

Postscript to Contact

by Jerome Clark

IN the light of recent events, it was almost inevitable that someone would "confess" he was the being Steven Houffer and his six teenaged friends chased over a Virginia hill last January. (See my "Two New Contact Claims" in the May/JUNE FLYING SAUCER REVIEW.) This "someone", according to an article in the *Arkansas Gazette*², has been supplied in the rather unlikely form of a certain Donald Cash, who stands 5 ft. 8 ins. and weighs 190 pounds.

Cash claims that on the evening of January 26 he donned blue overalls, messed his hair, and covered it with a leather cap, hoping to take advantage of the UFO sighting flap then in progress. Standing in a field near a highway, he was spotted by passing youths, who pursued him on foot and almost caught him.

"It shook me up," he is quoted as saying. "I didn't know what they would do if they got their hands on me."

One wonders at the gullibility of the news media, which treated Cash's "confession" quite seriously despite the fantastic incongruities between his claims and those of Houffer and photographer Charles Weaver: as we shall see, practically every detail of the latter report contradicts Cash's peculiar account.

A Chase

What probably first attracted Houffer's attention to the figure on the side of the road was its height: 3½ feet—as contrasted with Cash's 5½. Even in semi-darkness it is extremely unlikely that the observer's eyesight would be so poor that it would make an error of such dimension in judging the creature's stature.

When the youths gave chase, the little man easily outdistanced them—something which an apparently obese man like Cash would find difficult, if not actually impossible, to do, especially as he left no footprints on a muddy field. Further, we are told that *two identical beings* then appeared, following their companion who was by this time out of sight. Cash, of course, says nothing about accomplices.

The "men", according to the witnesses, wore "a one-piece, skin tight garment that was silver in colour." Overalls are neither skin tight nor silver, and they obviously are not "one-piece" in the sense that Houffer meant them.

Cash seems to be blissfully ignorant of the fact that the incident he purports to have caused had two separate and distinct parts. The first involved

the initial sighting and chase, which ended when the youths returned to Staunton to tell the police. The second began after the authorities had left, having found nothing, when Houffer, and Weaver with his camera, continued the search and discovered the "aluminium barn", apparently a landed UFO.

It is pointless to continue. Cash reveals nothing concerning the nature of the "barn", or the fact that he struck Weaver, or how he caused the latter's face to turn "blood red". But surely we cannot expect more from a hoaxer so shabby and careless that he scarcely knows whereof he confesses.

What one asks, are Cash's motives? Perhaps he is nothing more than a publicity seeker, an up-to-date Robert Randall.² But his presence is just a bit too *convenient* for comfort. I think that Cash may have played a more sinister role in the whole proceedings.

A clumsy move

Readers will recall that Weaver, the photographer, was whisked away by the authorities and presumably taken to Washington—a fact that did not escape the notice of the local newspapers. In essence, the censors had shown their hand most clumsily, and those who might otherwise have scoffed were at least momentarily sobered by the thought that the story might very well be true, after all. A situation like this one could easily blow up to the proportions it deserved, and perhaps ultimately the government might be forced to release Weaver's photograph, which probably would remove any lingering doubts the American public might have about the reality of the flying saucer.

How to remedy the problem? Why not bribe someone to "confess", and thereby completely discredit the story in the public's eye? This, ostensibly, is what happened. Only the "hoaxer" wasn't briefed very well; but no matter, since Americans are known to be very gullible in these matters. And thus Houffer and Weaver have been forgotten—and so has their photograph.

I do not think that this is the first time such a tactic has been attempted. It occurred before during the Oradell, New Jersey, reservoir flap in September 1962,- and I believe it accounts for Michael Hallowitz's "confession" in the Glassboro landing. Each time it has worked distressingly well. Because it has, I am certain that we shall see it again.

Notes

¹February 1 issue. The report is reprinted in the March/April *Controversial Phenomena Bulletin* (edited by Mr. Armand A. Laprade, 48 Great Brook Valley Avenue, Worcester, Massachusetts 01605).

