

fluoridation of water, vaccination, the press, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and more. One critic, the acid-tongued, anomalyphobic Martin Gardner, would complain that *Doubt* had "become a dreary prolongation of a joke that should have been buried with Fort" (Gardner, 1957). Science-fiction novelist James Blish, though a society member, characterized Thayer as an advocate of almost every imaginable crazy belief, "the more asinine the better. At bottom, however, every one of these beliefs ... turned out to rest on some form of personal-devil theory" in which politicians, newspaper editors, physicists, priests, and doctors were conspiring to persecute the rest of humanity (Knight, *op. cit.*).

In 1949 Thayer in effect expelled a local chapter of the society, headquartered in San Francisco. He complained that its members were more interested in Fortean phenomena than in "other rebellions" against prevailing social and religious beliefs. Robert Barbour Johnson, a member of the San Francisco chapter, retaliated with this assessment of Thayer's editorship of *Doubt*: "The editorial tone is distinctly juvenile.... Much of its 'humor' is not even sophomoric.... Irony is laid on with a trowel.... The childish pretense is consistently maintained that the foundation date of the Society was 'the Year One' and all items are double-dated from that, adding to the confusion.... An occasional short article sometimes creeps in, always by unknown authors, usually mathematical, and always unintelligible" (Johnson, 1983).

For most readers of *Doubt*, as for Forteans since, the phenomena have always held greater appeal than the philosophies and social views some have tried to extract from Fort's work. To many in the movement Thayer seemed a difficult, divisive figure. Yet no one questioned his sincere commitment to the society, many of whose expenses he met out of his own pocket.

Even more than the cataloging of reports of anomalous phenomena, the society's most lasting accomplishment was arranging for the publication, in 1941, of the 1125-page *Books of Charles Fort*, which went through repeated printings over the years and introduced Fort to new generations of readers. In a lively introduction Thayer wrote:

I call this one of the greatest books ever written

"THE UFO ENCYCLOPEDIA" (1992)

in this world, right up there at the top, surely among the first ten. That estimate is based on its potentiality rather than upon any measurable effect to date. That potentiality lies in its power to *make* its readers think without telling them *what* to think.

The last issue of *Doubt*, number 61, appeared in the spring of 1959. A few months later, on August 23, Thayer suffered a heart attack and died. Thereafter the society existed only in name, despite efforts to keep it alive, until Thayer's widow formally disbanded it on September 30, 1960. Six years later a different sort of group, the International Fortean Organization (INFO), was organized in the Washington, D.C., area. Its still-existing magazine, the quarterly *INFO Journal* (edited by Raymond D. Manners), is concerned entirely with reports of Fortean phenomena and does not stray into social or political territory.

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**FRY, DANIEL WILLIAM (1908- )**

Daniel William Fry was born on July 19, 1908, in Verdon, Minnesota. Orphaned at nine, he was raised by his grandmother in Pasadena, California. Though largely self-educated, Fry trained himself in science and engineering and by 1950 was employed by Aerojet at the White Sands Proving Ground in New Mexico. It was there, he claims, that he first met Alan, a friendly extraterrestrial.

On July 4, 1950, having missed the last bus to Las Cruces, where other White Sands employees had gone to celebrate the holiday, Fry was alone when a



flying saucer appeared and hovered just above the ground. Fry approached it and was stroking its surface when a voice boomed, "Better not touch the hull, pal. It's still hot!" After several minutes' conversation on technical and philosophical matters—as was typical of the contactee literature of the 1950s, Fry quotes it verbatim, even as he says nothing of a tape-recording or note-taking—Fry was invited on board what the voice explained was a "remote controlled cargo carrier," otherwise known as a "vimana." Alan himself was speaking from a mothership 900 miles above the earth. "I have never set foot upon your planet," he said. "It will require at least four more of your years for me to become adapted to your atmosphere and gravity and to become immunized to your biotics." Fry was flown to New York and back in half an hour. In the course of the trip he learned that Alan and his people had once lived on earth but been forced to flee to other worlds when a great conflict between Lemuria (Mu) and Atlantis destroyed human civilization (Fry, 1954b).

He heard from Alan again in 1954, near Fry's cabin in a secluded area near Merlin, Oregon. Again they conversed on scientific and theological questions, and again Fry was able to quote alien Alan's words verbatim in his book *The White Sands Incident* (1954). A third conversation with Alan's voice occurred a few days later. But Fry did not meet Alan personally until 1961. He turned out to look like a normal white male in casual clothes.

