessed such evidence or that it deemed UFOs anything out of the ordinary.

On May 23, 1955, popular newspaper columnist Dorothy Kilgallen wrote: "I can report today on a story which is positively spooky, not to mention chilling. British scientists and airmen after examining the wreckage of one mysterious flying ship are convinced that these strange aerial objects are not optical illusions or Soviet inventions, but are actual flying saucers which originate on another planet." Her source, she said, was a "British official of cabinet rank who prefers to remain unidentified." Kilgallen had no more, then or later, to say on the subject, and nothing has surfaced in the years since to substantiate it. Gordon Creighton, a retired British foreign officer and editor of *Flying Saucer Review*, has claimed that Kilgallen got the story at a May 1955 cocktail party hosted by Lord Mountbatten; at least one of the crashes, she was told according to Creighton, took place during World War II. Mountbatten's private secretary at the time, Mollie Travis, denies this claim, according to Timothy Good, who has written extensively on the British government's involvement in UFO investigation.

Isabel L. Davis, among the most intelligent and critical-minded of the first-generation ufologists, could not help being intrigued when an acquaintance, a medical doctor and physiologist, related what she said was an experience she had in the late 1950s. The doctor had been taken to a secure facility, given special clothing, and directed to study portions of bodies that she quickly recognized as humanlike but not human. Her supervisors told her nothing about what these beings were or how they came to be there. After her work was completed, her clothes were returned, and she was ordered not to talk about the incident—which was hardly necessary, she remarked to Davis, since no one would have believed her anyway.

The Las Vegas case. An unusually evidential case occurred on April 18, 1962, in Nevada and Utah. There can be no question that it happened; numerous witnesses and a radar tracking attested to the passage of an unusual flying object. Reporters interviewed witnesses, as did the Air Force (which also conducted a desert search for the object) and—years later—ufologist Kevin Randle. Project Blue Book officially explained the object as a bolide, but aspects of the incident belie this interpretation.

The episode apparently began with a sighting of a westward-moving glowing red object over Oneida, New York. The original observers saw it for no more than a few seconds. Though this certainly sounds like a meteor, the object began to be picked up on radar as it headed through the Midwest into the Southwest. The Air Defense Command alerted bases along the object's trajectory. At least one of them, Luke Air Force Base near Phoenix, sent interceptors after it. When the UFO passed over Nephi, Utah, observers on the ground heard the rumble of jet engines in its wake.

At Eureka, Utah, the object was seen to land. The witness described the UFO as a glowing orange-red oval that emitted a low whirring sound. At the same time electrical service from a nearby power plant was disrupted. The object then rose

and headed west toward Nevada. It swept toward the south, and radar lost it east of Las Vegas. Witnesses said the object, which looked like a "tremendous flashing sword," vanished in a red explosion in the direction of Mesquite, Nevada, according to a headline story in the April 19 issue of the *Las Vegas Sun*.

In a terse summary Blue Book files confirm a radar tracking at Nellis AFB in Nevada:

> Radar sighting. Speed of object varied. Initial observation at 060, no elevation. Disappearance at 105 [degrees] az[imuth at] 10,000 feet altitude. Heading tentatively NE, however disappeared instantly to S. Observed by search and height radars. No visual.

These last two words are misleading. Apparently they mean that the personnel attending the radar did not see the object. The change in speed is further indication that the object was not a meteor. Blue Book further noted:

> Obj. came in over Cuba and apparently landed in rough terrain West of Eureka, Utah. Bright enough to trip photo electric cell which controlled city street lights.

