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### **DERENBERGER CONTACT CLAIMS**

In Woodrow W. Derenberger's telling of the tale, it all began on the rainy evening of Wednesday, November 2, 1966, on Interstate Highway 77, just north of the Route 47 interchange. It was around 7:25, and Derenberger, a 50-year-old salesman for a Parkersburg, West Virginia, sewing-machine company, was driving south on his way home. Home was a farm outside a tiny Parkersburg suburb, Mineralwells, where his young wife and two small children waited. The account that follows has been reconstructed from many sources, including Derenberger's account, newspaper reports, and investigations by ufologists.

Because of reduced visibility and uncertain road conditions, Derenberger was driving at a cautious 50 mph. A car passed him, and immediately afterwards something else—a dark gray object—overtook him, moving at 15 to 20 mph faster than his panel truck. Then, when it was about 30 feet ahead of him, the object turned sideways and covered both lanes.

Derenberger hit the brakes, and as his vehicle skidded to a stop, the object maintained a 20-foot distance between them.

Trying to describe what it looked like, Derenberger would think of the glass covering of an old kerosene lamp. If one were to cut two such coverings in half, join them at the broad end, and put the resulting creation on its side, that would describe the object's shape. Its color was a dull charcoal, and its surface was smooth.

For a moment Derenberger considered trying to drive around it, but it was blocking so much of the road that he had no choice but to pull over to the shoulder. His headlights were shining on the middle of the object. Then, according to a statement he made to investigator Kevin D. Dee on November 6:

[The object] appeared to be about eight to 10 inches hovering off the ground. There was a small fluttering sound. The instant it stopped, a door opened, and a man stepped directly out and began walking at a normal rate of walk towards the side window opposite the driver's side. At the second he stepped out of the object, the door closed immediately, and the object rose to a height of what I estimated to be 50 to 75 feet straight up and remained stationed. . . . I was aware of a voice which said, "Will you open your window?" I leaned over the engine hump, and I had the window down by the time he got directly there. He was standing with his arms folded under his armpits. He was about six feet high in height, and I would estimate weighing about 185 pounds. He was smiling. I did not see his lips move, but I was aware that he was talking to me.

The man wore a top coat which hung between the knees and the ankles. His skin was dark as if tanned, and his dark hair was slicked back.

Derenberger opened the conversation by introducing himself. "My name is Derenberger," he said.

"I am called Cold," the man replied. When Derenberger looked confused, the man repeated, "Cold." This time Derenberger understood that he was speaking his name.

Cold went on, "Please do not be frightened. I wish you no harm, only happiness." Looking toward the lights of Parkersburg, he asked, "What is this called?"

"That's a city or town called Parkersburg," Derenberger said.

"Where I am from, that is called a gathering. Mr. Derenberger, why are you frightened? Look at me. You can see we are as you are. We eat, sleep, breathe, and bleed just as you do. Do you have to work for a living? Do you work for a living?"

"I am a salesman."

"I am a searcher. Mr. Derenberger, don't think of me as an alien. Please don't be frightened. Why are you frightened? Your country is more powerful than mine. You have more armament than we."

With these words Cold stepped back from the truck and walked in front of it. Illuminated by the headlights, he delivered a brief message: "Mr. Derenberger, we will see you again." With that he made a hand signal, and suddenly the object reappeared, now just six feet from the driver's side of the van. According to Derenberger:

The door opened again. I could observe an outline of a figure, which I could not identify, back inside the doorway. It appeared to me that the figure stepped back to allow the man [Cold] to step inside, stooping as he did. What appeared to be an arm and hand . . . closed the door, and the vehicle rose directly up.

The shaken Derenberger raced home. He arrived there at 7:45 and told his wife what had happened. After 8 he began making phone calls: to the Parkersburg police, the West Virginia State Police, Glenn Wilson of the Parkersburg radio-television station WTAP, and *Parkersburg News* reporter Larry V. Murphy. The following evening WTAP television ran a half-hour interview with him.

