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### **ADAMSKI, GEORGE (1891-1965)**

George Adamski, who would become the world's most famous, controversial, and influential flying-saucer contactee, was born in Poland on April 17, 1891. When he was one or two, his parents emigrated to Dunkirk, New York. The young Adamski received little formal schooling and educated himself, influenced by his parents' strong religious beliefs. In 1913 he joined the Thirteenth Cavalry Regiment, was stationed along the Mexican border, and was honorably discharged in 1916. His first civilian job was as a painter at Yellowstone National Park. On Christmas Day 1917 he married Mary A. Shimbersky (d. 1954). The next year he worked at a flour mill in Portland, Oregon, and by 1921 was in California working at a concrete factory (Moore, n.d.).

By the 1930s Adamski had become a minor figure on the California occult scene. He founded the Royal Order of Tibet ("Tibetan Monastery," 1934) and lectured on "Universal Law" both before live audiences and on radio stations KFOX (Long Beach) and KMPC (Los Angeles). His pupils began to call him "professor." When he took up residence in Palomar Gardens, on the southern slope of Mount Palomar, and set up a small observatory of his own, with a 15-inch telescope (he also owned a six-inch telescope which he would take with him on stargazing trips), "Professor" Adamski was sometimes mistaken for a professional astronomer associated with the celebrated observatory a few miles away. According to Jerrold Baker, who spent time with Adamski in the early 1950s, "His hand-made dome and telescope seemed largely to be intended to capture the public driving up to the real thing on Mount Palomar" (Baker, 1989).

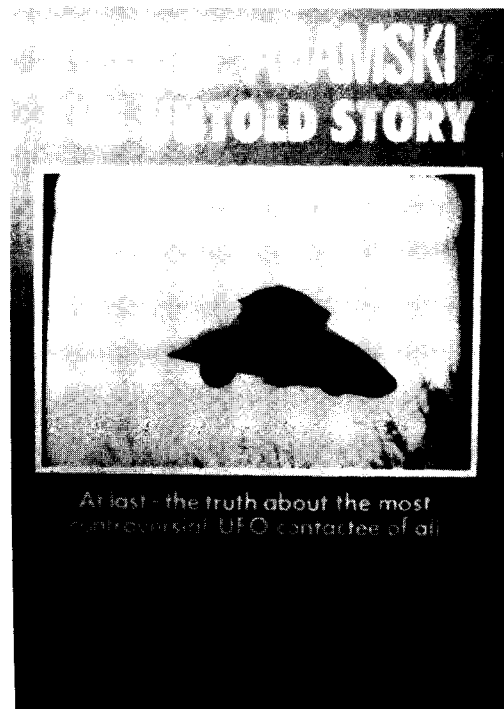
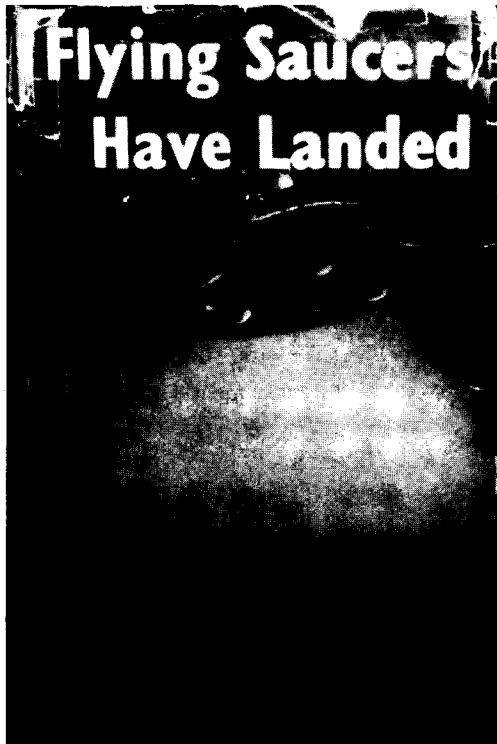
In 1949 Adamski published a science-fiction novel, *Pioneers of Space: A Trip to the Moon, Mars and Venus*, under his own by-line (the book was actually written by his secretary Lucy McGinnis; all of Adamski's books would be ghostwritten). It would come back to haunt him in later years, when critics pointed out that portions of it bore a striking resemblance to subsequent claims he would make of interplanetary con-

tacts and travels (Blomqvist, 1988; Stupple, 1979b; Zinsstag and Good, 1983).

According to Adamski's account (Leslie and Adamski, 1953), as he and associates were watching a meteor shower on the evening of October 9, 1946, they spotted a "gigantic space craft" hovering overhead. Some weeks later he and customers at the restaurant at which he worked discussed the sighting, and a military officer who overheard the conversation assured Adamski that the object was indeed from another world. The following summer, when reports of "flying saucers" attracted wide attention and comment, Adamski saw 184 UFOs pass overhead in squadrons of 32 each.