By 1954 Fry was a celebrity on the southern California's influential contactee circuit. In early June of that year he was a star attraction at the First Annual Flying Saucer Convention in Los Angeles, where he was billed as the "scientist who rode a flying saucer from White Sands." Though his story was only marginally more believable than other claimants', Fry's intelligence and articulate manner of expression threw some who had come to scoff. *Los Angeles Daily News* reporter Paul Weeks, who attended a Fry press conference on June 1, confessed this was a "story I honestly don't know how to handle.... Mr. Fry is a solid-appearing, apparently sober-minded gentleman. He doesn't exude the personality you ordinarily associate with this sort of thing. Furthermore ... he is absolutely willing to submit to a lie detector test" (Weeks, 1954).

Two months earlier, after Fry had told his tale to another contactee gathering, Franklin Thomas, president of New Age Publishing, approached him about writing a book, and Fry was happy to oblige. The book (*White Sands Incident*) was written and published within two months, and by the time of the Los Angeles conference Fry had become both well-known and controversial. At the press conference a reporter asked if he would submit to a polygraph test, and Fry said he would, so long as the operator was an impartial one. A few days later Fry took the test, arranged by a local television show, and—according to the operator—flunked it. Fry disputed this interpretation in a subsequent article in Max B. Miller's popular *Saucers* magazine (Fry, 1954).

In 1957, when the **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP) challenged prominent contactees to undergo polygraph examinations, most declined, Fry among them. He wrote NICAP:

I make no "claims", nor have I ever made any. The word claim implies the desire or intent upon the part of the claimant, to acquire something as a result of the claim. There has never been any desire or intent upon my part, to acquire anything as a result of the report which I made concerning the event which occurred at the White Sands Proving Ground. I published the report only because I felt that there might be a few people in this country and abroad, who could benefit by the information contained therein. I believed that, if there was any value to the report, that value would be recognized by discerning minds, and once recognized, it would stand upon its own feet without need for substantiation (Fry, 1957).

Nonetheless a year later Fry gave NICAP a small metallic artifact which he claimed could conceivably be of extraterrestrial origin, but NICAP's analysis found only silicon, aluminum, iron, and mercury. Fry responded that the object, two and a half inches in diameter, one-quarter-inch thick, dull black in color, and with a small hole in the center, "was upon the surface of this earth when I obtained it. Obviously I cannot, of my own knowledge, state that it was extraterrestrial in origin. The elements which it contains all appear to be common to this earth (and probably

to at least a few million other planetary and stellar bodies within this galaxy)" (Fry, 1958).

Fry was a continuing source of annoyance to the conservative NICAP. He habitually identified himself as a "charter member" of the organization, and with some reason; NICAP secretary Rose Hackett Campbell, who harbored pro-contactee sympathies (which eventually led to her being forced out), had granted him the honor and even confided to him she had a favorable impression of him and his claims (Hackett, 1957). NICAP eventually prepared a form letter which disavowed any association between it and Fry and rejected his claims as "utterly improbable," noting that even Fry's regular membership (available to anyone who paid dues) "was revoked because of his misuse of our name in a context which implied that we endorsed his views." NICAP added, a bit gratuitously, that "Mr. Fry's 'doctorate' is from a notorious London diploma mill, and the same 'degree' could be obtained by nearly anyone willing to purchase it" (*Information Sheet*, 1967).

Nonetheless to the contactee and New Age communities Fry was seen as a heroic scientist who dared to admit to contacts with benevolent aliens. He was appointed head of the "Department of Electronics and Physics" of a San Francisco-based metaphysical correspondence school with the grandiose title Great Western University. Fellow contactee **George Hunt Williamson** headed the "Department of Anthropology" (*Will* 1959, n.d.). In 1955 he founded Understanding, Inc., which established smaller study units around the world and published the magazine *Understanding*, which reported on space messages and occult teachings. Understanding—both the organization and the magazine—still exist.