²See Waveney Girvan's "The Wiltshire Crater Mystery: the Meteorite That Never Was," *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW*, September/October, 1963.

³See *The N.J.A.A.P. Bulletin*, September/October, 1962, p. 8.

Who hoaxes whom?

by Charles Bowen

THE incidence of hoaxes which plagues the UFO scene whenever there is a flap of the first magnitude seems to be on the advance.

Unhappily it is such incidents that always receive the lion's share of the publicity. Glad of any opportunity to aim a body blow at our subject, the interested government authority, such as the Air Force in the United States, or the Ministry of Defence in this country, seizes upon hoax, or suspected hoax cases, with ill-concealed relish. The follow-up treatment in the Press ensures the officially-proclaimed hoax receiving far more publicity than a well-substantiated case. Inevitably it is publicity detrimental to our subject.

In the early days of flying saucer awareness, many clumsy hoaxes were attempted by chancers with an eye to turning a quick penny. There was another type of hoax which was deliberately fabricated to trigger off advertising stunts, and all in all it was not surprising that the infant science of ufology suffered ridicule, and that public attention dwindled. Saucers not only became unfashionable: they became ridiculous in the eyes of most people.

So why the present-day epidemic of hoaxes? Surely the lesson has been absorbed that there are no quick fortunes to be made from capers on the fringe of the subject? And if the intent is not one of monetary reward, but simply a quest for publicity, then has the intending deceiver not observed the treatment accorded all who, genuinely or otherwise, become involved in a sighting, landing or contact story? There is, for instance, the case of that reliable and much-vouched-for speed cop Lonnie Zamora, who is fed-up to the back teeth with the treatment he has received during the year following his classic report.¹ It should be obvious by now that if one reports seeing a UFO, one is immediately suspect; that if one claims to have seen one on the ground, or worse still, to have made contact with its occupants, one is looked upon as little better than an outlaw. A solitary exception, according to his own testimony, has been Sid Padrick.²

However, some person or persons unknown, with their own particular axe to grind, have noted with approval the early demonstration of the way hoaxes can destroy respectability. Earlier this year there was an incident near Brooksville in Florida which made headlines both in the United States and in other countries. It was a bizarre contact

story, which was swiftly and officially denounced as a hoax.

The Weeki-Wachee Springs Contact Claim

An account of this case appeared in the last issue of the *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW*,³ and the U.S. Air Force pronouncement arrived just in time to be included in our Stop Press column. Within a day or two, Mrs. Coral Lorenzen of A.P.R.O. had written: "To the best of our information the Weeki-Wachee incident was a hoax—a cleverly executed one, and no doubt carried out by a well-informed UFO researcher."

Here is what the U.S. Air Force had to say in an appraisal (with diagrams and copies of the 'writings', all run off on a duplicating machine), which was sent to Dr. Bernard Finch:

"The alleged landing of a spacecraft at Brooksville, Florida, on 2 March 1965, was apparently a hoax according to information obtained by Air Force investigators from MacDill AFB, Florida, and by Dr. C. W. Bemiss, Pan American Airways technical staff member of the Eastern Test Range, who conducted an additional investigation.

"The report submitted to the Air Force investigators by the alleged eyewitness contained several statements which cannot be confirmed as facts.

