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WILKINS, HAROLD T. (1883-1960)

Harold T. Wilkins, a Cambridge-educated, multilingual British journalist of wide-ranging, sometimes eccentric, interests, wrote two early UFO books, *Flying Saucers on the Attack* (1954)—published in England as *Flying Saucers on the Moon*—and *Flying Saucers Uncensored* (1955). These books expressed the view that UFOs are hostile. Though hardly scientific or even strictly accurate in all respects, they are interesting chiefly for their survey of pre-twentieth-century reports of anomalous aerial phenomena possibly related to modern UFOs and for their valuable if uncritical coverage of just about every notable flying-saucer rumor of the early 1950s. A third UFO manuscript, *The Phantom War of the Flying Saucers*, failed to find a publisher. His *Strange Mysteries of Time and Space* (1958) contains some material of ufological interest.

Wilkins died in 1960. The bulk of his UFO files eventually were bequeathed to Contact International (UK).

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WILLIAMSON, GEORGE HUNT (1926-1986)

George Hunt Williamson was born on December 9, 1926, in Chicago and died in Long Beach, California, in January 1986. Beyond that, little is known of Williamson's life outside the flying-saucer milieu, even though he was not only a "witness" to **George Adamski's** supposed meeting with a Venusian in the California desert on November 20, 1952, but a

prominent figure in the contactee movement of the 1950s. By the early 1960s, however, he had ceased being active in the public UFO scene.

By his own account Williamson got interested in UFOs one day in 1951 after reading **Donald Keyhoe's** *The Flying Saucers Are Real* (1950). His interest in a general occult metaphysics stemmed, however, from psychic experiences in his teenage years and from a spontaneous out-of-body experience as a college student (Griffin, 1989). He was also influenced by the supernatural traditions of the Chippewa and the Sioux, with whom he was living, respectively, in Minnesota and North Dakota. After reading Keyhoe, he would write, he learned that the "'saucers' existed in the tales of almost all the American Indian tribes and even in the legends of so-called primitive people all over the world!" (Williamson and Bailey, 1954).

Williamson returned to Tucson, where he and his then-wife Betty were based, in the spring of 1952. The Chippewa had given him a spiritual message which he was to pass on to the Hopi tribe of the Southwest. The Hopi accepted the message and initiated Williamson into the tribe's secrets, some of which seemed to him to refer to beings from other planets.

A few months later the Williamsons moved to Prescott in northern Arizona and immersed themselves in saucer literature. One day they were visited by two other occult enthusiasts, Alfred and Betty Bailey of Winslow, Arizona. That evening, in the course of an automatic-writing experiment, they received a message from an extraterrestrial aboard a spaceship. In the days and weeks that followed, "Nah-9 of Solar X Group" and other space people communicated in this fashion and through a ouija board.

The space people called the earth "Saras." Nah-9, a citizen of Mars ("Masar"), reported, "There will soon be a destructive blast to be felt on Saras. This is of your own manufacture. Evil planetary men, who abound, will attempt contact with evil men of Saras for destruction! The good men of Saras must unite with the ben [good] men of Universe" (*ibid.*).

Soon Zo, of Neptune, delivered an electrifying message: "We promise to transmit on 340 kc. to 405 kc. with International Morse Code 8-22-52 at 7 miles altitude." Bailey was instructed to approach a co-

worker on the Santa Fe Railroad, Lyman Streeter, a ham radio operator, and ask his help in picking up the space signals.

On the evening of the twenty-second, Streeter saw unusual lights over Winslow and heard strange signals at 400 kc. Not long afterwards Lyman and Susan Streeter, along with Bailey, heard, or thought they heard, "the mysterious code ... coming from the very air itself!" At 2 A.M. the code, actually a variation on the Morse system, came through the radio.

The contactors identified themselves as Regga, Zo, and Nah-9. Zo referred to a Uranian named Affa, and Nah-9 added, "Affa is afraid Saras is too evil." He also warned of the "Orion Solar Systems" which "are much like Saras. Orion is coming soon to Saras in a square star body."