The next day, with police and an Air Force representative in attendance, Derenberger held a news conference at which he offered to take a lie-detector test to prove his sincerity. By Friday his story, thanks to a UPI dispatch, was being recounted in newspapers all across the country. The Parkersburg papers, the *News* and the *Sentinel*, treated Derenberger re-



Though first deemed credible, Woodrow W. Derenberger soon achieved notoriety as his tales grew ever more extravagant and took him to "Lanulos" and other planets.

spectfully. The *Sentinel* noted that Derenberger was a regular church-goer, and in his column on November 6, the *News's* Larry Murphy, who would write a number of supportive articles, said Derenberger "has an honest, wholesome and healthy appearance, an air of sincerity. . . . He has a friendly smile, and looks you directly in the eye—not belligerently, but in a sincere and convincing manner."

*Messages and sightings.* Derenberger's space adventures were only beginning. On the evening of the fourth, little more than 48 hours after the first, a second contact occurred.

He and a friend, Phillip Elliott of Parkersburg, were on U.S. Highway 50 when Derenberger, who was behind the wheel, started pulling his hand across his face. "At one point he pulled it all the way from the back of his head, down his face," Elliott testified. "A few minutes later, he was steering with his left hand,

his right hand cupped over his chin. I nudged him and called his name twice. He did not answer.”

Suddenly he lapsed into a kind of trance. His jaw dropped open, and his eyes rolled back in his head. Alarmed—they were moving at 60 mph and going down a hill—Elliott shook him, to no avail. He noticed that Derenberger’s body was rigid. Moving Derenberger’s foot from the accelerator, Elliott managed to slow the car down to 35 mph. Then Derenberger started making mumbling sounds which over the next few minutes grew audible, if not always coherent. All the while Elliott was keeping the car at a safe speed and on the road, though he himself did not assume control of the wheel.

The first understandable words were: “Fly! Fly! Fly! One ship!” Then, as if being corrected, he said, “More ships. More ships. More ships.” After a lapse into incoherence, he came out with a clear message, spoken slowly: “When they are ready they will tell all.” To Elliott’s ears it sounded like “reading off a telegraph machine as if he was getting one word at a time.” Derenberger struggled with a word which he seemed unable to pronounce or understand. Elliott, who was jotting notes, rendered it phonetically as “Grundileis.” After speaking the word “Ardo,” Derenberger collapsed. His companion slammed on the brake, steered the car to the side of the road, and switched off the engine.

Thoroughly alarmed, Elliott shook Derenberger in an effort to bring him back to consciousness. After three or four minutes he revived. He asked, “What happened?” When Elliott told him, Derenberger said he would keep the episode to himself until he could make sense of it.

According to Derenberger’s subsequent version of the episode, he had experienced a tingling sensation around his eyes. As he rubbed his forehead, he realized that Cold was sending him a telepathic communication. Cold told him his ship was directly overhead and pacing the truck, and he urged him more than once to drive carefully as he listened. Cold went on to say he was from the “galaxy of Ganymede,” a place ecologically much like the earth, though it has only three seasons: planting, harvest, and cold. (To earthly astronomers Ganymede is a moon of Jupiter, not remotely suited to anything like human life.) His

first name was Indrid, and he was married to Kimi, and the couple had two young sons, with a third child due shortly. His people live between 125 to 175 earth years. Time on Ganymede is different from time here, Cold said (Derenberger, 1968).

On the eighth the *News* reported that two men in a passing truck had apparently seen Derenberger speaking with Cold at the spot where the encounter was said to have taken place. On the evening of the second, at approximately 7:25, an unnamed “Parkersburg businessman, who is engaged in the trucking business and who doesn’t want his name revealed because he fears his customers might doubt his rationality,” saw a van matching the description of Derenberger’s vehicle on the side of the road. A few days later investigators from the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) located the man. On November 12 Walter Vanscoy provided a signed statement:

I was traveling in a truck (as an assistant driver) going North on I-77. About ½-mile past the interchange for W. Va. Route 47, I observed a panel truck parked on the berm of the Southbound lanes of I-77. The panel truck had its lights on low-beam. I also observed what appeared to be a man standing by the right-hand front door of the panel truck. The man was standing upright and did not appear to move during the time that I saw him. He appeared to be wearing a knee-length coat that did not give off any unusual reflection. I didn’t notice if he was wearing a hat. I did not notice anyone inside the panel truck, or any lights inside. . . .