In 1962 Fry moved from El Monte, California, to Merlin, Oregon, near where he had met Alan in the flesh the year before. By then the heyday of the flamboyant contactees of southern California had passed, and though he remained a popular figure among the aging faithful, he was otherwise relegated to footnote status, remembered mostly as one of those who had shared the stage with the far more influential and charismatic **George Adamski**. If his contact claims seemed unbelievable to most people, Fry's commitment to a gentle metaphysical world

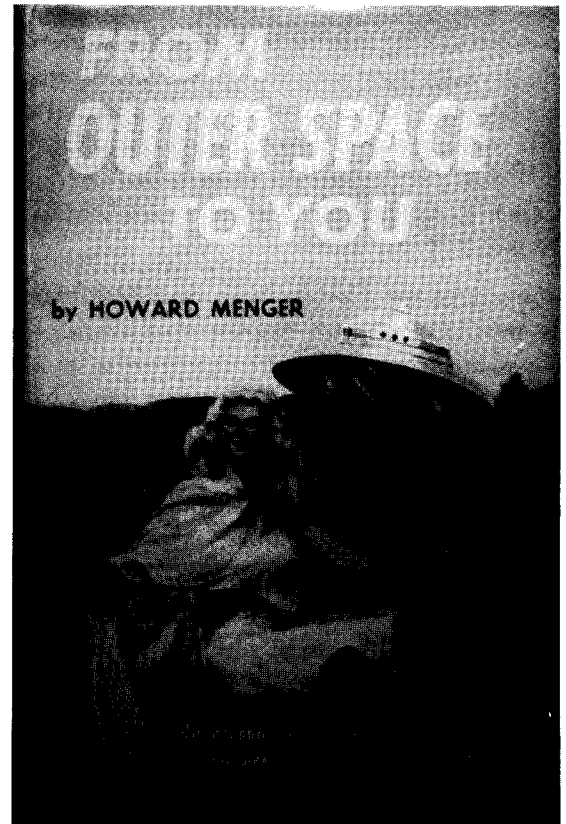
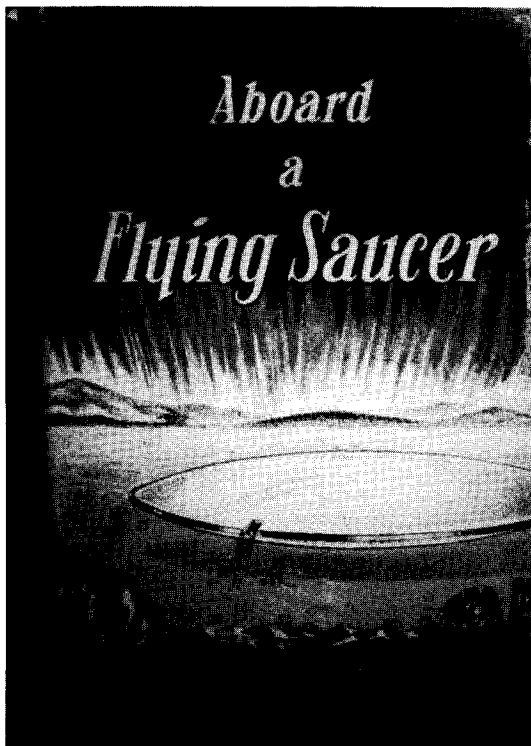
view (to which his saucer tales may have been no more than a means to an end) appeared beyond dispute.

In 1968 physicist Edward Condon, head of the Air Force-sponsored University of Colorado UFO Project (known generally as the Condon Committee), interviewed Fry for two hours (Fry, 1968), to NICAP's consternation (Nixon, 1968). NICAP saw this—correctly, as it turned out—as evidence that Condon's interest in UFOs was not serious. Two close observers of Condon's activities complained of his "seemingly inexplicable preoccupation with the 'crackpot' aspects of the UFO problem" (Saunders and Harkins, 1968).

Now living in Arizona, Fry still makes occasional public appearances.

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Two of the most popular contactee titles of the 1950s were Truman Bethurum's *Aboard a Flying Saucer* (1954) and Howard Menger's *From Outer Space to You* (1959). Contactees who claimed physical encounters with benevolent extraterrestrials were often frequent targets of hoax accusations by conservative ufologists and others.

until the early 1950s, when his career as a flying-saucer celebrity brought him an income from writing and lecturing. His first published account of his alleged encounter with space people appeared in a 1953 issue of Max B. Miller's *Saucers* magazine. There Bethurum related that in the early morning hours of July 1952, while napping between shifts as a heavy-equipment operator in the Nevada desert, he was awakened by eight small men who "seemed to be of Latin extraction from their appearance." They took him to a nearby flying saucer, where he met the captain, a "gorgeous woman, shorter than any of the men, neatly attired, and also having a Latin appearance: coal black hair and olive complexion. She appeared to be about 42 years old" (Bethurum, 1953), though later Bethurum learned that she was hundreds of years old. Her name was Aura Rhanes. The ship was called a "scow," and the little men and their captain were from the planet Clarion, a world that,

though it is in our solar system, is never seen because it is always on the other side of the moon.