Air Force Capt. Herman Gordon Shields provided this testimony in an interview conducted at Hill AFB:

> I was flying a C-119 aircraft from the left seat [captain's seat]. We were approximately two miles west of La Van, Utah[,] flying 8500 feet MSL. Our true airspeed was a little less than 170 knots. We were making a right turn from a heading of about 068 degrees to 165 degrees. We were approximately 25 degrees of bank on the aircraft and we had turned for about 30 degrees to a heading of about 098 or 100 degrees, somewhere in there, when it began to get very bright in the cockpit.
>
> The illumination was from above. It built up slowly. My first impression while the intensity was low was that it was the landing lights of another aircraft. Of course, when the intensity increased this was ruled out automatically. The cockpit was illuminated from above. In the C-119 aircraft there is an instrument panel in the middle of the cockpit up above on the ceiling of the cockpit. The light source was coming from this area that was blanked out, in other words, straight behind this instrument panel because neither Lieutenant Larson, who was in the right seat[,] nor I saw the source of the illumination.
>
> We continued the turn. The light intensity increased until we could see objects [on the ground] as bright as day for a radius of five to ten miles from the aircraft. This would probably be a diameter of twenty miles or so. Objects on the ground, on the hills around us, were clearly distinguishable. Colors were distinguishable. It was as bright as daylight. The intensity of the light diminished faster than it had increased. After the light had decreased in intensity we were still looking for the light

source, and I noticed an object to my left between the wing and the lower part of the fuselage of the aircraft against the hills.

By this time the light had decreased so that the hills were dark. It was night again. And this object which I saw was illuminated. It had a long slender appearance comparable to a cigarette in size, that is, the diameter with respect to the length of the object. The fore part, or the lower part of the object, was very bright, intense white such as a magnesium fire. The second half, the aft section, was a clearly distinguishable yellowish color. I would say the object was just about divided in half, the fore part being intensely white, the aft section having a more yellow color to it. . . .

I saw only a slender object. I don't know what the shape was. . . . There was no exhaust, no trail following after it. It was clearly defined. I saw it for a period of maybe one to two seconds.

Military interviews of civilian witnesses filled a single-spaced, seven-page report. A number mentioned that even after it was no longer visible, they heard booms in the sky and saw a trail of gray smoke. According to one witness:

As the object passed over Robinson [Utah], it slowed down in [the] air, and after, [a] gasping sound was heard, the object spurted ahead again. After this procedure was repeated three or four times, the object arched over and began descending to earth after which the object turned bluish color and then burned out or went dark. After the object began to slow down it began to wobble or "fishtail" in its path.

Douglas M. Crouch, head of Hill AFB's criminal-investigation division, concluded:

Preliminary analysis indicates that each of the observers interviewed were [sic] logical, mature persons, and that each person was convinced that he had observed some tangible object, not identifiable as a balloon or conventional type aircraft. The theory that the object was a manned aircraft was abandoned due to the described shape and color and flaming tail of the object, plus the fact there are no reports of missing aircraft in this area. No unusual meteorological or astronomical conditions were present which would furnish an explanation for the sighting. No missile test firings are conducted in the immediate area other than static tests. The hypothesis that the object was a falling meteor is questioned due to the statements of three observers describing the flat trajectory, plus the description of sounds emanating from the object. Due to the inaccessibility of the valley, ten miles wide by 15 miles long in which the object apparently came to earth, no further search for the object is contemplated. With the completion of this initial report, no explanation has been developed for the brilliant illumination of the area, the object itself, or the explosion in the wake of the object.

A search-and-rescue party led by Clark County Deputy Sheriff Walter Butt headed in jeeps into the Spring Mountain, Nevada, area. Though the search continued all night and at one point aircraft were brought in, nothing was found. Then, Crouch's recommendations notwithstanding, the Air Force did conduct a search on May 8, flying Blue Book director Lt. Col. Robert Friend and its scientific consultant, astronomer **J. Allen Hynek**, to the area. Accompanied by Crouch, they interviewed witnesses in central Utah over a one-day period. At the end of it, the two had persuaded Crouch that a bolide was responsible for the sighting.

In fact, the object could have been no such thing. When seen over Reno, it was heading from west to east. Over Utah witnesses insisted without exception that it was moving southeast to northwest. It had changed direction, in other words, indicating that it was under intelligent control. Randle collected witness accounts from, among others, Sheriff Raymond Jackson of Nephi. Jackson heard a roar, looked up, saw a westbound yellow-white flame, and heard booming sounds. At that moment all the town's lights went out temporarily.