Late the next year—again according to Adamski—two men from the Point Loma Navy Electronics Laboratory, Joseph P. Maxfield and G. L. Bloom, along with two other men "from a similar setup in Pasadena," asked Adamski if he would cooperate in an effort to photograph spaceships. In his subsequent career Adamski would often claim (anonymous) government and military contacts, but this is the one instance in which he named names. Both Maxfield and Bloom existed. In 1949 the former held the post of superintending scientist at the laboratory, and the latter was a chemist in the nuclear-radiation section. Nonetheless, when **James W. Moseley** questioned him about Adamski's story in 1954, Bloom said he had been "grossly misquoted" (Moseley, 1957). In February 1969, in an interview with physicist and UFO researcher James E. McDonald, Maxfield disputed Adamski's version of their meeting (McDonald, 1969). In 1988 Bloom told ufologist Eric Herr, "Everything Adamski wrote about us was fiction, pure fiction" (Herr, 1990). In any case, a few months later Adamski produced two pictures of alleged spaceships said to have been taken through his six-inch telescope, and sometime later he told a San Diego reporter that he had given the photographs to the laboratory. The laboratory denied ever receiving such pictures. After persistent press inquiries it eventually acknowledged it had received them (*San Diego Tribune-Sun*, April 4, 1950) but said its analysts were not convinced they depicted spaceships.

Adamski gave his first lectures on flying saucers in 1949. In 1950 he got his first national exposure as



*Flying Saucers Have Landed*, a 1953 title by Desmond Leslie and George Adamski, was one of the most influential—and controversial—UFO books of its time. In it Adamski launched a career as the chronicler of personal encounters with space people. Exactly 30 years later he was the subject of a sympathetic biography by Lou Zinsstag and Timothy Good.

coauthor of an article about his photographs in *Fate*, a popular digest-sized magazine devoted to anomalies, the paranormal, and the occult. *Fate's* editor appended a statement to the article attesting, “We have investigated Professor Adamski quite thoroughly, and in our opinion, have found not the slightest evidence that he is perpetrating a hoax” (Weekley and Adamski, 1950). A follow-up article showed yet more photographs, dramatic ones capturing spaceships passing over the face of the moon (Adamski, 1951).

*Enter the space people.* All of this would have done no more than ensure Adamski a footnote in UFO history if it had not been for the event, real or invented, that occurred on November 20, 1952, when he and six trusted associates drove out to the desert hoping to see a flying saucer and maybe even meet its pilots. Adamski’s companions included his associates Alice

Wells and **George Hunt Williamson**. Williamson falsely claimed a Ph.D. in anthropology (Moseley and Mann, 1959).

Shortly after noon, at a location between Desert Center, California, and Parker, Arizona, the seven heard an airplane pass overhead. Shortly after it disappeared in the distance, a huge, silvery cigar-shaped object approached them and hovered overhead for a few moments before drifting off. “That ship had come looking for me,” Adamski declared. He asked to be taken about a mile down the road. As he, Lucy McGinnis, and Alfred Bailey drove away, they saw the cigar shadowing them. Soon Adamski asked to be dropped off and directed his companions to rejoin the others. Meanwhile he set up his telescope and waited, confident that contact was imminent. Sure enough, five minutes later a “beautiful small craft” came down half a mile away, landing

slightly below the crest of a mountain so that its top half was visible to the other witnesses.

Soon Adamski saw a figure waving to him, and as he walked toward it, he would write, "I fully realized I was in the presence of a man from space—A HUMAN BEING FROM ANOTHER WORLD!" He was a beautiful-looking being of human appearance, with long blond hair and an "extremely high forehead." Through gestures, sign language, a few words, and telepathy, Adamski learned he was from Venus, and he and other beings from other worlds were coming here in peace, out of a deep concern about humanity's atomic weapons and warlike ways. The Venusian brought Adamski to the spacecraft ("Scout Ship"), and at one point Adamski briefly glimpsed the face of another occupant as he or she looked out a porthole. Adamski's extraterrestrial companion declined to be photographed but asked for one of Adamski's unexposed pictures. Soon he entered his ship and sailed away. "I felt that part of me was going with it," Adamski wrote; "the presence of this inhabitant of Venus was like the warm embrace of great love and understanding wisdom" (Leslie and Adamski, *op. cit.*).

The Venusian had left tracks on the desert floor, and Williamson took plaster casts of them. Each track contained within it a distinct set of symbols which Adamski's disciples would spend much time trying to decipher. Both skeptics and believers would wonder how Williamson happened to have such materials with him, and there would be speculation that the contact had been prearranged, either—from the believer's point of view—via communication (perhaps psychic) from space people or—from the doubter's—via planned hoax (Stuppel, 1979a).

The first printed account of the November 20 incident appeared four days later, in the *Phoenix Gazette* (Welch, 1952).