State Police told the *News* that after the Derenberger story became known, they received calls from several residents who lived near the site. They said they had experienced odd problems with television reception at the time of the sighting. One woman said she had seen a strange light beam around 7:30, and another saw a “gray streak of light” between 7:30 and 8. The object was near the I-77/Route 47 interchange (Murphy, “Strange Happenings,” 1966). Unfortunately neither police nor civilian investigators followed up on these reports.

(In an article published the next year in England’s *Flying Saucer Review* [Keel, 1967], John A. Keel claimed

that "at about the same time" as Derenberger's encounter two men driving home from work early in the morning in the Point Pleasant, West Virginia, area—approximately 50 miles southwest of Parkersburg—saw a cigar-shaped object landed on the road. Its occupant, a humanlike, dark-skinned figure in shiny overalls, approached and asked them, via telepathy, about their names and destination. According to Keel, "The two men decided not to tell anyone, but one of them took to heavy drinking for the first time in his life and finally confided to his family, and exchanged notes with another person in Point Pleasant who had reported seeing a UFO." In a later book Keel wrote that he had found and interviewed the men, who wanted no further involvement [Keel, 1970a]. This story, significant if true, does not appear in the extended and sympathetic treatment Keel accords Derenberger in *The Mothman Prophecies* [1975].)

A UFO sighting made at 6:45 P.M. on November 4 also seemed to provide support for Derenberger's story. Irma Hudgins, her son Fred, and her daughter Pamela Sue, traveling south on I-77, noticed an unusual object "at or near the crest of the hill, just north of where you turn off onto State Route 47"—in other words at or very near the site of the Derenberger encounter. Fred, who was driving, stopped the car. "All three of us looked," Mrs. Hudgins said later, "and the object had moved from its former position, and was straight ahead of us, toward Mineralwells. Once it looked like it was going in reverse. It had been right on the tree-tops when I first saw it, and now it still was fairly close to earth." Light gray in color and without lights, it resembled "two glass chimneys from a kerosene lamp welded together at their widest or bulging ends." Her description is virtually identical to Derenberger's. She claimed, however, that she had not heard of the earlier story at the time of the sighting.

The object reversed direction and disappeared in the direction of Parkersburg, after being visible for a little more than five minutes (Murphy, "Space Ship," 1966).

NICAP investigators who interviewed the Hudginses on November 12 concluded they were sincere.

On Sunday, November 6, a driver on Route 47, just off I-77, recounted a close encounter with a beam-wielding object. He spotted the object about 6:30 P.M. and got out of his car to watch it. At first it looked like "two lights" low in the sky "near the Viscose plant, across the Little Kanawha River," to the south. The UFO crossed the river and crossed 47, then turned off its lights. The witness estimated its altitude to be 100 to 150 feet.

"It hadn't quite reached I-77 when it turned off its lights," he told the *News*. "A minute or so later, it turned on its two lights again, then started moving back in my direction." When it was nearly overhead, the man impulsively pumped his brake pedal, causing the brake lights to go on and off. In this way he hoped to attract the UFO's attention. He said that "the thing stopped right over my car and suddenly focused a beam of bright light on my car, something like a spotlight. It was a bright light and was shining directly in my eyes from the thing overhead, whatever it was." He was almost blinded for the 10 seconds the light kept shining. When it shut off, the object headed at a leisurely pace in a southerly direction. The two other lights, one red, one yellow, were back on. It executed a sharp turn and headed up 77. The lights shut down again, and it was lost to view (Murphy, "Derenberger Story," 1966).

Over the next weeks other residents of the Parkersburg area would come forward to recount their own sightings of unusual lights. UFO activity all up and down the Ohio River Valley was on the upswing, but around Parkersburg any sighting Derenberger supporter Larry Murphy reported in the *News* amounted to validation of the November 2 claim.