At both Eureka and Reno the UFO was seen *under* two aircraft by those aboard them. As Randle remarks, "Coupled with the testimony of three witnesses in Utah who said the object was about five hundred feet above them, [the aircraft sightings] tended to rule out the bolide theory because the meteor would have been too low for too long." Moreover, according to a statement made to the press by a Nellis AFB spokesman, radar would not have tracked a meteor. At best it would have picked up, briefly, its ionized trail, and that would not have appeared as a single moving point.

Leased Wire Associated Press

Roswell Daily Record

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ROSWELL, NEW MEXICO, TUESDAY, JULY 8, 1947

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Claims Army Is Slacking Courts Martial

Indiana Senator Lays Protest Before Patterson

RAAF Captures Flying Saucer On Ranch in Roswell Region

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Defeat Amendment By Demos to Remove Many from Rolls

Security Council Paves Way to Talks On Arms Reductions

No Details of Flying Disk Are Revealed

Roswell Hardware Man and Wife Report Disk Seen

Ex-King Carol Weds Mme. Lupescu

Some of Soviet Satellites May Attend Paris Meeting

Roswellians Have Differing Opinions On Flying Saucers

American League Wins All-Star Game

Miners and Operators Sign Highest Wage Pact in History

The front page of the *Roswell Daily Record* on July 8, 1947, trumpets the retrieval of a UFO in the vicinity. (Fortean Picture Library)

In the Air Force file on the case, Randle found this assessment by an unidentified intelligence officer:

> On April 18, 1962, the Air Force Defense Command was puzzled by an aerial object that exploded and seemed to be a meteor, but had the unique distinction of being tracked by radar 70 miles northwest of Las Vegas, Nevada[,] in a blinding flash. An Air Force Defense Command alert reported the object was tracked and traced over New York, Kansas, Utah, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Wyoming, Arizona and California, so that its light covered almost as much area as that created by the big hydrogen space bomb test held later in the Pacific hundreds of miles high.

The UFO, which crossed several time zones in its flight across much of the continent, was in view for approximately 32 minutes, the incident ending around 7:30 p.m. Las Vegas time. As Randle observes, this was "much too long for a meteor. A meteor would cross the United States much faster. And it means that the object, whatever it was, was not a meteor."

Randle, the only ufologist to conduct a serious inquiry, interviewed witnesses, collected press reports, and uncovered Air Force documents in the late 1980s. In the course of his investigation, he received a letter from a man who asked to remain anonymous. The correspondent, who claimed to have been an officer stationed at Nellis AFB when the incident happened, said he and 30 fellow officers were driven into the desert early the following morning. There, using flashlights, they were directed to clean a debris-filled field. As the day dawned, they were loaded into a bus where windows were blacked out with dark paper. One piece of paper, however, did not entirely cover the window, and the correspondent glimpsed quickly through it to see a damaged saucer-shaped machine. This is the only known allegation of a retrieval of remains from the UFO's descent, and unless independent confirmation comes to light, it must be viewed with skepticism. On the other hand, if something did indeed crash, presumably it left some evidence of its fate.

Retrieval in Arizona? An interesting but flawed crash/retrieval story came to the attention of prominent ufologist Raymond E. Fowler in 1973. Fowler learned that two years earlier the Framingham, Massachusetts, edition of the *Middlesex News* had interviewed Jeff Young, a boy who was writing a book on UFOs for youthful readers. In the resulting article the boy said he had spoken with a man who, while working as a Project Blue Book consultant, participated in the recovery of a crashed UFO.

Fowler contacted the young man and learned further details. The man—to whom Fowler subsequently would assign the pseudonym "Fritz Werner"—said he had been an engineer in the Office of Special Studies of what was then the Air Force's Air Materiel Command Installations Division at Wright-Patterson AFB. Later he designed landing gear and alighting devices at the Aircraft Laboratory at Wright Air Development Center. For a while Werner was on temporary assignment

with the Atomic Energy Commission at the Atomic Proving Ground in Nevada. Once, he told Young and the latter's friend Paul Chetham, he and some associates had had a UFO sighting during an atomic test. He had experienced another while in Thule, Greenland.