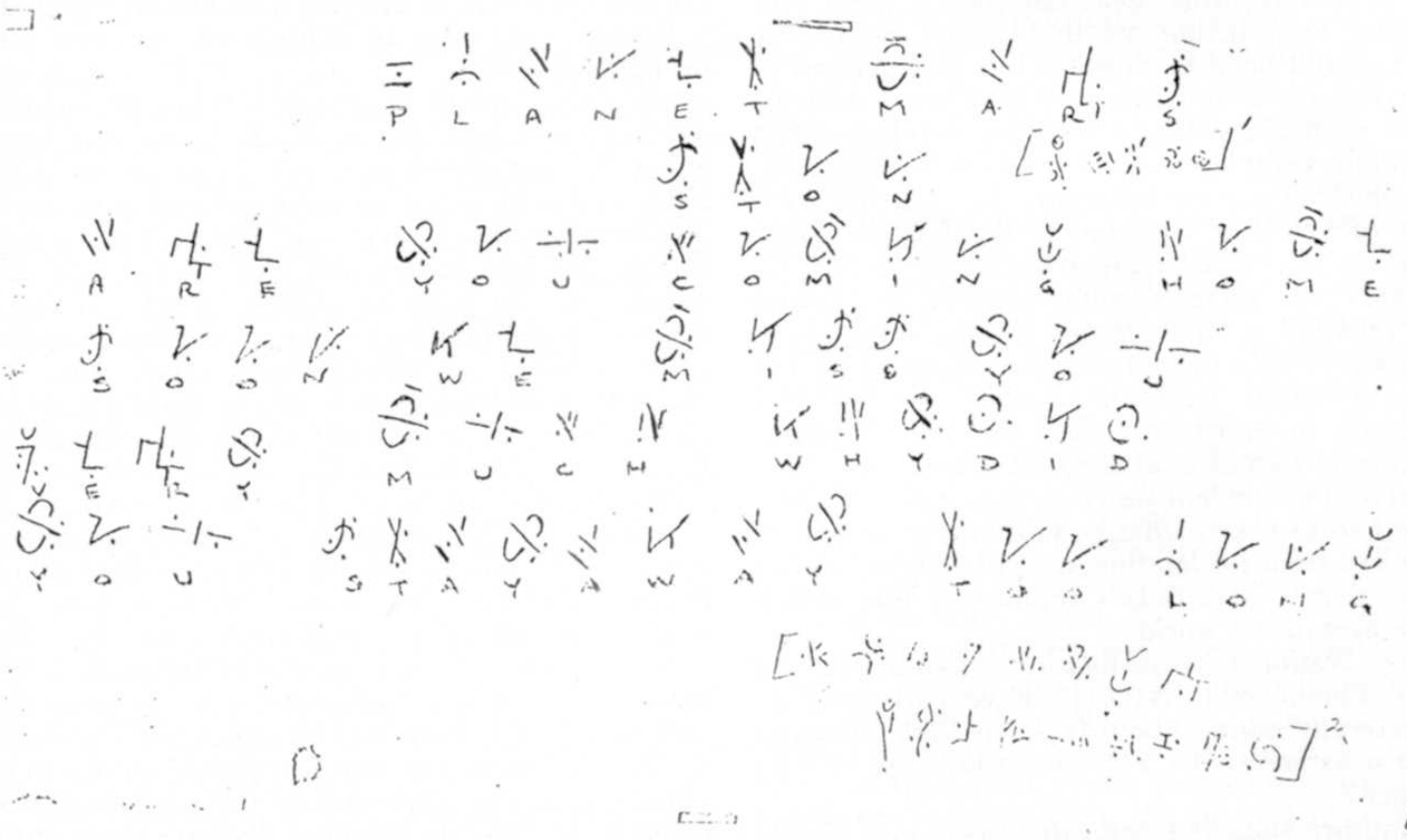
1. The spacecraft allegedly took off straight up at 5,000 miles per hour and was out of sight in ten seconds. It is extremely doubtful that a twenty to thirty-foot object would have reached an altitude of 36,430 feet.

2. The blast-off from a vehicle taking off at this speed would have disturbed the sand and soil in the immediate area. There was no evidence of any abnormal disturbance in the area.

3. The sketch of the alleged spacecraft showed four stilt poles which protruded at an angle as the landing gear. The holes which were purportedly caused by the landing gear were straight and appeared to have been scooped or dug as opposed to indentations caused by an object of any sizeable weight.