Ufologist Kevin Dee had already interviewed Derenberger and others before a four-man team from NICAP's Pittsburgh Subcommittee arrived in Parkersburg on Saturday, November 12. The investigators spoke with Derenberger, other witnesses, police officers, and local media people. At one point they went to the encounter site but found nothing out of the ordinary. Four days later a team member wrote NICAP headquarters, "Based upon the evidence which has been obtained thus far," the group had concluded that "Derenberger's story cannot be labeled as a fraud or a hoax. The question of whether

Derenberger experienced an hallucination (possibly in conjunction with an epileptic seizure) cannot be ruled out." The group planned to continue its investigation (Kalapaca, 1966).

*Cold's world.* Meanwhile Derenberger's contacts with Cold were continuing. A few days after the initial meeting, he came home from work about 9 P.M. and met Cold and his navigator (Cold called him his "panion") Carl Ardo. Though it was chilly outside, Derenberger was so excited that he forgot the cold over the next two hours, as the three of them engaged in animated conversation. "They . . . would not come into the house because my wife was frightened," Derenberger would write. "Since then she has lost all fear of them and has entertained them in our home" (Derenberger, *op. cit.*).

Cold and Ardo asked him many questions about earthly life. They said the concept of hate is incomprehensible on their world because "we are all brothers." Derenberger would provide this account:

These people do not have a written record of how their planet began; however, they do have a legend. They believe their forefathers came from earth in a space ship and after they had landed, somehow lost the art of space travel. It was many, many years before they again learned how to travel in space.

Mr. Cold told me that their religion and their belief in God is the same as our own. They believe there is but one God, who created everything that is good, and is the Father of all. Mr. Cold has told me many times that they would like to land and come and talk with our people, but he has met several times with hostility, has been shot at[,] and also other ships of his friends have been shot at. At one time in Arkansas, he was shot with a shotgun and he had to have several pellets removed from his legs and thighs. These people are as much afraid of our people as we are of them. Yet they say they would like to make friendly contact with all our people, and be able to tell us their ways and learn ours.

They would like to be able to trade with our country. Mr. Cold says that they have things that we would like to have, as do we have things that

they need. He has told me things that I have no way of knowing whether they are true or untrue, yet in everything he has told me I have never, never in any way learned that he has been untruthful. He has told me that he made an offer to our Government that if they would guarantee safety for both him and his ship, he would land. But for some reason unknown to him, our Government will not grant his request. He said that our Government leaders said that no physical harm would come to him, but otherwise he would have to place himself and his ship in their hands and they would do what was best for him and for us. Mr. Cold has declined this offer. I have no way of knowing if this is true.

In their country, they don't have a Government as we know it, but a Guiding Council. Their officials are also elected. There are 56 members in their Council, and they are elected every six years (in our time). Any time one of the officials proves to be unfit for the job, he can be dismissed and another one elected. These people are very friendly and have never had a war on their planet, nor have they crime, as we know it here. They not only talk with telepathy, but have a language of their own. I know a few words of their language. When a couple is married, it is said that they are "united." The wife calls her husband her "united," and the husband calls his wife his "union."

Their children are very healthy, but they do have sickness. They also have diseases they cannot control, as we do, and have death they cannot prevent. When their children are old enough to know right from wrong, no matter what age, they are sent to school and go until they are 28 years old. At this time, if they have not reached the standard of learning that they should, they go to school until they do. Everyone works at a job that he himself chooses. If a man does not like his work, he can ask for reclassification and can be assigned to something else [*ibid.*].

By now Derenberger was something of a celebrity and the focus of a fair amount of hysteria. Every night cars filled with spaceship-hunting (and sometimes

gun-toting) gawkers lined up on the roads around his farm. No spaceships appeared. Nonetheless, or so Derenberger would assert, one night in early 1967 a black Volkswagen drove through the crowd. A neatly dressed man with a deep tan got out and met Derenberger on his porch. The man handed over a vial of medicine, returned to his car, and drove off undetected. Indrid Cold had just delivered the cure for a chronic stomach ailment (Keel, 1975).