Werner further claimed that in 1954 (or 1953, as he would revise the date in subsequent testimony), when he was back at Wright-Patterson, he received a call from the base commander instructing him to fly to Chicago, then on to Phoenix, to investigate a crashed UFO. Werner said the UFO looked like a "teardrop-shaped cigar" made of a dull material. While at the site, he caught a glimpse of the body of the alien occupant, four feet tall and humanoid, lying in a tent.

As if this were not already fantastic enough, Werner went on to state that he later had actual contact with UFO beings.

When Fowler interviewed Werner, he heard a story that was different in some particulars. For example, Werner now said the incident had happened while he was assigned to the Frenchman Flats area of Nevada. The evening before—May 20, 1953—Dr. Ed Doll, his superior, ordered him to report for special duty the next day. He was driven to nearby Indian Springs AFB and with 15 other specialists put on a military plane and flown to Phoenix. The passengers were not allowed to speak with one another.

At Phoenix they boarded a bus with other personnel and rode for about four hours. Because the windows were blacked out, the passengers could not tell where they were going. The only explanation they got was from an Air Force colonel who said a supersecret Air Force vehicle had crashed and the specialists were to study it from the perspectives of their respective disciplines.

When the bus stopped, the men were summoned by name one at a time and escorted to the site, which Werner thought he recognized as being near Kingman, Arizona, not far from the proving grounds where Werner was working. Apparently the trip to Phoenix and back was part of an elaborate ruse to keep the participants from knowing the location of the incident.

The object, heavily guarded and illuminated by two brilliant spotlights, was oval-shaped and 30 feet in diameter. As he expressed it in an affidavit he prepared for Fowler, it looked like

> two deep saucers, one inverted upon the other. . . . My particular job was to determine, from the angle and depth of impact into the sand, how fast the vehicle's forward and vertical velocities were at the time of impact. . . . Questions having nothing to do with our own special areas were not answered.
>
> An armed military policeman guarded a tent pitched nearby. I managed to glance inside at one point and saw the dead body of a four-foot, humanlike creature in a silver metallic-looking suit. The skin on its

face was dark brown. This may have been caused by exposure to our atmosphere. . . .

As soon as each person finished his task, he was interviewed over a tape recorder and escorted back to the bus. On the way back . . . I managed to talk with someone else going back to it at the same time. He told me that he had glanced inside the object and saw two swivel-like seats, as well as instruments and displays. An airman, who noticed we were talking, separated us and warned us not to talk with each other.

After we all returned to the bus, the Air Force colonel who was in charge had us raise our right hands and take an oath not to reveal what we had experienced. I was instructed to write my report in longhand and not to type or reproduce it. A telephone number was given me to call when the report was complete. I called the number and an airman picked up the report.

Werner showed Fowler an old calendar diary that contained an entry marked May 20, 1953. It read in part, "Got a funny call from Dr. Doll at 10. I'm going on a special job tomorrow." The next day: "Got picked up at Indian Springs AFB at 4:30 p.m. for a job I can't write or talk about." In Fowler's estimation the paper and ink looked "aged."

Fowler was prepared to dismiss the obvious inconsistencies as derived mostly from "memory lapses." He noted Werner's academic background—two bachelor's degrees in mathematics and physics and a master's in engineering—and positive character references from former employers and professional associates. Through the Atomic Energy Commission, Fowler confirmed the dates and names of the tests Werner had mentioned. In *Casebook of a UFO Investigator* (1981) Fowler essentially endorses the claim and glosses over credibility problems he had earlier discussed more frankly in a private report prepared for the **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP).