In subsequent meetings Bethurum learned that Clarion is an idyllic world without war or conflict. The Clarionites were visiting the earth out of concern that human beings might blow up their planet in a nuclear war and cause "considerable confusion" among the inhabitants of other worlds.

In August 1953, at a convention sponsored by the Los-Angeles based Flying Saucers International, Bethurum told his story in public for the first time. *Aboard a Flying Saucer*, a book bearing Bethurum's by-line but in fact ghostwritten by Mary Kay Tennison, followed a year later. From then until his death Bethurum was a prominent and active figure in the contactee movement.

As with the other major contactees of the period, opinions differed about Bethurum's credibility and

motivation. Bryant and Helen Reeve, two sympathetic chroniclers of the movement, “were favorably and very deeply impressed with Mr. Bethurum’s unimagined sincerity.... In our humble opinion, he had not only one of the greatest personal saucer experiences, but he had one of the hardest ‘rows to hoe’—because not a single friend had the courage to be a witness to the contacts” (Reeve and Reeve, 1957).

Outside contactee circles, however, Bethurum’s claims were viewed with considerable skepticism. Among mainstream ufologists believers in the authenticity of his claims were few, and most UFO researchers dismissed him as a charlatan. Two prominent ufologists, Jim and Coral Lorenzen, were willing to give him the benefit of the doubt, however; they theorized that Bethurum had had a visionary experience, for which they offered a Jungian analysis. A “Clarion is a small trumpet,” they wrote, “so named because it makes a clear sound.... [T]he symbolic meaning relates more closely to the Latin word *clarus*, meaning clear.” Thus “the intended function of the Clarionites was to clear up the clouded, confused aspects of Bethurum’s life.... [T]heir lady captain’s name translates almost directly as ‘characteristic of rain.’ We all know that a dominant characteristic of rain is that it ‘clears the air.’” The Lorenzens reported that subsequently Mary Bethurum “sued for divorce, naming Aura Rhane [sic] as co-respondent ... complaining that Truman had neglected marital duties because of the space woman” (Lorenzen and Lorenzen, 1967).

Isabel Davis, of *Civilian Saucer Intelligence of New York* (CSI), responded with more cynicism to Bethurum’s claims. In a caustic survey of the 1950s contactee movement, she noted Bethurum’s unwillingness to surrender for proper analysis a letter allegedly written by Aura Rhanes and typed on Clarionite paper. Bethurum said such an analysis would be pointless because “paper on Clarion is made out of just the same kind of trees we have on Earth” (Davis, *op. cit.*). When challenged by the **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** to take a polygraph test concerning his claims, Bethurum declined (“Interim Report,” 1957).

Bethurum’s first major supporter was Adamski. That fact led Davis to ask:

Where was Clarion ... during the night of Au-

gust 23-24, 1954? On that night, Adamski claims, he was shown both sides of the Moon by Ramu of Saturn, through an instrument on the Venusian carrier ship.... As the ship goes around from the familiar toward the unfamiliar side, ahead of it in the sky should have been Captain Aura Rhanes’ Clarion. But neither Ramu nor Adamski mention[s] it. Adamski certainly knew about Clarion—for Bethurum had visited Palomar Gardens during the summer of 1953, and Adamski had then accepted Bethurum’s story. But with a whole planet missing from where it should be, Adamski is neither surprised nor curious (Davis, 1957).