On August 25, at 9:25 P.M., Affa himself called, followed by Zo, Um (Zo's wife), and Regga. These and other beings from planets in the solar system and the interstellar regions continued sending messages, sometimes over the radio but more often via mental telepathy, to members of the group, which included, besides the Baileys, Streeters, and Williamsons, two students named Ronald Tucker and Betty Bowen. All of them signed an affidavit swearing that the events had occurred as recounted in Williamson and Bailey's 1954 book *The Saucers Speak!*

Williamson and Adamski. The space people's apocalyptic warnings and prophecies of imminent landings put Williamson into what one scoffer called a state of "chronic fright" (Ibn Aharon, 1957). On October 16 he wrote an occult associate engaged in missionary work in Guatemala to declare "time is *very, very short!* ... Disaster will come before Dec. 1st, *this year!* So only a few weeks remain!" Williamson also wrote:

Our radio contact has been stopped, and we have been told that a man will contact us soon, when all is in readiness! And there will be a landing in this vicinity by special ship direct from Mars within two or three weeks from now! ... The landing will be near here. Professor George Adamski is in on this too. He is a very great man, indeed (*ibid.*).

Adamski's name came to Williamson's notice when he read Kenneth Arnold and **Ray Palmer's** *The Com-*

ing of the Saucers (1952) in which Adamski's pictures of flying saucers were mentioned. Williamson secured Adamski's address from Palmer, then entered into correspondence with him. An invitation to visit Adamski, an occult teacher who lived with a few close associates at Palomar Gardens in southern California, quickly followed, and that fall the Williamsons and the Baileys traveled regularly back and forth between Arizona and California.

According to the testimony of both Adamski (Leslie and Adamski, 1953) and Williamson (Griffin, *op. cit.*), Adamski told the four that he had been making repeated trips into the desert hoping to meet a saucer. Williamson liked Adamski, whose concept of "Universal Law" echoed what Williamson's own space friends were communicating; moreover, Adamski's gregarious personality and sly wit made Williamson think of Will Rogers. He was further impressed when he had a mystical experience on the property, a vision of luminous script which hung in the air before him for a few seconds before vanishing.

Adamski confided that for many years highly evolved beings—he believed them to be Tibetan lamas—had been communicating with him telepathically, teaching him spiritual philosophy. In recent years extraterrestrials had replaced the Tibetans, but their teachings were much the same. Adamski cautioned Williamson that nothing should be said publicly about this, because some people ridiculed psychic phenomena while others had an unhealthy obsession with such things. (Later, when Adamski became an international occult celebrity and the world's leading contactee, he would sharply criticize channelers and psychic communicants. In the twilight of his career, when he let his psychic interests be known and sought to market them, he would alienate many of his followers.)

After he felt he could trust his new friends, Adamski began channeling space messages in the presence of the Williamsons and the Baileys. At one of these sessions a space being declared that soon a face-to-face meeting would take place; a specific psychic message would be given when the time was right.

On November 18 Adamski phoned Williamson and said the space people had told him a physical encounter would occur two days hence. On the morning of

the twentieth Adamski and two associates, Lucy McGinnis and Alice Wells, set out from Palomar Gardens. They met the Williamsons and the Baileys at Blythe, a small town on the California side of the California-Arizona border, and drove off together deep into the desert.

What happened—or did not happen—next would be one of the most controversial events—or non-events—in UFO history. Allegedly, as his six traveling companions watched from a distance, Adamski met a Venusian named Orthon who arrived in a disc-shaped ship. In due course the Baileys essentially retracted their testimony (Moseley, 1957b), and some of Adamski's subsequent claims would be conclusively debunked.