At one point Fowler had questioned Werner about his conflicting descriptions of the crashed UFO. In his report to NICAP, Fowler wrote:

> [T]he witness appeared flustered for the first time and said that he had described the object he had seen over Thule, Greenland, to the boys. I reminded him that he had described the Thule sighting to me as having been a black disc seen at a distance. He started to insist until I produced the copy of the transcript, which clearly indicated that he had described the crashed object, not the Thule object, to the boys. At that point, he backed down and admitted that he had lied to the boys. He said that the description given me was accurate because I was really conducting a serious investigation into the matter. In my opinion, this is the most significant and damaging contradiction without a completely adequate explanation.

Werner said he had been drinking when Young and Chetham interviewed him. When he drank, he explained, he exaggerated things. He had been under the influence of four martinis, he said. When Fowler checked with the boys, they said they had seen Werner consume one beer in the course of the interview. It is possible, of course, that Werner drank the martinis *before* the boys showed up, but nothing about this aspect of the story inspires confidence.

Equally disquieting is the undeniable similarity Werner's story bears to elements of Scully's discredited *Behind the Flying Saucers*. Consider these "coincidences":

(1) Two of Scully's fictitious crashed saucers came down near proving grounds in the Southwest. Werner's saucer did, too.

(2) In one of Scully's cases researchers were dispatched from Phoenix to study the vehicle. So were the specialists in Werner's story.

(3) Scully's saucers appeared to be composed of an aluminumlike substance, as did Werner's.

(4) Inside one of Scully's craft were two "bucket seats" in front of an instrument panel. Inside Werner's were two "swivel seats" in front of "instruments and displays."

(5) The skin of Scully's humanoids was "charred a very dark chocolate color . . . [apparently] as a result of [terrestrial] air rushing through that broken porthole window." Werner's humanoid's skin was "dark brown. This may have been caused by exposure to our atmosphere."

Had Werner read Scully? It is hard not to suspect as much. Kevin Randle also cites the story's curious portrayal of security procedures. Why, after the occupants of the bus were ordered not to speak with one another, would an officer call out their names once the bus reached its destination? Such an action "would provide those involved with a way of learning more about the assignment after they were returned to their regular duties because they had the names of others on the bus." Randle, a former Air Force intelligence officer, characterizes this as a "major breach" in security.

Randle also wonders why Werner "would note in his unclassified desk calendar that he was involved in a special project." But even if authentic, the entries do not specifically mention a UFO-related project. A man working in sensitive areas, as Werner is supposed to have done, surely must have participated in a number of jobs he "can't write or talk about."

Fowler was able to establish that Ed Doll existed and that he had been employed by the Atomic Energy Commission. Fowler's effort to locate him, however, were unavailing. William Moore, who interviewed him in California on October 9, 1981, had better luck. When he asked Doll about the incident, Doll denied knowing anything about it. Questioned about Werner (whose real name Moore knew and mentioned), Doll replied that he had never heard of him. Two former Blue Book heads said the same thing.

A case for the Werner story can be made, even if only shakily. Why, one may ask, would a liar have mentioned Doll's name, knowing that he could deny the story (as indeed he did)? An advocate would further argue that Doll's denial is only to be expected; after all, he may have taken his security oath more seriously than Werner seems to have done. Moreover, other persons have spoken of what may be the same event.

One of these was an individual identified only as "an Air Force Major, named Daly . . . a metallurgist stationed at Wright-Patterson AFB in 1953." Daly was a friend to the father of Charles Wilhelm, a Cincinnati UFO enthusiast. In 1968 Daly told the senior Wilhelm that in April 1953 he was flown blindfolded to a "hot and sandy" area. Once there, he spent two days examining a metallic disc-shaped craft 25 to 30 feet in diameter. Perhaps, assuming for the sake of argument that the Daly and Werner stories are true in some sense, Daly's memory of the month is slightly off.

Another story came from a woman named Judy Woolcott. In 1965, she told ufologist Donald Schmitt, she got a letter from her husband, a professional military officer serving in Vietnam, a week before he was killed in action. Unfortunately, sometime before she met Schmitt a dozen years later, she misplaced the letter and thus was forced to reconstruct its contents from memory.