On the morning of December 13 the flying saucer returned. At one point, when it was within 100 feet of Adamski, who was busy shooting pictures all the while, one of the portholes opened, a hand extended, and the film holder was tossed on the ground. When developed, the original picture (apparently showing the Venusian spaceship at close range) "was replaced by a strange photograph and a symbolic message,

which to this day has not been fully deciphered. Several scientists are working on it" (Leslie and Adamski, *op. cit.*).

The next year Adamski's 54-page account (ghost-written by Clara L. John) was appended to an already-completed manuscript on modern and historical UFO reports by Irish occultist Desmond Leslie and published as *Flying Saucers Have Landed*. Two years later Adamski was back with even more sensational claims in *Inside the Space Ships*. This time he was cavorting with beautiful humanlike beings from other planets in our solar system. Among them was his friend from the November 20 meeting. Besides the Venusian "Orthon," others were "Firkon," a Martian, and "Ramu," a Saturnian, though "no names, as we know them, were given to me for any of the people I met from other worlds." The faintly ridiculous names were the invention of Charlotte Blodgett, who ghost-wrote the book, and became something of an embarrassment to Adamski's followers (Zinsstag and Good, *op. cit.*).

*Space Ships* consists of long, verbatim conversations with assorted benevolent space people, who teach an occult philosophy identical to the one with which Adamski had long associated himself, and a surprisingly tedious account of a voyage into outer space (Stuppel, 1984). As a sociologist who studied Adamski's career has remarked, "One of the striking characteristics of Adamski's work is its literary barrenness. Although he describes extraordinary events, the narratives have a lifeless quality about them. The reader of *Inside the Space Ships* enters a perfect world—the kind, he says, we can create here on earth if we behave ourselves" (Stuppel, 1979a). These perfect worlds are all but one (earth) of the solar system's 12 planets, all but one inhabited by physically handsome, spiritually evolved beings.

By the mid-1950s Adamski was an international occult celebrity, revered by loyal followers and reviled by detractors, including such prominent ufologists as **Donald E. Keyhoe**, Coral Lorenzen, and **Isabel Davis**, who considered him a charlatan (Davis, 1957). Other contactees, **Daniel Fry**, **Truman Bethurum**, **Orfeo Angelucci**, and **Howard Menger** among the most prominent, followed in his wake, though

Adamski would remain the acknowledged leader of the movement.

In May 1959 Adamski toured Europe, igniting fierce controversy in Holland where he was received by Queen Juliana and attacked in the press. When he tried to speak in Zurich, university students disrupted his lecture with jeers and flying fruit. Adamski attributed such opposition to the "Silence Group," financed by international bankers who feared the moral reforms and technological advances friendly space people would bring to earth (Adamski, 1959, 1961). During a second tour, according to Adamski, he had a secret meeting with Pope John XXIII at the Vatican on May 31, 1963. Lou Zinsstag, a Swiss woman who accompanied Adamski to Rome and who later cowrote a mostly sympathetic biography, reported seeing her companion step into an obscure private entrance to St. Peter's Basilica as a man in a "black suit but not a priest's robe" gestured to him. When Zinsstag saw Adamski an hour later, he announced, "I was received by the Pope. He gave me his blessing and I handed him a message." As proof of the meeting Adamski produced a gold coin with the pope's head in profile (Zinsstag, 1965; Zinsstag and Good, *op. cit.*). The Vatican denies any such meeting ever occurred (Heiden, 1984). Probably the truth will never be known.

*Decline and fall.* In 1962 Adamski announced that the "Brothers" (as he called the space people) were going to take him to Saturn to attend a conference. This was to set in motion a series of events which would alienate him from some of his most important followers. Most disturbing to those who knew his teachings and who had often heard him warn them against the dangers of seeking psychic guidance was a statement that upon his return he would pass on, in confidence, his new knowledge only to "people of high standing"; moreover, he would be "allowed to review the past lives of those who are working with me and why they are associated with me at this time." In fact, according to Williamson, Adamski's intimates knew of his decades-long psychic channeling of messages first from Tibetan masters and later from extraterrestrials who encouraged him to go into the desert on November 20 for a face-to-face meeting (Griffin, 1989).

To Zinsstag who, like most, knew nothing about this

aspect of Adamski's earlier life, all this smacked of something that could have come "from a spiritualist meeting" (Zinsstag and Good, *op. cit.*). Adamski also asked his associates to meditate at a certain time on March 27, 29, and 30 to see if they could pick up a telepathic message he intended to send from Saturn. In June he mailed out an account of the meeting, saying he had boarded the Saturnian ship at a U.S. Air Force base, where a high government official had met with the extraterrestrial crew. Some of the account left readers with the impression that Adamski approved of psychic, as well as physical, interplanetary travel.