*NICAP bows out.* Investigators from NICAP's Pittsburgh Subcommittee returned to the area on November 26 and met with Derenberger at his Mineralwells home. When they asked him if he would be willing to submit to hypnosis, he declined. Earlier, he said, an "Air Force major from the Pentagon" had visited him and specifically asked him to refrain from being hypnotized. He further claimed that a man who identified himself as an FBI agent had interviewed him. The NICAP people, openly skeptical, suggested that the visitors had been imposters, but Derenberger said they had shown him authentic-looking identification (Murphy, "Derenberger Is Questioned," 1966). Derenberger confided that he had had three subsequent contacts with Cold, who informed him that he came from the planet Lanulos, "near the Ganymede star cluster" (Weitzel, 1966).

Among those who sat in on the meeting was a Parkersburg psychiatrist, Raymond Jarvis (pseudonym). On November 29 Jarvis sent in membership fees to NICAP's Washington headquarters and offered to "help in any way possible." He said he had long been interested in UFOs. The local NICAP investigators wanted him to conduct a psychiatric and neurological evaluation of Derenberger. Jarvis found Derenberger to be a "friendly, outgoing man whose behavior, thinking, and interaction with others does [sic] not reveal evidence of serious psychopathology." On December 7 a further EEG test was conducted on Derenberger at a Baltimore hospital. The physician who did the work detected "no evidence of brain damage or of focal organic change and certainly, nothing to suggest the presence of a convulsive disorder."

In early December Jarvis and his family, who lived in the country outside Parkersburg, had a daytime sighting of a disc-shaped object. Two days later, as he was

watching a televised football game, he felt a tingling in his head and arms. Then the voice of Indrid Cold announced that he and his associates would like to meet him. Cold said that he would soon appear in the guise of a salesman. In the days following this incident, Jarvis would see lights in the woods a mile from his home, but these lights would appear only when he was alone. Whenever he alerted family members for corroboration, they would vanish. Cold did not keep his promised appointment.

NICAP's investigation went on inconclusively. Members checked into Derenberger's background and uncovered no evidence of criminality or other abnormality. Dr. Jarvis's background proved similarly ordinary. Members of the team participated in sky watches hoping that they would see the UFOs area residents seemed to be sighting regularly, but the results were disappointing. Though Pittsburgh Subcommittee chairman William Weitzel called Derenberger's "one of the most interesting cases NICAP has ever studied" (Weitzel, 1967), Derenberger had begun to grow uncomfortable about the group, apparently because he feared that NICAP would monopolize his story and cut him out of the profits. A local man named Jack Mace had appointed himself Derenberger's manager. Mace spoke privately but frequently of the money Derenberger—and presumably Mace as well—could see from commercial exploitation of the story (Elliott, 1966).

In late November Gray Barker, a West Virginia publisher of contactee and occult literature, showed up in Parkersburg and talked with Derenberger, then gave an interview to the *News*. Barker, who had been expelled from NICAP that year, was eager to settle scores. "I think [the NICAP investigators] plan to come up with a very negative report," he charged. "And the people of the Parkersburg area should be righteously angry at the treatment afforded one of their citizens by this innuendo" (Murphy, "Ufologist," 1966).

Not only had NICAP always been hostile to contact claims, it was reluctant to endorse even reports of brief, noncommunicative encounters with UFO occupants—the sorts of incidents that would come to be called **close encounters of the third kind**. Yet it had devoted considerable attention to Derenberger's

claims, in spite of their increasingly bizarre character. NICAP headquarters in Washington even drew up a list of questions it wanted Dr. Jarvis to ask Indrid Cold next time the latter established telepathic contact with the former.

But NICAP's patience and Derenberger's credibility were rapidly eroding. In its May/June 1967 issue the organization's newsletter devoted three short paragraphs to the matter. The item concluded, "While NICAP has been unable to conclusively disprove the claims of Derrenberger [sic], the case is considered highly dubious." A statement drafted for press inquirers was more specific:

The alleged sightings, visits, and communications with spacemen as reported by Woodrow Derenberger . . . have been investigated in detail by NICAP. No convincing evidence has been found to substantiate Derenberger's claims, and it has been noted that the claims tend to become more complicated, and correspondingly more fantastic, with the passage of time. Evidence has been found indicating a degree of suggestibility among some of the people involved in the Derenberger case, whereby unrelated events have been connected, misinterpreted, and made mysterious when there is no objective justification. Thus, much of what has transpired seems to lie in the realm of psychology rather than empirical experience [*Statement*, 1967].