In November 1955 Aura visited Bethurum in astral form and instructed him to solicit contributions (“a minimum of 10 of your dollars” followed by a “yearly family donation of six dollars” [Beckley, 1970]), buy up a large section of land, and establish a “Sanctuary of Thought,” essentially a commune. Even after the sanctuary was established (in Prescott, Arizona), Bethurum continued to demand regular contributions from followers. At the **Giant Rock Spacecraft Convention** in 1961, **James W. Moseley**, editor of *Saucer News*, witnessed the wedding of Bethurum and Alvira McRoberts. “The charming couple was married right on the speakers’ platform at the Rock,” Moseley wrote, “by an elderly preacher called at random from the audience, and who unfortunately forgot most of his lines. Betherum [sic] took time out from hawking his wares (saucer books and pamphlets) just long enough for the brief ceremony, and then quickly returned to the pursuit of his first love—money” (Moseley, 1961).

Bethurum died on May 21, 1969, in Landers, California.

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### **UNARIUS—SCIENCE OF LIFE**

The Universal Articulate Interdimensional Understanding of Science (Unarius), one of the oldest and most successful contactee groups, was founded in 1954, after Spiritualist medium Ernest L. Norman met and married Ruth Marian. Besides his Spiritualist associations, Norman had already been involved in such California-based flying saucer-occult groups as N. Meade Layne's Borderland Sciences Research Associates and Mark Probert's Inner Circle, both heavily influenced by Theosophy.

As they embarked on a career as channelers of a complex cosmology, the couple claimed impressive credentials from past lives. Ernest, originally a space-man who had landed and lived in Atlantis until its destruction, had once been Pharaoh Amenhotep IV and Jesus; Ruth, also of extraterrestrial origin, lived on earth as the pharaoh's mother, Confucius, Socrates, Mary Magdalene, the woman who found Moses in the bullrushes, Mona Lisa, Henry VIII, and other notables. Through Ernest space people spoke of their mission to redeem the earth, a troubled planet in which those who have committed great wrongs on other worlds are dumped to work off their karmic debt. Unarius followers are encouraged to confess their past-life sins, to achieve higher consciousness by adhering to the organization's teachings, and to prepare for imminent landings by space beings, at which time the earth will become the thirty-third planet in the Intergalactic Confederation.

After Ernest Norman died in 1971, his spirit moved to Mars, where he now works as "Moderator of the

Universe" and is known as Alta. In 1974 Ruth Norman (also known as Uriel) moved the organization into a headquarters building in El Cajon, California, east of San Diego, and three years later purchased 67 acres near the rural town of Jamul, California, where the Space Brothers had told her they would be coming to earth soon. Space communications, as well as messages from such earthlings as Aristotle, Wolfgang Mozart, Benjamin Franklin, Henry David Thoreau, Louis Pasteur, Nikola Tesla, Albert Einstein, Robert Oppenheimer, and Ivan Pavlov, continued and filled the numerous books and tapes Unarius sold to followers and others. Channeling duties are shared by Ruth, Vaughan Spaegel, and Thomas Miller. Through regular meetings and pageants (at which Unarians dress in costumes from their earlier lives on other planets) the Unarius message is constantly renewed and expanded.

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### **UNDERSTANDING, INCORPORATED. See Daniel William Fry**

### **UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS**

One of the best popular films on UFOs had its genesis one August night in 1952, when producer Clarence Greene and a friend saw a "sphere of light" in the sky over Los Angeles. Visible for five minutes, the object

alternately hovered and turned before speeding off over the horizon. The next morning Greene told his business partner, Russell Rouse, about the sighting. As he reflected on his experience, he grew ever more irritated by the ridicule attached to UFO sightings. In fact, he thought there might be a "planned campaign of skepticism and scoffing" (Greene, n.d.).

When he learned that Albert M. Chop, formerly the Pentagon's press officer for UFO-related inquiries, lived on the West Coast, he contacted him and pressed him for information. Chop was at first reluctant to speak with Greene but soon was persuaded that his interest was serious. Over the course of several meetings Chop filled him in on the Air Force's investigation and later introduced him to one-time **Project Blue Book** head **Edward J. Ruppelt**, now living in southern California.

When Greene asked Chop and Ruppelt about two rumored UFO films in Air Force possession, they reluctantly acknowledged that such existed; in fact, they had viewed them personally. Soon Greene approached the photographers, Delbert C. Newhouse, who had filmed UFOs over Tremonton, Utah, in 1952 (see **Utah Film**), and Nicholas Mariana, whose footage of two daylight discs was taken in Great Falls, Montana, in 1950 (see **Montana Film**). Scientists and experts who studied the films for Greene assured him that the depicted objects were not birds, balloons, or planes. Subsequently, through Ruppelt, Greene met Wendell V. Swanson, whom Ruppelt identified as the leading authority on radar trackings of UFOs, and Maj. Dewey Fournet, former liaison officer between the Pentagon and Blue Book.