4. There was no radioactivity in the area.

5. Two papers which contained unreadable hieroglyphics were reportedly dropped by an occupant of the spacecraft. An analysis of the papers was made by the Institute of Paper Chemistry in Appleton, Wisconsin. This analysis indicated that the paper is composed of fibres which are common worldwide. The fibre composition



corresponds to that used in lens and stencil papers.

6. The hieroglyphics on one of the papers was deciphered by means of simple substitution and was determined to be the work of an amateur. The deciphered hieroglyphics read as follows: 'Planet Mars—Are you coming home soon—We miss you very much—Why did you stay away too long'.

"Since no other implications were apparent, it was not feasible for the Air Force to expend further time and money in deciphering the second sheet. Based on the above, it is the opinion of the Air Force that an attempt was made to perpetrate a hoax."

Discounting the reasoning and the arithmetic involved in paragraph 1 of the appraisal, one still finds particularly irritating the *conventionalization* of paragraph 2. It would seem that the Air Force experts are not forward-looking enough to see beyond conventional rockets and their propellants. Their conservatism is such that they cannot accept the idea that sand and soil in the take-off area might not be disturbed if the visiting machine employs a more sophisticated form of locomotion. Indeed much of the evidence that has been collected points to the fact that in UFO take-offs there is seldom a blast-off as Cape Kennedy knows it!

It must be admitted that radiation is quite often traced at landing sites, and its absence in this case is a point in favour of the Air Force assessment. Again, the hieroglyphics found on the sheets which were reputedly dropped by the 'robot' are amateurish and bogus. Page 1, partially deciphered,

is depicted above. One correspondent has suggested—tongue in cheek, I imagine—that it is an outside chance that the manuscripts could have been planted deliberately by spacecraft occupants in the hope of misleading anyone who observed the landing.

Failing that remote possibility, we are left with the conclusion that Mr. Reeves perpetrated a hoax, in the conception of which he displayed a remarkable and detailed knowledge of saucer or UFO features. One can but wonder if the conception was his alone, or if he was put up to it. If it was a case of the latter, then who persuaded him to make such an ass of himself? Could it have been a UFO investigating body which, while not prepared to consider contact cases, is nevertheless prepared to discredit other investigating bodies which do not fight shy of such cases? Such a solution seems highly improbable, as also does the idea that Reeves worked out the hoax himself. His reported statements in the newspapers reveal him as a confused and naive, rather than a clever and conniving person.

There is a whiff of chicanery about the hieroglyphs. Perhaps the attempt to deceive is not as straightforward as it would at first appear. It is conceivable that they were added to the hoax in the knowledge that their rapid translation into the childish 'message' would heap instant ridicule on to the saucer story. So a strong possibility is that an official body, or its agents, planted Reeves as a stool pigeon.

It is an incredible idea that such a great and powerful organization as the United States Air Force should need to stoop to the employment of petty deceptions to discredit or disillusion believers in the probability that UFOs are extraterrestrial spacecraft, yet it is an idea that has to be examined.

In this context we must not overlook the testimony of Professor Gehman of the Eastern Mennonite College, who told how the Air Force N.C.O. 'wangled' the geiger counter controls to produce false readings when investigating the area where gunsmith Horace Burns had reported seeing a UFO make a touch landing.⁴ Other reliable and qualified investigators had discovered ample evidence of radiation at the site, yet the Air Force report on the incident stated categorically that Mr. Burns had **not** seen what he said he had seen, that there had been **no** landing, and that there was **no** radioactivity. Mr. Burn's reputation was sullied in the eyes of the world.

The National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) have had much to say in recent months about U.S. Air Force attempts to warn witnesses of UFOs not to talk. Here is an instance.⁵

"Another silencing case, described in a signed report to NICAP, involved a frightening, close encounter with a UFO by an officer of a Federal law enforcement agency.