Even those inclined to accept Adamski at his word, even when it was attesting to the most fantastic events, found the story of the trip to Saturn more than they could believe. Zinsstag concluded it was a "personal mental experience ... induced by some method of hypnosis." Soon speculation spread that Adamski had fallen in with bad extraterrestrials. After all, Adamski himself was saying, "There is a new group of space people that have replaced those who have been here so long..." A postcard written allegedly by space people and mailed from Box 885, Glendale, California, was traced to Adamski, who subsequently used the same address to advertise contacts with space people. Those who replied were asked to contribute money to cover expenses. It was, charged disillusioned associate C. A. Honey (who had taken over Adamski's affairs in 1961, only to part company from him two years later), a scheme to bilk the credulous. In his *Cosmic Science Newsletter* Honey photocopied pages from Adamski's 1936 book *Wisdom of the Masters of the Far East*, showing that Adamski had crossed out "Royal Order of Tibet," substituted "Space Brothers," and republished much of the original in 1964 as *The Science of Life Study Course* (Honey, 1964). For his part Adamski denounced Honey as an intelligence agent. By this time Adamski's name had disappeared even from the pages of England's widely read *Flying Saucer Review*, whose editor, publishing executive Waveney Girvan, had bought the original Leslie/Adamski manuscript, sold worldwide rights to it, and long been Adamski's most articulate defender.

In February 1965 an obviously ill Adamski flew to Washington, D.C., and was met by Madeleine Rodeffer,

one of his most faithful followers, and her husband. On the morning of the twenty-sixth Adamski told Mrs. Rodeffer that a space person had stopped by on his way to a meeting with Vice-President Hubert Humphrey. The visitor said a spaceship would fly over soon and they should have a camera ready. At 3 P.M. the saucer appeared and was filmed. But according to Rodeffer, when the film came back from processing, "several pieces were missing and several obviously faked portions had been added. The space people themselves later retrieved a portion that showed the underside of the craft in more detail than they wanted to reveal to the Earthlings" (Curran, 1985). In March Adamski went on a lecture tour through New York and Rhode Island, returning in an exhausted state to the Rodeffers's Maryland home in early April. He died of a heart attack on the evening of April 23.

Soon thereafter a bizarre episode took place in England. Ernest Arthur Bryant, a gardener in Scoriton, Devonshire, reported that on April 24 he saw a flying saucer with three occupants. One, who looked to be about 14 years old and spoke in an east-European and American-inflected English, identified himself as "Yamski" from "Venus." Yamski said, as Bryant (who claimed never to have heard of Adamski) told it, "If only Des or Les were here he would understand." Ushered inside the saucer, Bryant saw a purple robe with a "red rose beautifully embroidered on the sleeve." Adamski enthusiasts pointed out that Adamski had confided to associates that he would return as a boy and that the robe was precisely similar to the one Adamski wore at the Saturn conference. The reference to Desmond Leslie was obvious. The subsequent investigation produced a book (Buckle, 1967), which essentially endorsed Bryant's claims, and a subsequent monograph (Oliver, 1968) detailing the further investigation that conclusively established Bryant's unreliability as well as familiarity with Adamski's writings. Even Adamski's most determined partisans do not dispute investigator Norman Oliver's conclusion that this was a convoluted hoax (Zinsstag and Good, *op. cit.*).

*The controversy.* To Adamski's followers the truth of his claims was self-evident. To them—at least till his last few years, when evil space people or manipulators from the Silence Group led him astray—his sincerity should have been obvious to all but the most

cynical. Yet attempts were made to answer scoffers' derision with evidence supporting Adamski's claims.

Adamski himself brought six "witnesses" to his first contact and supplied photographs of Venusian "scoutcraft" and "motherships." Engineer Leonard G. Cramp argued that the object depicted in the scoutcraft photos and an alleged UFO photographed by two young Lancashire boys on February 15, 1954, were identical (Cramp, 1954). At sunrise on February 20, 1962, while in orbit around the earth, Mercury astronaut John Glenn reported seeing thousands of little "fireflies" outside the window of his space capsule. Adamski defenders (see, for example, *Flying Saucer Review*, May/June 1962) were quick to point out that seven years earlier the contactee had used the word "fireflies" to describe what he had seen while in space (*Inside the Space Ships*, page 76). In fact, Adamski was referring to the appearance of the stars in deep space, whereas Glenn, considerably closer to earth, was seeing sunlight reflecting off debris from his orbiting vehicle (Gillmor, 1969). The usage by the two men of the word "fireflies" was simply coincidental.