In May 1954 Greene-Rouse Productions began work on a docudrama, with Winston Jones directing. The main character was Chop, played by *Los Angeles Examiner* reporter and aviation journalist Tom Towers. The plot, such as it was, traced Chop's career from skeptical Public Information Office representative (serving at Wright-Patterson's Air Materiel Command desk in 1950) to Pentagon UFO press spokesman who comes to understand the seriousness of the phenomenon. The story climaxes with the **Washington-National radar/visual sightings**. The movie, made for less than \$200,000, featured only one professional actor, Harry Morgan (later to star on such

popular television shows as *Dragnet* and *M.A.S.H.*), and then only his voice, as a pilot communicating with radar operators as he attempts to intercept the Washington UFOs. UFO witnesses such as Newhouse, Mariana, and airline pilot Willis Sperry played themselves, and Los Angeles policemen stood in for Air Force officers Ruppelt, Fournet, Gen. William M. Garland, and others.

Seeking a sober, realistic treatment of the subject, Greene, who produced *Unidentified Flying Objects*, had Chop, Fournet, and Ruppelt vet Francis Martin's script to ensure accuracy. Aside from its honest accounting, the movie's principal claim to attention was its showing, for the first time in public, of the recently declassified Utah and Montana films (Pryor, 1956).

Despite its minuscule budget and many favorable reviews (Carmody, 1956; P.V.B., 1956; Weiler, 1956) the movie lost money, possibly because it was too accurate to be interesting to the jaded movie-going public. It was not especially popular even among UFO buffs; the next year the **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP) noted that "it appears [fewer] than half of NICAP's members saw this moving picture" ("Air Defense Command," 1957). And even critics who liked the film complained about certain amateurish qualities, for example pacing problems and repetition (Gardner, 1956), which may have put off viewers or would-be viewers. Years later Towers remarked, "I felt the film was too damn factual. It attracted two kinds of people: those who believed and those who did not. The broad middle mass could not have cared less—and you need that market to make a film successful at the box office" (Barrow, 1977).

*Unidentified Flying Objects'* least enthusiastic viewers were from Project Blue Book, which in mid-1956 was directed by the fiercely anti-UFO Capt. George T. Gregory. Gregory feared—groundlessly, as it turned out—that the movie would cause a new wave of criticism of Air Force UFO policies. A. Francis Arcier of the Air Technical Intelligence Center (ATIC) talked with Air Force officials about drawing up a list of official explanations for all the cases cited in the film. Soon ATIC produced a form letter which assured all inquirers that the Air Force had the UFO situation

well in hand and that it had solved all important cases (Jacobs, 1975). When the 4674th Ground Observer Squadron in Miami sought permission to use a GOC display at a showing of the movie, the Air Defense Command immediately squelched the proposal, writing that such a display "would involve the risk that Air Force could be considered as endorsing subject matter and authenticity of the filmed version of flying saucers" ("Air Defense Command," *op. cit.*).

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## UTAH FILM

As he drove on a highway seven miles north of Tremonton, Utah, at 11:10 A.M. on July 2, 1952, Delbert C. Newhouse, a U.S. Navy chief petty officer and experienced aerial photographer, heard his wife call his attention to something strange in the sky. One

glance was sufficient to get him to pull the car to the side of the road.

Stepping outside, he watched 12 to 14 objects at what he estimated to be 10,000 feet. Looking like "two pie pans, one inverted on top of the other," they were clustered in a loose formation, "milling around" (Ruppelt, 1956). Newhouse took 1200 frames of film (75 seconds' worth) through the telephoto lens of his 16-mm movie camera, though by the time he had it unpacked, the objects had receded even farther until they now were little more than shiny points of light. At one point a single object left the pack, heading east, and he held the camera still so that the UFO crossed the field of view. He repeated this procedure three or four times. After the last of these passes, the object disappeared in the east while the rest were lost to view over the western horizon.

*Analyses.* The film was sent soon after to **Project Blue Book**, the Air Force's UFO-investigation agency, headquartered at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Dayton, Ohio. Blue Book's head, Capt. **Edward J. Ruppelt**, quickly informed Maj. Dewey Fournet, who served as Pentagon liaison officer for the project, of the film. Fournet arranged for the original to be shown to a group of high-ranking intelligence officers. Then it went to the Air Force's Photo-Reconnaissance Laboratory at Wright-Patterson.