*Lanulos and other planets.* Now that the crowds around the farm had dispersed, the people of Lanulos felt free to land regularly on Derenberger's property. He took an extended flight with them to the Amazon and from there flew to a huge mothership parked near the moon. On another occasion he sailed through the solar system. Along the way he learned through personal observation that Saturn's rings "are simply rainbows that are caused by the sun shining on the ice." The ship went on to Lanulos but did not touch ground there. It flew close enough to the surface, however, for Derenberger to wave at some of the planet's friendly inhabitants.

A May 1967 voyage brought Derenberger to Lanulos again, and this time he was permitted to disembark.

He stayed at the Colds's luxury home, but whenever he went outside, he attracted stares because unlike the Lanulosians he wore clothes. Later he decided to do as the Lanulosians did, and so he became a nudist. This made the space people happy, and they welcomed him warmly into their midst. Even so, he felt uncomfortable because he was a "little bit overweight" while the Lanulosians all had perfect bodies. On a trip to Venus he learned that Lanulos is not the only nudist planet (Bord and Bord, 1991; Derenberger and Hubbard, 1971).

(Curiously, in one of the very first contact claims of the UFO era, an elderly man told a local newspaper that he had encountered nude and beautiful Venusians in the clearing of a woods near Mineral, Washington. Though it allegedly took place in March 1950, the story was not reported in the UFO literature until three decades later, long after Derenberger made a comparable claim [Clark, 1981; see *The Emergence of a Phenomenon*, pp. 295-97]. A sighting of a beautiful extraterrestrial couple, "dressed in nature's garb," allegedly occurred on April 16, 1897, near Springfield, Missouri ["Golden Haired Girl," 1897]. A naked, humanlike UFO being figures in an unpublished CE3 from Memphis in the late summer of 1960 [McCarroll, 1978]. A dubious 1986 abduction claim from Germany alleges a meeting with giant but otherwise human-looking, attractive nude aliens [Von Ludwiger, 1993].)

Though conservative ufologists had long since written Derenberger off, he continued to fascinate the iconoclastic investigator and writer John A. Keel, who was researching UFO reports and other anomalous phenomena in the Ohio River Valley. Derenberger would figure prominently in Keel's *The Mothman Prophecies*. During his first visit Keel saw "some small lights bobbing around in a field behind Woody's house"; Derenberger claimed they were projections from Cold's spacecraft (Keel, 1970a). Keel believed explicitly in Derenberger's essential sincerity and did not doubt that he was having extraordinary interactions with other-than-human beings; he disagreed, however, with Derenberger's interpretation. He thought Derenberger's friendly space people were really malevolent, manipulative occult entities in disguise (Keel, 1969, 1970b, 1975).

Keel interviewed Derenberger's wife Marge and two children. According to Keel, they "also met Indrid Cold and his colleagues from the planet Lanulos." The Lanulosians often passed undetected among earthlings. Some had even shopped in Parkersburg stores. Nonetheless Mrs. Derenberger shared Keel's suspicions of their motives. She thought, at least initially, that there was something evil about them. Two other individuals, cousins Jim Hacket and Darla Sartor, also claimed to have met Cold, Ardo, and another Lanulosian, Demo Hassan, in Derenberger's company (Keel, 1975).

Derenberger moved from the Parkersburg area, complaining all the while of persecution by **men in black**. On one occasion, he said, he had been the victim of a knife attack which left a prominent scar on his belly. The scar, however, proved invisible to others ("The Night," 1971). He appeared before contactee-oriented audiences, and he became a regular guest on radio and television talk shows. On February 28, 1968, he invited reporters to a private home in Vienna, Virginia, promising a meeting with space people. When they failed to show, he blamed sabotage by evil-doers (*ibid.*).