"On the night of January 12, as he was driving his official car toward Blaine Air Force Base, in north-west Washington State, a flying disc 30 feet in diameter hurtled down at his machine. At the last moment, the disc arced up steeply, avoiding collision. When the officer jumped out, he saw the UFO hovering overhead. After a minute it began to move, then it shot up into clouds at terrific speed.

"That same night, citizens near Blaine reported a UFO 'touch landing, apparently the same disc. The witnesses were quickly silenced by the Air Force, as was the Federal officer. In his signed report, he said the Air Force told him not to talk with anyone. Resenting the order, convinced by his experience that the public should know the facts, the officer asked his headquarters to approve a report to NICAP. Since the Air Force had no legal authority over him, his superiors agreed, provided NICAP would keep his name and the agency's confidential."

The report states that photocopies of this and other reports are held by the Board of Governors of NICAP, and that the originals are at their H.Q. NICAP insist that their reports are not aimed at the millions of service personnel who have made the Air Force the vitally important power it is, and that they are not an attack on Air Force commanders. NICAP believes that the policy is set at a higher level, and that the Air Force is saddled with

the unhappy task of denying and hiding the facts.

When everything is considered, we are left thinking uneasily that maybe it is Air Force investigating agents or personnel who are behind some of the hoaxes. If this should be the case, then either the instigation of a new hoax, or the persuasion of some person to come forward to say he is responsible, could be part and parcel of the policy of denying and hiding the true facts. And the reason for the hoaxes? Quite simply to heap ridicule on the subject, to divert attention from the great number of substantiated cases, and to dissuade ordinary citizens from reporting what they see for fear of the ridicule which may attach to themselves as a result of the official damning. A form of censorship, in other words, by coercion.

It is suspected that similar techniques have been employed in this country as well as in the United States. The late Waveney Girvan coined the word 'Randallism' in connection with the well-known Charlton 'crater' case in Wiltshire in 1963. When authority was confronted with the awkward and inexplicable hole and its associated markings, a "Dr." Randall, who was completely unknown in ufological circles, appeared on the scene and proclaimed his weird 'crippled flying saucer from Uranus' theory on T.V. and in the Press. This was easily disposed of by astronomer Patrick Moore with his meteorite explanation. All would have been comfortably swept under the carpet but for Waveney Girvan's probing, which exploded the meteorite theory. "Dr." Randall, however, was never traced again.

Let us conclude with a recent 'crater' incident now also classified as a hoax.

The Glassboro' incident

We read in the May 1965 (American) edition of *Fate* magazine that "On January 18th, Michael Hallowich, 18, a former student of Glassboro' State College, was given a suspended \$50 fine for disorderly conduct, and ordered to pay \$10 in court costs for perpetrating a hoax in connection with the Glassboro' "UFO".⁶ The article goes on to state that Hallowich and two friends had been sleeping outside when they got the idea to make up a "spaceship landing site".

"Hallowich dug a hole for the 'blast-off area' and smaller holes to simulate the marks of a three-legged landing gear. He broke branches off nearby trees to make it appear that a UFO had landed and then taken off; poured kerosene into the large hole and set it aflame, and discharged gunpowder in the smaller holes. He also sprinkled a small amount of radium dioxide around the site to make it appear radioactive."

He then told the two Campbell boys he had seen a saucer land, and the whole fiasco was set in

motion.

I am indebted to our contributor Jerome Clark for drawing my attention to these developments. In his letter Mr. Clark goes on to say: "A correspondent of mine who lives in the area made a very thorough investigation of the incident shortly after it was reported, and sent me an 8-page document describing what he had found out. One detail is of especial import: Chief Watson of the Glassboro' police could not venture an opinion on the origin of the hole, but was 'sure that it was not a hoax'. He emphasized that 'the three tripod marks had not been dug, but *pressed in*—leaves, like those around the holes, had been flattened at their bottoms.' Contrast this with the contention that Hallowich dug out the holes. Further, the chief asserted that an explosive would have scattered dirt around the hole—which did not occur—and, in addition, stated 'that it would have been absolutely impossible to dig a hole so perfectly circular . . . Near the hole the limb of a sassafras tree was broken almost off, its leaves scorched by intense heat—it was not burnt by fire.' The hoax explanation accounts for none of these things.