Some of Adamski's friends believed they had seen space people passing as earthlings. His biographers Lou Zinsstag and Timothy Good both believe or suspect they encountered such persons dressed in conventional clothing. In one instance, which occurred during Adamski's 1959 European tour, Zinsstag left her companion, who had expressed a desire to take a nap in his hotel room, and waited outside in a small cafe. There she saw a young man who "looked very distinguished and well-dressed, with dark blonde [sic] hair neatly cut and brushed down over his forehead in a fashion much in vogue when I was a young girl." Later she asked Adamski if this was a spaceman, and he said yes (Zinsstag and Good, *op. cit.*). C. A. Honey provides a more cautious account: "I was with Adamski in 1958 during a meeting with three little people who he claimed had come to earth from Venus. I saw them and talked with one of them but I don't know if they were anything other than what I saw—little people" (Honey, 1979). In an earlier, somewhat different version of the story, however, Honey reported that while on a trip to Oregon, Adamski had suddenly insisted they stop at a cafe, where they met a small blond woman. When Adamski

appeared shocked, Honey examined her carefully. He would write: "She looked from a distance as if she was about 12 years old. Close up, however, she looked ... about 45 years old." Soon "she let me know she was reading my thoughts." The next morning Adamski confirmed Honey's expressed opinion that this was a space person, and the morning after that a space person called to confirm that the woman was a sister of the Venusian woman Kalna, whom Adamski describes in Chapter 3 of *Space Ships* (Honey, 1959).

To Adamski's detractors the absurdity of his claims was self-evident. Even in the early 1950s his assertions about surface conditions on, and the habitability of, Venus, Mars, and the other planets of the solar system flew in the face of massive scientific evidence. As that evidence mounted ever higher, some Adamski partisans insisted that Venus, Mars, Saturn, and the rest were merely "code words" for planets in other solar systems (Zinsstag and Good, *op. cit.*); there is, however, nothing in Adamski's public writings to support this interpretation and considerable testimony to the contrary. Ufologist Isabel Davis remarked, in an important early analysis of the contact literature, that besides being scientifically dubious, the cosmologies of Adamski and the other prominent contactees who came in his wake contradicted each other. She wrote that "everything about these books is inconsistent with the theory that they are true, and fatally consistent with the theory that they are inventions" (Davis, *op. cit.*).

Mainstream ufologists such as Davis (affiliated with the group **Civilian Saucer Intelligence of New York**) were almost uniformly hostile to Adamski, holding not only that his and similar contact stories were fraudulent but that the contactees were making serious UFO investigators look ridiculous and drawing attention away from authentic evidence. At one point Donald Keyhoe, director of the **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP), fired a pro-Adamski employee, Rose Hackett Campbell, who had secretly given Adamski (along with six other contactees) a NICAP membership card ("Contactees," 1958; Keyhoe, 1960a). But the first serious investigation by a critic of Adamski's claims was conducted by James W. Moseley in the mid-1950s and published as a special issue of his magazine *Saucer News* (Moseley, 1957). Moseley found that the

"witnesses" to the first contact were close associates and that, moreover, at least one, Alfred Bailey, had retracted his testimony, saying he had seen neither spaceship nor spaceman and doubted any of the others had either. Jerrold Baker, a young man who had lived at Palomar Gardens between November 1952 and January 1953, told Moseley he had heard a tape recording of "what was to transpire in the desert, who was to go, etc., several days before the party left Palomar Gardens" for the celebrated contact. One of the three Venusian saucer photographs allegedly taken on December 13, 1952, was credited (in *Landed*) to Baker but was actually taken secretly the day before by Adamski and probably was of a model. Baker claimed to have seen what looked like the model Adamski used in his pictures. He also said the plaster of paris had been purchased some days before the contact. The purchaser was Lucy McGinnis, and Adamski, not Williamson, had the material with him on November 20, contrary to *Landed's* account.

Moseley's debunking of Adamski's claims remains the definitive one, but in subsequent years further negative evidence would come to light. Ufologist Ray Stanford, who as a teenager spent much time with Adamski, said that Adamski had confided to him that he had gotten into "all this saucer crap" for monetary reasons and further intimated that he had never been aboard a spaceship (Clark, 1978). In 1978 a tape in which Adamski recounted his meeting with Orthon was subjected to analysis via a controversial "lie-detection" technique, Psychological Stress Evaluation (PSE), at the conclusion of which evaluator Forrest Erickson declared, "Mr. Adamski does not appear to be telling the truth about Orthon" (Hewes, 1979). (In 1957 NICAP had challenged Adamski to take a polygraph test, but he refused to do so ["Interim Report," 1957].) Photoanalysis of one of the December 1952 photos suggested that the "'UFO' measures less than eight inches in diameter" and "represents a crude hoax" (Hewes, *op. cit.*). In 1985 William L. Moore found that "Adamski's four photos of the 'Venusian scout ship' are really pictures of a model, the design of which is virtually identical in every detail to an artist's conception of a 'prototype space vehicle' which appeared in a technical paper written and published during February 1952, *nine months before* Adamski's alleged encounter of Decem-

ber 13, 1952.... The technical paper, which was entitled 'The Flying Saucer: The Application of the Biefeld-Brown Effect to the Solution to the Problem of Space Navigation,' was written by Mason Rose, Ph.D." Rose told Moore that his paper was "quite widely circulated at the time" (Moore, 1985). Noting Adamski's reference to "blustery" weather in Los Angeles on the night of April 22, 1953, contact recounted in *Space Ships* (Chapter 7), Richard Heiden checked records and found only the lightest of breezes recorded that evening (Heiden, *op. cit.*).