*Vadig and the time cycle.* The next month Derenberger appeared on Fred Gale's call-in show on Washington, D.C., radio station WWDC. To the astonishment of all concerned, Derenberger most of all, someone called in to say he, too, had been to Lanulos. Though agreeing with much of what Derenberger had said about the planet and its people, he added some new details which Derenberger quickly verified. After 15 minutes the caller was put on a special off-air line and asked his name and phone number. He identified himself as Ed Bailey but refused to give out further information. He wanted no more publicity, he explained.

A few minutes later, however, Bailey's phone rang. The station had traced the call and given the number to Harold Salkin, Derenberger's new manager. To Salkin "Bailey" revealed that his true name was Tom Monteleone, 21 years old and a psychology major at the University of Maryland. A week or so later Salkin and the Derenbergers visited him at his Adelphi apartment and tape-recorded an interview with him.

Monteleone related that at 1 A.M. on December 10, 1967, he was driving home on an interstate highway

when a UFO landed and blocked his way. Two humanlike occupants stood near the craft, and one approached him, smiling broadly. The alien, who had a "suntanned" complexion and bulging eyes, introduced himself as Vadig. After a few minutes' conversation Vadig said, "I'll see you in time," and reentered the ship. Two months later Vadig entered the Washington restaurant where Monteleone worked part-time as a waiter. He was dressed in an ordinary business suit. He arranged to meet the young man the following Sunday night. When he left, he said, once more, "I'll see you in time." At midnight that Sunday, Vadig picked up Monteleone in a large black sedan and drove him to a farm in rural Maryland. There they boarded a UFO and flew, in what seemed like seconds, to Lanulos. Monteleone was surprised to find that its inhabitants did not wear clothes. "Some of them were real lookers," he would recall. He was flown back to earth and driven back to his apartment. Vadig again promised, "I'll see you in time." A week later Vadig and another Lanulosian came to the restaurant and talked for a short time with Monteleone. He never saw them again.

In late March, Salkin and the Derenbergers returned for another interview. This time they had brought John Keel with them. Keel did most of the questioning. At first he seemed skeptical but soon was won over. Keel said he thought Monteleone was telling the truth because he had revealed information known to Keel from his investigations but not to ufologists or the larger public.

The next year Keel devoted several paragraphs (though without naming Monteleone) to the story in a *Flying Saucer Review* article titled "The Time Cycle Factor." Cases like Derenberger's and Monteleone's indicated, he wrote, that the UFO intelligences "originate outside of [sic] our time frame. . . . UFOs are from another time cycle vastly different from our own." In other words, Vadig was trying to tell Monteleone something when he promised to meet again "in time" (Keel, 1969).

Using his real name, Monteleone made several public appearances in New York City in January 1970. He soon regretted these and complained to Keel about harassment by a "horde of kooks. . . . Although the experiences I had with Vadig were completely true, I



sometimes wish that I had never revealed them to anyone" (Monteleone, 1970).

Monteleone's story was incorporated into a book Derenberger wrote with Harold W. Hubbard, *Visitors from Lanulos* (1970). Keel cited it in *Mothman Prophecies*, remarking that "even Woody was surprised by such direct confirmation of his own experiences." Nonetheless "I finally had to conclude Tom was on the level."

He was not, however, on the level. His story was science fiction from beginning to end, he confessed in a brief 1979 *Omni* piece. Recalling his phone call to the radio station, Monteleone stated, "I contradicted Mr. Derenberger's story on purpose, claiming to have seen totally different things on my visit to Lanulos. But on each occasion, he would give ground, make up a hasty explanation, and in the end corroborate my own falsifications. He even claimed to know personally the 'UFO-naut' who contacted me!"

In the article, devoted chiefly to ridicule of those foolish enough to believe him, Monteleone neglected to mention either his public lectures or his insistence on his sincerity as long as three years after the initial claim. Instead readers got the false impression that his involvement in the hoax consisted of a single phone call intended as a "harmless prank." While lamenting all the attention he received from the "odd, achingly pathetic world of the UFO cultists" even though he "wished to receive no publicity," Monteleone wrote, "I shudder to think what would have happened had I sought public attention"—a disingenuous remark if ever there was one.