For his part Williamson would stand by his early testimony, contradicting Adamski's account in only one, yet significant, aspect: Whereas Adamski wrote that there had been no more than the most elemental telepathic exchange between him and Orthon (most of the exchange, as he had it, was by sign language), Williamson would tell a biographer, John Griffin, that the two had conversed via a "highly developed form of telepathy."

After Adamski. The world first heard of the desert encounter when it was reported in a long, tongue-in-cheek article in the *Phoenix Gazette* for November 24 (Welch, 1952). Adamski was instantly famous, and in the days and weeks ahead the faithful began making pilgrimages to Palomar Gardens.

The Williamsons moved there to be close to Adamski, but changes were in the air. Adamski now seemed like a different man, secretive, remote, and even untrustworthy. When Williamson told Adamski he was thinking of writing about his own contact experiences, Adamski urged him not to mention that many of them were of a psychic nature; he himself, Adamski added, would never confess openly to his psychic contacts. Moreover, he criticized Williamson's growing involvement in the channeling of extraterrestrial communications. Adamski insisted he could handle all the channeling that needed to be done.

Williamson decided to go his own way. Influenced by the occult doctrines of N. Meade Layne and his Borderland Sciences Research Associates, he delved further into the paranormal, linking up with other

psychic contactees such as Dick Miller (*see Mon-Ka of Mars*) and Dorothy Martin.

In 1954 his and Bailey's *The Saucers Speak!* chronicled the radio and telepathic communications they had received in Arizona. The next year, under the name Telonic Research Center, Williamson and Miller sought to re-establish "radio and light beam contact with extraterrestrial intelligences," but the two men quarreled bitterly and separated ("Inside Story," 1955). After the center's demise—it lasted about a year—William got involved with the Brotherhood of the Seven Rays, a metaphysical colony based in Moyobamba, Peru. Besides Williamson, members included channelers Charles and Lillian Laughead and Dorothy Martin (Moseley, 1957a), whose failed December 1954 apocalyptic prophecy had made them the butt of international ridicule ("The End," 1955) and the subject of a classic work in the sociology of religion (Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter, 1956).

Ancient astronauts and international bankers. Meanwhile Williamson was writing books. Besides *The Saucers Speak!*, he produced *Other Tongues—Other Flesh* which, though copyrighted 1953, was not published until 1957. It, along with its two sequels, *Secret Places of the Lion* (1958) and *Road in the Sky* (1959), was one of the first "ancient-astronaut" books of the sort that would be popularized by Erich von Däniken and others in the 1970s. Williamson, who presented himself as an anthropologist and archaeologist, drew on occult lore, contactee metaphysics, and Immanuel Velikovsky's disputed cosmological theories to create a UFO-age revisionist history of the human race. He contended not only that benevolent and malevolent space people had continually interacted with humanity but that some earthly peoples—the Hopi, for example—actually had their origins on another planet. Williamson was among the first writers to suggest that Peru's Nazca lines were "markers or beacons for something arriving from outer space" (Williamson, 1959).

Aside from these kinds of improbable but harmless speculations, the books were notable for their not-so-subtle anti-Semitism. Williamson wrote that "negative space intelligences from Orion"—the "Unholy Six" comprising six solar systems—were watching the "Earth planet, rich in mineral wealth, with greedy

eyes." They controlled the "minds of various individuals" (*ibid.*) and caused them to "prey on the unsuspecting[;] they astound intellects with their words of magnificence" (Williamson, 1953). These "Intruders" are under the influence not only of evil aliens but of sinister earthlings: the "International Bankers."

In *UFOs Confidential!* (1958), written with John McCoy, Williamson, citing an extreme rightwing monograph titled *Our Secret Government*, says leaders of the "Hidden Empire" which controls the world are "invisible to the public eye," but such "top figures in the Great Conspiracy" as Bernard Baruch, Felix Frankfurter, Herbert Lehman, and the Warburgs were their principal agents:

Every king, president or dictator on Earth is only a figure-head ... a tool of the "Hidden Empire". For millennia this group has been determined to keep truth from mankind for selfish purposes! They have removed vital books and sections of the Holy Bible until it is unrecognizable ... they have written history as they wished to, not as it really happened ... they wave flags and scream "Patriotism!" and thousands of young men, women and children die so that vast war machines may be fed. But mankind is waking up! Men are no longer content to remain "stupid" and believe what they are told to believe. It matters not whether the "authority" is religious, political, or otherwise, for there is only *one hierarchy* ... the "International Bankers".