Supposedly her late husband had been on duty at an air base control tower in the Southwest when an unidentified object appeared on radar. Soon the object dropped off the screen, and a white light flashed in the distance. Woolcott and other base personnel set out in jeeps and eventually came upon a domed disc, with no apparent external damage, embedded in the sand. But before they could get any closer, a military convoy showed up at the scene, ushered them off the site, and drove them back to the base, where they were sworn to secrecy. Later Woolcott heard talk from military policemen that bodies had been found inside the craft. The crash took place somewhere near Kingman.

Randle heard an interesting story from a woman who had worked in the Parachute Branch at Wright-Patterson in the early 1950s. At some point in 1952 or 1953 (the woman had only a general sense of the time period) a sergeant had entered the office where she worked. He said he had just flown in from the Southwest on a plane carrying the bodies of alien beings recovered in a UFO crash. The woman and her workmates did not believe the story. Within the hour, however, the base commander, Col. C. Pratt Brown, arrived to insist that the sergeant's story was no more than a rumor that should not be repeated. To ensure that it was not repeated, he had everyone sign an official form. The form stated that if they did not keep their silence, they would be subject to a $20,000 fine and 20 years in jail.

Randle offers this cautionary note:

> The problem is clearly that the secretary did not remember the exact time frame or location. To suggest this was part of the Kingman case, we must resort to speculation based on the limited documentation of

the waves. One of the witnesses called the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and three officers from the Barrington Passage station arrived 20 minutes later. "I saw a light floating on the water about a half mile offshore," Constable Ron O'Brien told the *Halifax Mail-Star and Chronicle-Herald.* "It was being carried out to sea by the tide and disappeared before we could get a boat to it."

A Canadian Coast Guard lifeboat and eight fishing boats set out from nearby Clark's Harbor and arrived less than an hour later at the spot where the light had been seen. An 80-foot-wide patch of bubbling water and yellowish foam covered the site, suggesting, the observers surmised, that something had submerged there. Capt. Bradford Shand, an experienced Shag Harbor hand, said that he had never seen anything like it.

The following day other witnesses reported their own corroborating sightings of the curious phenomenon to the RCMP. Some said they had seen a dark object, approximately 60 feet long, with a string of lights along its side. It had descended to the surface, floated for a short time, then disappeared into the water. No aircraft were missing.

Navy divers from the H.M.C.S. Granby scoured the ocean bottom, some 40 to 80 feet beneath the surface of that location. Though the floor was sandy and flat and the visibility was good, the search proved fruitless, even when other divers joined in and the area under scrutiny was expanded. The search was terminated on October 8. Three nights later several witnesses reported seeing the same or similar lights, stretching about 60 feet from end light to end light at 500 to 600 feet altitude and three-quarters of a mile offshore. After hovering for seven or eight minutes, they disappeared. Four reappeared soon afterwards, now positioned at a 35-degree angle, descending toward the horizon and changing from yellow to orange to red before vanishing. An hour later one of the witnesses saw what may have been the same lights, moving "faster than any plane."

The incident was investigated by Norman Levine of the **University of Colorado UFO Project.** It is listed as unexplained in the project's final report. In the 1990s Nova Scotia ufologists Chris Styles and Don Ledger conducted a great deal of research on the case, collecting documents and interviewing witnesses. In the course of their inquiries, Styles and Ledger learned of a whole new dimension to the case. Their sources were divers and military personnel who had participated in the retrieval effort.

According to this extraordinary (and unverified) story, the searchers realized at some point that the UFO had made its way a few miles to the north-northeast, placing it on a seabed off Shelburne County's Government Point, close to a top-secret (now closed) submarine-detection base run jointly by Canada and the United States. A flotilla of ships positioned itself over the submerged craft. As the crews gave consideration to a recovery effort, a second underwater UFO joined the first and engaged in a repair operation. The ships decided then to do no more than observe the proceedings.

Seven days later a Soviet submarine appeared but was escorted from the site. Soon afterwards the two UFOs sailed off toward the Gulf of Maine. Emerging from under water, they ascended rapidly and flew off at a high rate of speed.