"Most interesting to me is this item: 'When Bill Klemens (a senior at Clearview Regional High-school, Mullica Hill) visited the crater site on Monday, September 7, he met a boy, apparently about 13 years old, whose name he does not know. The boy claimed that, on Sunday, he and an unnamed adult had visited the site and found a strip of metal near the sassafras tree; the strip was allegedly about four feet long, one inch wide, and

one-eighth of an inch thick. The boy said that he had broken off a one-foot strip for himself. When he met Bill, he broke off one end (1" x 1/2") and gave it to him. Bill gave this specimen to his chemistry teacher at Clearview, Philip T. Larson, for analysis. As of September 19, Larson had not made an analysis, but had said that superficial studies indicated the presence of magnesium'. Nothing about this in the Hallowich 'confession.'

"How too do we explain the several apparently authentic UFO sightings made in the area *after* the supposed landing? Are we to believe that Hallowich was responsible for these also?

"I do not pretend to know the answers to these questions, but I do feel that the Glassboro' file should not be closed as yet. Is it possible that Hallowich was paid by the Air Force to claim the whole thing was a hoax? Several years ago, during the Oradell flap—also in New Jersey—a group of boys announced they were responsible for the sightings, having launched helium balloons which were mistaken for UFOs, an obviously phony claim. If my guess is correct it would not be the first time the United States government has ruined individual reputations in the interest of 'national security'. (See David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, *The Invisible Government*)."

Notes

¹The Zamora story is told in *The Socorro Classic* in the November/December, 1964 number of FLYING SAUCER REVIEW.

²See *Two New Contact Claims* by Jerome Clark in the May/June issue of FLYING SAUCER REVIEW.

^{3/4}Both incidents reported in *Opposition Flap 1965* in the May/June number of the REVIEW.

⁵Taken from the March/April issue of *The UFO Investigator*.

⁶Reported in the World Round-Up item *An American Charlton Crater?* in the January/February issue of the REVIEW.

THE WARMINSTER PHENOMENON (Continued from page 3)

8.30 p.m. until about 9 p.m. One of the witnesses who was quoted in the newspaper reports was a Mrs. Patricia Phillips, wife of the vicar of nearby Heytesbury. Mrs. Phillips has since furnished the FLYING SAUCER REVIEW with a report (with sketch), from which we learn that her son Nigel, aged 12, was the first to see the object. Nigel ran to fetch a low-powered telescope, whilst his mother, brother and sister, and a friend of the family continued to watch the strange light, which was due south from them in a clear sky with no wind. The sun was just setting, and the angle of elevation of the object was about 45° to 50°. It did not appear to move, flicker, or emit smoke, and its colour was a shining pale yellow. It appeared to be solid. About 9.15 p.m. it seemed to shorten, became just a spot of light, and then was gone. Mrs. Phillips would not hazard a guess as to what it was.

Nigel Phillip's telescope was rigged up and

focussed just before the object disappeared. To the naked eye it had appeared "cigar-shaped", and whilst this was confirmed through the telescope, it was also seen to have what looked like a ring at the top.

From this description, the object will be recognized as identical with that seen stationary over Mount Kilimanjaro on March 4, 1951 (see *Flying Saucers and Common Sense* by Waveney Girvan, p. 79). The only difference is that the Mt. Kilimanjaro object was horizontal.

Readers are also referred to the Rownham's Mount incident (see page 28).

Finally, scrutiny of the map has revealed that Warminster lies but 14 miles north of the site of the Charlton Crater. Could the "cigar", due south of Heytesbury, have been in that area?

C.B., G.C.