These developments were not reported until well after Adamski's death, but aside from Moseley's, the most damaging exposé to occur during the contactee's lifetime was engineered by Arthur C. Campbell of the NICAP Kansas City Affiliate. On the morning of December 1, 1958, Adamski boarded a Rock Island passenger train in Kansas City, heading for Davenport, Iowa, where he was to give a lecture. The round-trip-ticket purchase was witnessed by Adamski's hosts, Mr. and Mrs. Paul M. Wheeler, of Independence, Missouri. When Adamski returned to Kansas City a few days later, he produced, in the Wheelers's presence, what appeared to be the uncanceled ticket, instructing his secretary, Lucy McGinnis, to obtain a refund. He explained that 20 minutes out of Kansas City the train had stopped, and after it was announced that there would be a 10-minute wait, Adamski left the railroad car and went outside to stretch his legs. There he met a car whose driver collected Adamski's luggage from the vestibule, then drove him to a waiting spaceship, which flew him to Davenport.

The Wheelers were impressed, but when he heard the story, Campbell had grave doubts. After consulting records from the railroad company and interviewing the conductor and two attendants, he learned that no such unscheduled stop had occurred, or even *could* have occurred, and that the vestibule had not been opened during the trip. The findings were released just as Adamski was embarking on a tour of England, causing him considerable embarrassment. He told reporters the CIA had framed him ("Adamski's Latest Claim," 1959). Adamski's story, but not the exposé of it, is told on page 156 of Zinsstag and Good's admiring biography.

*Adamski and officialdom.* Throughout his career Adamski claimed he was being secretly supported by the highest government officials (including President John F. Kennedy), who themselves were in contact with space people. (As late as March 9, 1965, a month and a half before his death, he told a newspaper reporter that before the end of April a "high government official" would confirm his story [Rybeck, 1965].) There is no reason to believe this was true, but it is a fact that Adamski occasionally attracted the attention of government agencies.

In July 1953 the FBI provided the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) with information on Adamski, including a copy of the December 1952 "scout ship" photograph. In an August 14 letter to the Director of Special Investigations at Air Force Headquarters in Washington, Charles A. Sither, Chief of the Counter Intelligence Division at Bolling Air Force Base, wrote, "The files of this office contain extensive information" about Adamski, described as a "well known Author, Economist and Lecturer who maintains a pro-Russian attitude by praising its internal improvements and citing the historical background of Imperialism and Colonization in the 18th century and not Russia and Communism as the cause for the unrest in the world today." As for the photograph, "It appears that this object is a Spanish style hat (sombrello) with the sweat band pulled out. During the course of the reproduction of this photograph, it was pointed out by an experienced photographer that the object was quite small, probably the size of a hat, because of a comparison of the object with a fence post in the background, which was considerably farther away from the camera when the photograph was taken" (Moore, n.d.). (In January 1968, however, a spokesman for the Secretary of the Air Force would tell an inquirer that "photo analysts at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, have determined that these prints contain stimuli caused by a tobacco humidior and three ping pong balls" [*ibid.*].)

In January 1953 Adamski had what apparently was his first meeting with an FBI agent. A young associate of Adamski's, Karl Hunrath, whom Adamski regarded as somewhat unstable, had developed a "magnetic machine" which he said could disrupt the engine of any passing flying saucer. Hearing that, Adamski expressed no concern about the well being of his

Venusian friends, but when Hunrath said the machine could also disrupt the engines of airplanes, Adamski got alarmed and urged a young woman who was staying at Palomar Gardens to alert the FBI. She did so, and presently an FBI agent and an officer from the Air Force Office of Special Investigations showed up at the cafe where Adamski worked. Adamski told them what he knew of Hunrath, then launched into an account of his space contacts. Before the visitors left, he provided them with copies of Venusian writing and photographs of the spaceships (Gross, 1988).

Not long afterwards FBI agents in southern California learned that Adamski, apparently as a consequence of the visit, now was claiming in his lectures that the FBI and the Air Force had given him "clearance" to talk about his space contacts. On March 17 an FBI agent and two AFOSI officers interviewed him, and in their presence Adamski drafted a short statement saying in part, "I have not and do not intend to make statements to the effect that the U.S. Air Force or Federal Bureau of Investigation have approved material used in my speeches." The three investigators signed the statement as witnesses. In December an investigator for the Los Angeles Better Business Bureau, which was reviewing the claims made in *Flying Saucers Have Landed* for evidence of fraud, interviewed Adamski and was shown a document signed by an FBI agent and two AFOSI agents and purporting to show Adamski had been "cleared" by these official representatives. Informed of this, the Los Angeles FBI office notified the San Diego office, which sent an agent, accompanied by an AFOSI representative, to "call on Adamski and read the riot act to him in no uncertain terms pointing out he has used this document in a fraudulent, improper manner, that this Bureau has not endorsed, approved, or cleared his speeches or book, that he knows it, and the Bureau will simply not tolerate any further foolishness, misrepresentations, and falsity on his part," as an internal FBI memorandum of December 16 puts it. The same memo cites an assertion made by a San Diego-based agent named Willis, who said the "document" which Adamski has exhibited ... is undoubtedly a 'doctored' copy of a signed statement which Adamski executed on 3-17-53.... Adamski, after executing this statement signed by three Agents