These secret world rulers will never allow official UFO announcements to be made to the public. If they did allow it, it would spell their doom. If the technology of the space visitors is revealed it will immediately eliminate the need for oil, gas, automobiles, and practically everything else that drains the public and keeps every family in America on a credit-buying spree until they are deposited six feet under.

Williamson remarked that even so vigorous a critic of official UFO secrecy as Donald Keyhoe did not know what the "Silence Group" really was: "an ancient, hideous conspiracy that is nothing but the spirit of the anti-Christ!"

The critics. Though by the late 1950s Williamson was a popular figure in the contactee subculture, some

ufologists who did not sympathize with contactees disliked Williamson intensely. *Saucer News* in particular conducted what amounted to a vendetta against him.

In a review of *Other Tongues—Other Flesh* Lonzo Dove ridiculed Williamson's revisionist astronomy (Dove, 1957) and Y. N. Ibn Aharon (Yonah Fortner) did the same with his command of ancient history and language (Ibn Aharon, 1959, 1960). *Saucer News'* editor **James W. Moseley** took after Williamson's endorsement of "Fascist and anti-Semitic views" (Moseley, 1958b). Most damagingly, however, the magazine exposed as largely fictitious Williamson's academic claims in *Who's Who in America* and *American Men of Science* entries (Moseley and Mann, 1959; Robinson, 1963). Among other degrees and honors Williamson claimed a "Sc.D., No. U., 1952." No "Northern University" existed, and Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, had never heard of him. (Perhaps "Sc.D., No. U.," meant what it said: doctorate of science at no university.) Even Williamson's assertions about undergraduate degrees proved false.

In 1958 Williamson embarked on a world tour and in 1961 visited Japan, where he spoke to crowds of enthusiastic saucer fans. His last metaphysical book, *Secret of the Andes*, written under the pseudonym "Brother Philip," was published that year. Much of the volume was cannibalized from other writings by the Laugheads and James Churchward, chronicler of the (nonexistent) lost continent of Mu (Robinson, 1962).

In 1959 Williamson changed his name legally to Michel d'Obrenovic, said to be his family's original name. He claimed to be a descendant of Yugoslavia's royal family. The reason for the name change, according to Griffin, was that his "sensational UFO and psychic claims ... had rendered his professional work [in anthropology] completely unacceptable in scientific and academic circles" (Griffin, *op. cit.*).

Thereafter Williamson/d'Obrenovic surfaced only occasionally to deliver relatively restrained lectures on ancient-astronaut themes under his new name. Few UFO enthusiasts knew what had happened to him, or even if he was still alive. Word of his whereabouts and death came as a surprise to most.

After Williamson's passing Robert Girard, a seller of

books on UFOs and related subjects, purchased Williamson's considerable library and listed it in 18 pages of small print in an issue of his Arcturus Book Service catalogue. Girard noted, in a fitting summation of this enigmatic figure's career and obsessions, "In addition to a decent range of UFO material, Williamson possessed many books of great interest in the areas of mythology, folklore, ancient history, ancient astronauts, symbolism, anthropology, ethnology, and especially, a strong holding of books on the Americas and American Indians.... Williamson was one of the most important figures of the early UFO Age, left many influential—if often controversial—books to enrich UFO literature, and in many ways was the direct precursor of a number of authors (such as Von Däniken) who went on to develop the 'civilization from the stars' motif.... The condition of the books is not always the best, reflecting Williamson's roller-coaster ride through life and the many moves he had to make under varying degrees of urgency."

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