Stringfield and the new era. The first major mainstream ufologist to declare crash/retrieval reports a matter of legitimate concern, even vital interest, was Leonard Stringfield, a widely respected figure whose history in the UFO field went back to the early 1950s. His advocacy of crash/retrievals would have enormous impact on ufology's subsequent direction. In the 1980s and 1990s crash/retrieval investigations and attendant controversies would stand at the forefront of UFO research.

Stringfield first declared himself in a 1977 book, *Situation Red, the UFO Siege!*, which sought to revive both the **extraterrestrial hypothesis** of UFO origin (a notion that had largely fallen out of favor among many ufologists) and the idea of an official cover-up (also judged passé). In doing so, he marshaled the usual evidence familiar to readers of 1950s UFO books, such as those by Donald Keyhoe. Less predictably, he dedicated 10 pages to crashed-disc stories.

One concerned the remarkable testimony of a Presbyterian minister. When he was a boy, he and his father, also a minister, were visiting Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry when they got lost in a labyrinth of corridors. Trying to find an exit, they entered a room with a large, glass-covered case. Inside the case they were startled to see a number of preserved bodies of small humanoid beings. At that moment they were discovered, and the father was taken into another room, where he was detained and forced to sign papers swearing him to silence.

The treatment here afforded crash/retrievals would set a pattern Stringfield followed until death ended his career as a collector of this variety of modern folklore. He collected and reported incredible tales, usually from anonymous informants. This practice, which he defended as essential to the protection of his sources, generated considerable criticism. No one questioned Stringfield's honesty, but some wondered about his judgment. If the identities of his sources were kept from other investigators, no independent assessment was possible. No one could accuse Stringfield of excessive skepticism; to the contrary, his critics complained that he was inclined to take at face value even wild claims, providing that the source appeared sincere enough.

To such criticisms Stringfield countered:

> I wish to emphasize that most of my firsthand sources just don't seem to fit the psychotic or weirdo types. Most, working initially through an intermediary, have shown a reluctance to talk too much until I assured them of anonymity and confidential treatment on other details relative to military or personal matters.
>
> Notably, almost all sources indicated no inclination to take an active part in UFO research for fame or fortune, either because they were

fearful of reprisals based on their secrecy oath, or the desire for privacy for business or family reasons. Interestingly, most were not sufficiently attuned to the subject of UFOs to even keep up with the current literature.

Nonetheless, some of his informants proved to be hoaxers, including a man whose tape-recorded testimony was highlighted at Stringfield's well-attended lecture on July 29, 1978, in Dayton, Ohio, at a Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) conference. The claimant's testimony was exposed as dubious only after other researchers learned of his identity and launched their own investigations.

Beyond what little could be determined with reasonable certainty about the credibility of individual informants, how one felt about the stories Stringfield was collecting had a great deal to do with how one felt about crash/retrievals. If one considered such things possible, one found the testimony—whatever its undeniable problems (for example, only a minority of informants were, or claimed to be, first-hand sources)—at least suggestive. To those who rejected crash/retrieval claims as absurd, nothing Stringfield brought forth amounted to much as evidence. Indeed, real evidence, in the form of a body of interlocking testimony from a wide range of independent informants, did not come to light until the Roswell investigation, in which Stringfield played only a marginal role.

Here are summaries of several representative cases discussed in the MUFON report:

A "reliable person in a technical position at a large General Electric plant" heard the story from his brother, a radar specialist at California's Edwards AFB. In 1952 the brother tracked a UFO on radar as it sped across the screen. Soon afterwards word came that it had crashed. The captain ordered him to pretend that he had seen nothing. Later "base officials" informed him that the disc had been recovered in a desert area nearby. The craft was over 50 feet in diameter and contained bodies of humanoids. It was held for a short time in an Edwards hangar, then shipped by truck to Wright-Patterson.

Stringfield had his informant contact his brother, who refused to speak with the ufologist, citing—according to the informant—his security oath. As supporting evidence Stringfield cited testimony from three individuals who said they had seen a tarpaulin-covered "strange cargo," rumored to be a flying saucer, being transported on a lo-boy to Wright-Patterson in 1952.