In a longer exposé published the next year in *Fate*, ufologist Karl T. Pflock reported that Monteleone's call to the radio station had been done at the urging of his roommates; as he was waiting to go on, it occurred to him it would be amusing to say that he, too, had been to Lanulos. Monteleone went on to a successful career as a science-fiction writer, and he even wrote a play based on his brief career as a contactee.

"*This is good By.*" Derenberger largely disappeared from public view after the early 1970s. By then it had been some while since any but the most aggressively credulous flying-saucer enthusiasts took him serious-

ly. Even John Keel, whose supernaturalist approach provided a framework in which practically anything could "happen" in some sense, privately remarked that barely a year after his initial claim "Derenberger's deterioration was well advanced" (Keel, 1980).

In the early 1980s Derenberger was residing in Parkersburg, selling used cars and living in reduced circumstances. A Massachusetts admirer who provided him with financial assistance was promised either a view of Cold's spaceship or a personal meeting with him. "Some day I hope to make Lanulos my home," Derenberger wrote his benefactor, "and in the not to [sic] distanced [sic] future Indrid's people will land openly and make themselves known to all earth people" (Derenberger, 1984a). A couple of weeks later he reported a recent conversation with Demo Hassan, who "stopped to talk to me for some time . . . of some changes on Lanulos. I can hardly wait to go back there, it seems so long since I was there last" (1984b).

On May 9 Derenberger's benefactor received a hand-printed letter from no less than Cold's wife Kimi:

Altho [sic] you think you are ready to meet with my people you are not. When you are completely ready Indrid will contact you. Do not become impatient. If you are contacted to [sic] soon it could ruin all our plans for you. . . . Woody is having quite a bit of trouble making ends meet. We are not permitted to help with money matters. . . . Do not for any reason try to come here before Indrid contacts you. Any help you can generate for Woody would be appreciated. It wont [sic] be to [sic] long before I talk to you personally.

A follow-up letter from Kimi read:

Recieved [sic] your letter today. Was very glad to get it for Woody was very much in need. He was being pursued by the men in black. Indrid has already left for (Lanulos) [sic]. We dont [sic] know just how long he will have to stay there, before it will be safe for him to return here. We all suffer from homesickness and loneliness [sic] all the time. But we have to condition ourselves to stand whatever faces us. In the nervous state

you are in the actual shock of meeting face to face with our people would be to [sic] much for you to bear. . . . Two of our people have already talked to you but couldn't reveal themselves to you because of your nervous condition. . . . Just recieved [sic] a mental message that Woody and Indrid have landed on (Lanulos) [sic]. They will return as soon as it is safe.

A final communication, signed "Woody," was dated July 31:

Charley[,] Just received word from Larry [Murphy?], you are trying to reach me. Charley[,] I am dropping out of sight[,] I am going over seas, I dont [sic] want anything else to do with U.F.O.s, they have caused me to [sic] much worry and trouble. Please dont [sic] try to reach me in any way, for I am thru [sic] with all space people, I have told them never to contact me again. This is good By.

Though his space adventures read like something out of a comic book, the November 2, 1966, episode has some puzzling aspects. For one thing, it appears to have been independently witnessed, though Walter Vanscoy's sighting of a figure in a coat, while consistent with Derenberger's description, hardly proves that the figure was an extraterrestrial. But it is undeniably curious. So is the sighting two days later of something very much like the unusual UFO Derenberger reported. In both cases the witnesses seem credible.

It is at least arguable that Derenberger initially had some sort of unusual experience. Possibly it, or the publicity resulting from it, affected him to the extent that he first imagined, then consciously concocted, ever more elaborate and fantastic tales which he exploited for financial gain. One could also argue that the episode was a hoax from the outset (thus Cold's promise of future contacts and the implicit suggestion that Derenberger was already planning for a career as a contactee) and that it was unrelated to the UFOs more truthful people were reporting around Parkersburg. At this late date the truth probably will never be known. Still, we may safely conclude that Woodrow Derenberger's tales owe far more to human invention than to extraterrestrial intervention.

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