A few weeks later the laboratory reported, according to Ruppelt, "We don't know what [the objects in the film] are but they aren't airplanes or balloons, and we don't think they are birds" (*ibid.*). A subsequent frame-by-frame analysis conducted at the U.S. Navy's Photo Interpretation Laboratory in Anacostia, Maryland, came to the conclusion that changes in the lights' intensity, among other things, eliminated the possibility that the images were aircraft or birds. To analysts Harry Woo and Lt. Robert S. Neasham, that left only one remaining option: that they were intelligently controlled vehicles of some kind. The implication, of course, was that these were extraterrestrial spacecraft.

But when they were shown the film on January 14, 1953, a group of scientists whom the Central Intelligence Agency had assembled to review the Air Force's UFO evidence (*see Robertson Panel*) felt otherwise. In their opinion the objects were seagulls known to



inhabit the Great Salt Lake area. Panel members shrugged off Newhouse's assertion that he had held the camera steady as one of the objects passed in front of it; perhaps Newhouse had panned the camera without realizing it. (This object's apparent speed—estimated at around 650 mph—had caused other analysts to reject the seagull identification.) Moreover, Johns Hopkins University astronomer and panel member Thornton Page suggested, perhaps Woo and Neasham had not used the proper technique in measuring the images' brightness (Durant, 1953; Ruppelt, *op. cit.*).

In 1955 Robert M. L. Baker, Jr., a computer and aeronautical scientist employed by Douglas Aircraft Company, was asked to analyze the film, which would be used the next year in a UFO docudrama produced by Greene-Rouse Motion Picture Studios (*see Unidentified Flying Objects*). In the course of his work, which would lead him to the conclusion that the objects were unidentified, Baker interviewed Newhouse, who told him that as he stepped out of the car the objects were directly overhead; they were "gun metal colored objects shaped like two saucers, one inverted on top of the other" (Baker, 1956).

After a reanalysis of the film in 1956, the Air Force endorsed the seagull explanation (Blue Book files). A decade later, after the Air Force asked the University of Colorado to conduct a purportedly independent review of the UFO evidence, University of Arizona astronomer William K. Hartmann studied the Utah film and identified the objects in it as seagulls, partly on the basis of his own observations of such birds in Utah. He acknowledged that this interpretation was inconsistent with what Newhouse said he had seen of the objects before he began filming them. "I have been unable to find any record of these statements in the Blue Book file," Hartmann wrote. "Baker ... indicates that the description in question was given in interviews about 1955. [Newhouse's] memory may have become 'set' by this time, or affected by events such as the witness' service as a NICAP advisor in the interim" (Gillmor, 1969).

This is unlikely. NICAP (**National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena**) did not exist in 1955—it was formed in late 1956—and Newhouse did not join its panel of "special advisers" until the next year.

As to Newhouse's credibility and his failure to mention structured discs in what is recorded of his Blue Book testimony, Ruppelt has this to say:

After I got out of the Air Force I met Newhouse and talked to him for two hours. I've talked to many people who have reported UFOs, but few impressed me as much as Newhouse. I learned that when he and his family first saw the UFOs they were close to the car, much closer than when he took the movie.... He didn't just *think* the UFOs were disk-shaped; he *knew* that they were; he had plainly seen them. I asked him why he hadn't told this to the intelligence officer who interrogated him. He said that he had. Then I remembered that I'd sent the intelligence officer a list of questions I wanted Newhouse to answer. The question "What did the UFOs look like" wasn't one of them because when you have a picture of something you don't normally ask what it looks like. Why the intelligence officer didn't pass this information on to us I'll never know (Ruppelt, *op. cit.*).

At a December 1969 symposium sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Baker took issue with Hartmann's analysis. Though conceding the "appealing" quality of the seagull hypothesis, he noted that the images' "motion is not what one would expect from a flock of soaring birds; there are erratic brightness fluctuations, but there is no indication of periodic decreases in brightness due to turning with the wind or flapping. No cumulus clouds are shown on the film that might betray the presence of a thermal updraft.... The motion pictures I have taken of birds at various distances have no similarity to the Utah film" (Baker, 1972).

Sources:

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