Possible additional evidence came from yet another source. The parents of ufologist and NASA engineer John Schuessler had a close friend who once had been a civilian guard at a receiving gate for internal security at Wright-Patterson. Sometime in 1952 a lo-boy carrying a tarpaulin-covered craft had arrived. On this or another occasion bodies of humanoids were delivered to the gate. They were said to have been recovered from a crash somewhere in the Southwest. The former guard turned down Schuessler's request for an interview.

In another alleged incident, this one set in Montana in 1953, Stringfield had an informant who claimed firsthand status. Cecil Tenney, 78, said that in the fall of that year, near dusk, he had been driving from Great Falls to Conrad when, close to Dutton, he saw a cigar-shaped object about 200 feet away. Apparently in trouble, it shook and belched fire and smoke. "It seemed to be trying to pull itself up," Tenney said, "but it couldn't." After a few minutes he heard an explosion, and balls of fire rained down from the sky.

Tenney repaired to an area bar, where a highway patrol officer and fellow witness got his name and address. That evening a colonel from Great Falls AFB called and gruffly instructed him to show up at the installation the following morning. When he arrived, two guards escorted him to a jail-like building and then to the colonel's office. After a 30-minute interrogation Tenney signed five copies of a document with a notary seal. On his way out the door, still accompanied by guards, he passed two guards carrying what he first took to be laundry bags. Suddenly one dropped his bag, and Tenney thought he could see the outline of a body with limbs. At that moment he was roughly shoved outside. "I can't swear they were bodies," Tenney told Stringfield, "but the bags contained something they didn't want me to see." His phone voice "sounded convincing," in Stringfield's judgment.

In July 1979, a year after the MUFON lecture, Stringfield received a typed statement from a source with whom he had been interacting for some months, mostly through an intermediary, a physician who "served on the staff of a major hospital." The composer of the statement was identified only as a "noted doctor . . . who had performed the autopsy" of an alien body in the early 1950s. He was, according to Stringfield, one of several "medical people" who were providing him with information on extraterrestrial physiology. The statement read in part:

> SIZE—The specimen observed was 4 foot three and three-eighths inches in length. I can't remember the weight. It has been so long and my files do not contain the weight. I recall the length well, because we had a disagreement and everyone took their turn at measuring.
>
> HEAD—The head was pear-shaped in appearance and oversized by human standards for the body. The eyes were Mongoloid in appearance. The ends of the eyes furthest from the nasal cavity slanted upward at about a ten degree angle. The eyes were recessed into the head. There seemed to be no visible eyelids, only what seemed like a fold. There were no human type lips as such—just a slit that opened into an oral cavity about two inches deep. A membrane along the rear of the cavity separated it from what would be the digestive tract. The tongue seemed to be atrophied into almost a membrane. No teeth were observed. X-rays revealed a maxilla and mandible as well as cranial bone structure. The outer "ear lobes" didn't exist. The auditory orifices present were similar to our middle and inner ear canals. The head con-

tained no hair follicles. The skin seemed grayish in color and seemed mobile when moved.

The above observations are from general anatomical observations. I didn't autopsy or study the head portion in any great detail since this was not my area of specialty. . . .

The arms are oversized in length by human standards. There was no thumb. . . . The chest area contained what seemed like two atrophied mammary gland nipples. The sexual organs were atrophied. Some other investigators have observed female specimens. I have not had this opportunity. The legs were short and thin. The feet didn't have any toes. The skin covered the foot in such a way that it gave the appearance of wearing a sock. However, X-ray examination showed normal bone structure underneath.

The informant later stated that under a microscope the alien skin tissue looked meshlike, in other words a grid's network of horizontal and perpendicular lines.

Stringfield published periodic updates as new information, third-, second- and firsthand, came his way. As he had done from the beginning, he tended to take the testimony at face value unless clear indications of a hoax were available. Though this approach left him open to criticism, by the time of his death (in 1994) his efforts as a collector of—depending on one's point of view—urban legends or raw data about UFO secrets had won him many friends and admirers.

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