as witnesses, demanded and was given a copy of the statement, said Willis. It is probably this copy of the statement, doctored up with seals and ribbons, which Adamski is using for his own purposes" (*ibid.*).

Adamski's most celebrated "proof" of high-level endorsement came in the form of a letter mailed to him from Washington, D.C., on December 6, 1957. Written on State Department stationery, with a department seal impressed on the paper, it began: "For the time being, let us consider this a personal letter and not to be construed as an official communication of the Department." It went on to state that the "Department has on file a great deal of confirmatory evidence bearing out your own claims.... While certainly the Department cannot publicly confirm your experiences, it can, I believe, with propriety, encourage your work...." The letter was signed "R. E. Straith, Cultural Exchange Committee."

This remarkable development was first announced in a cautiously worded article in the March/April 1958 issue of *Flying Saucer Review*, which quoted part of the letter. On April 10 the *Times* of London reported that the State Department was denying the existence of both Straith and the committee he allegedly represented. Adamski and his partisans immediately charged cover-up. Even before he released the document, according to his biographers, Adamski "made a thorough investigation of the authenticity of the letter. He was assured that Straith was an employee of the State Department, whose work was of such a nature that his name did not appear on any of the published lists of that Department" (Zinsstag and Good, *op. cit.*). Richard Ogden sent a registered letter, addressed to Straith, to the State Department. When the return receipt indicated the letter had been accepted, he viewed this as evidence that Straith was real (Ogden, 1959).

All over the world Adamski's followers were claiming vindication. South African UFO enthusiast Edgar Sievers declared the letter to be a "decisive document on imminent developments on this planet" (Sievers, 1958). **Wilbert B. Smith**, a Canadian radio engineer who earlier had been involved in an official UFO project, told Keyhoe, after the latter expressed skepticism about the document, that he "knew" the Straith letter to be authentic, because someone of his ac-



quaintance knew the man personally; Straith was working in a “supersecret agency partly under State Department control” (Keyhoe, 1960b). Over two decades later, looking back on the controversy, Zinsstag and Good concluded that while “much of the evidence is circumstantial ... on balance there is more in favor of the letter[’s] being genuine” (Zinsstag and Good, *op. cit.*).

Others felt otherwise. Adamski critic Lonzo Dove believed that the “Straith letter,” as it would be called in flying-saucer lore, was written on the typewriter of **Gray Barker**, a well-known publisher and promoter of contactee materials (“Justice Dept.,” 1958; Dove, 1959a). Dove submitted a detailed article documenting his findings (Dove, 1959b), but *Saucer News* editor Jim Moseley refused to publish it. For years afterwards rumors circulated that Barker (who died in 1984) and Moseley had conspired to write the letter, and in 1985 Moseley confessed as much. “For many years,” he wrote, “your editor used to visit Gray Barker in Clarksburg, West Virginia, for a weekend every few months.... On one particular occasion ... a young friend of Barker’s with a relative high in the Government had provided Barker with a packet of genuine official stationery from various Government agencies.... Barker and I wrote not one but *seven* ... naughty letters that evening— emboldened by the evil of alcohol and fully enjoying the hilarity of this chance to throw long-term Confusion into the UFO field” (Moseley, 1985).

*Theories about Adamski.* The two leading interpretations of Adamski’s career are that he told the whole truth and that he told no truth at all. On Adamski’s death, for example, British ufologist John Cleary-Baker reflected, “I think it is safe to say that Adamski’s two later books [*Space Ships* and *Flying Saucers Farewell*] ... did much to dissipate the favorable reactions ... which were evoked by his initial narrative of the alleged meeting with a Venusian in the Arizona desert. Allowing for possible faults of interpretation, this first story *could* have been true. The later books transported the reader into an Arabian Nights fantasy which few could take seriously. Second-rate science fiction, combined with a philosophical outlook which might be summed-up as ‘Theosophy and water,’ are productive of literary dyspepsia rather than of belief.... Of course, a man may tell the truth at

one time and lie at another.... However, there are adequate grounds for asserting that the first Adamski ‘contact’ was as spurious as the later ones” (Cleary-Baker, 1965).

There have been other views, however, such as that Adamski was duped by intelligence agencies. Some of Adamski’s followers offered this theory to explain, or explain away, his later claims, such as the trip to Saturn, which they could not accept.

But most such conspiratorial theories have been proposed by writers outside contactee circles. The first to do so was Leon Davidson, who speculated that CIA agents had posed as space people and that the “‘space ships’ and their equipment” were “nothing more than stage props designed to make Adamski believe that he was indeed traveling through space. The crew men, the contact men, and the Masters behave like well-trained earth people putting over a colossal hoax on a naive and trusting Adamski” (Davidson, 1960). Jacques Vallee suggested that a shadowy group of fascist-oriented intelligence operatives set up Adamski. “Let us note in passing,” Vallee writes, “that Adamski’s Venusian ... and many other alleged extraterrestrials were all tall Aryan types with long blond hair” (Vallee, 1979).

John A. Keel contended that Adamski and other contactees had been the victims of hoaxes set up by the UFO intelligences themselves, manipulative paranormal entities who hold human beings in contempt and use and discard them for their own purposes. He characterized the contact experience as a “complex and frightening hoax.... [a] direct threat to us” (Keel, 1970). A comparable idea was proposed by *Flying Saucer Review* editor Charles Bowen, who considered it “possible that imaginative ‘messages’ and conversations, or even illusions, of having been taken for a ride aboard a ‘craft,’ could be induced in receptive minds, and objects like overgrown chicken feeders, monstrous lampshades or oversize operating theatre lamps drummed up for the ready camera to record. ...[S]uch actions could be a form of *deception*, or *deterrent*: if certain entities *are* keeping us under surveillance, or carrying out strange tasks on our planet, it is possible that they may not wish to be observed.... [T]hey could ... plant ‘phoney’ messages of the kind given to contactee percipients to make the

subject sound so silly to down-to-earth types that they shun it for ever!" (Bowen, 1970).

The most recent interpretation of Adamski's claims comes from Hilary Evans, a British writer. Evans says that while there are undeniable elements of fraud in the Adamski story, "we have no right to do what many ufologists did when such cases as these were first reported—to dismiss them as simple imaginative fantasy" (Evans, 1984). At least his early experiences, in Evans's reading, may have arisen from visions which befell him because of a sincere spiritual commitment to an occult world view.

In the end, however, the amount of disconfirming evidence must be judged so overwhelming as to require a leap of faith to see Adamski as a truthful, even if misguided, teller of interplanetary tales. Yet for good or ill, Adamski virtually defined the contactee movement of his time, and his influences—and the controversies that surrounded him—continue even now.

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### AERIAL PHENOMENA RESEARCH ORGANIZATION (APRO)

The Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (APRO) was formed in January 1952, by Leslie James (Jim) and Coral Lorenzen of Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin. In its constitution APRO declared its purpose to be to "promote the eventual enlightenment of the people of the world in regard to the truth of the saucer phenomena—that they are in fact interplanetary vehicles. Contact with the beings operating them shall be strived for." Membership would be available to anyone with an "open attitude toward existence of saucers ... 16 years of age or over" and "nominated by a member of the club and ... elected by a majority

vote." Membership was unavailable to "Communists, parlor pinks, or fellow-travelers."

In those days, Coral Lorenzen would recall, "It wasn't really a research group.... We adopted that name because the Air Force was putting out those stupid explanations for incidents that were really unexplainable, and I thought there should be an organization that recorded the sightings for later, more responsible scrutiny" (Clark, 1977).

June 1952 saw the release of the first issue of *The A.P.R.O. Bulletin*, destined to be one of the most widely read UFO periodicals. Early issues consisted of editorial commentary on current ufology and newspaper stories of sightings. From the beginning APRO, whatever impression its credo might indicate to the contrary, was out of sympathy with the emerging contactee movement. After moving from Wisconsin in 1954, the Lorenzens lived briefly in Los Angeles; while there, they called on **George Adamski**, already the most famous contactee, and found him "quite a charming old faker" (*ibid.*).

In 1954 the Lorenzens moved to Alamogordo, New Mexico, and took jobs at Holloman Air Force Base, Jim in the data reduction facility, Coral in the range scheduling office. Two years later Coral resigned to devote her full attention to the rapidly growing APRO. In 1958 APRO suffered public embarrassment when the *Bulletin* reprinted a misleadingly translated four-year-old interview with Swiss psychologist C. G. Jung and it got picked up by press wires, which reported that Jung had affirmed the existence of extraterrestrial visitors. When interviewed, Jung said he had been quoted out of context, and the Lorenzens publicly apologized, amid much criticism (*see Jung and UFOs*).

The Lorenzens and APRO went to Tucson in 1960, when Jim joined the staff of the Kitt Peak National Observatory, where he designed computer interface for a remote-controlled telescope as well as instrumentation for rocket-elevated astronomical experiments. In 1967 Jim left the observatory to form Lorenzen Music Enterprises.

Along with such organizations as **Civilian Saucer Intelligence of New York (CSI)**, **Civilian Research, Interplanetary Flying Objects (CRIFO)**, and the **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenome-**