

Two New Contact Claims

By Jerome Clark

Our contributor, who hails from Minnesota, is studying Political Science at South Dakota State University.

FROM 1958 through 1963, the United States was left almost bereft of UFOs. There were a number of isolated sightings, but these were seldom spectacular in nature, and rarely did the craft appear *en masse* over a particular area. This spate of inactivity inspired speculation in the American mass media, which apparently were quite unaware of the incredible events transpiring at the time in Europe, South America, and the Soviet Union, that flying saucers were a fad that was just about dead, and good riddance.

However, after Socorro and its sequels—lasting even up to the time of writing (March 1965)—no one asks why the saucers are no longer seen; the question seems to be, instead, why they are back. Of course, the very obvious answer—that unknown spacecraft are once again conducting intensive reconnaissance of the terrain of North America—is much too simple for the professional scoffers who dominate the American Press. As a result, it appears that any explanation, however preposterous, is preferable to the truth. Perhaps the most ridiculous thus far advanced to account for the return of the UFOs was suggested by a writer for *The National Observer*, who theorized that mass hysteria resulting from Cold War tension was causing people to imagine spaceborne “saviours” in the form of flying saucers. In view of the fact that all during the period of the 1964–65 “flap”, the United States was experiencing unusually good relations with the Soviet bloc, one wonders what “tension” the author had in mind. Certainly not Viet Nam, about which, according to the Gallup Poll, most Americans are extremely apathetic.

Whether the incidents we are about to relate will serve as a climax to the current American wave remains to be seen. Definitely, at any rate, it is odd that two cases as sensational as these should have occurred in such rapid succession. Is it possible that they presage even more astonishing events in the near future?

Case 1: A Photograph in Virginia

On the evening of January 26 this year, Steven Houffer, 16, and six friends were driving near Brands Flats on U.S. Highway 250, when they saw

“what looked like a man walking” toward the road from a field. They thought nothing of it until the “man” sat down and began peering intently at passing cars.

It suddenly occurred to Houffer that the stranger might be from one of the UFOs which had regularly been reported in the area during the last few weeks, and, with this in mind, he stopped the car and stepped out. When he and his friends approached the being, though, it ran up the hill and quickly vanished over the other side. Two similar “men” also appeared, fleeing in the same direction. “They left us ‘way behind,’” Houffer explained to police, to whom he reported the experience shortly afterward.

The creatures, he said, wore one-piece, skin-tight, silvery garments. They were about 3½ feet tall, and—in a peculiar sidelight—did not leave any footprints in the muddy field across which they were alleged to have dashed.

The police, of course, were sceptical, but still interested enough to send 16 reserve officers to the area, along with photographer Charles Weaver. The search failed to produce any evidence for the claim, and everyone left except Houffer and Weaver, who stayed to look around further.

Shortly thereafter, the two sighted what they described as a “glowing aluminum barn” which they went down to investigate. Weaver was walking inside when suddenly something struck him on the head. “The whole left side of his face was blood red and his eyes had a peculiar red glow,” according to Houffer. The two turned to run, but Weaver stopped briefly and flashed a picture. In the light thrown off by the exploding flashbulb, a little man standing by the “barn” was visible.

Contacted by two local newspapers, Augusta County Sheriff John E. Kent and Staunton Police Chief R. Ruff Cline expressed the opinion that the story was a hoax. Mrs. Houffer, however, insisted that her son was “a hard-working boy,” unlikely to manufacture such a tale. The night of the purported experience, she stated, her son had awakened her, and “he was white as a sheet.”

As for the photograph, the woman reported that the camera contained colour film and would be

taken to nearby Roanoke on the 29th for Development.¹

It was not.

On the day of the intended trip, several newspapers carried the following item: "While the situation commands a certain degree of humorous respect today, someone apparently is taking it seriously. The youth who believes he 'captured' a small creature on colour film Tuesday night in the Brands Flat area could not be reached for comment late this morning. A fellow employee at the service station where Charles Weaver works said a government vehicle came by earlier and the local amateur photographer went off with the car's occupants, apparently to Washington."²

Predictably, no further information has been forthcoming. Quite probably, unless the United States government changes its policy toward the UFO problem, we shall never have the opportunity to view the photograph in question, which might very well prove, once and for all, the reality of the flying saucer—presumably something American officialdom does not want to happen.

Case 2: A Visit in California

On January 30, about 2 a.m., a 45-year-old television repairman named Sid Padrick was taking his customary walk along Manresa Beach near Watsonville, approximately 1,500 feet from the house in which his wife and three sons lay sleeping. Hearing a "humming" sound, he looked up to see some kind of flying machine which, for reasons to be explained shortly, he did not describe in any detail. A voice assured him that the occupants were friendly, and, after the craft landed, the commander—an individual called "Mr. Ziena," as near as Padrick could spell the name—invited him aboard. He entered through a large square door.

The nine beings inside the UFO were normal in appearance, wearing bluish-white suits—"the colour was almost that of the light inside the ship, which was indirect and seemed to come from the walls," according to the witness. The men sported short, dark hair that appeared never to have been cut—"as though that was its normal length."

"Ziena spoke English," Padrick said, "He told me they could speak any language among them, but he was the only one who could speak mine. They seemed to communicate between themselves with hand-gestures and perhaps facial gestures. He told me where they were from in terms I did not understand. I don't know much about space. I wouldn't be sure their world is in the solar system. He said they had been here before, but not how many times, or when their most recent visit was. He did say they would come again."

Padrick conversed with Ziena for some two

hours, interrupted only by a ten-minute walk Padrick took alone outside the UFO.³ The machine's motive power, he was informed, came from "energy transferred through a light source known to them," though "I didn't know what he was talking about." Apparently the witness learned little about the craft's occupants and their purpose. In fact, he reported that he "asked if any other person, with more scientific or technical background, could have gained more knowledge. The answer was 'absolutely no'," which would indicate that the occupants were not interested in revealing much about themselves. Although Ziena insisted the trip had been for "exploratory reasons only," Padrick expressed scepticism, saying, "I think it was more than that, truthfully. There was a religious facet which I was unable to decipher."

Even his description of the UFO was limited. About the interior, he noted that there were fourteen rooms, but he would not elaborate further. At one point, Ziena showed him "a diffuse glass-like plate" on which appeared the image of a "navigation craft" somewhere high above them.

Beyond stating that the saucer he boarded was about 50 feet long and 30 feet high, he refused to detail the structure of either of the machines with which he came in contact. "The Air Force asked me not to discuss it in detail," he claimed. He said that an account of his experiences had been given to Major D. B. Reeder at Hamilton Air Force Base, and that Reeder had passed it on to the UFO Center at Dayton, Ohio.

One newspaper, in recounting Padrick's purported encounter, commented, perhaps significantly, "Two other reports of sightings of unidentified flying objects were made in the Watsonville area about the same time. A crew of Santa Clara County park rangers reported 'a disc-like thing' over the Hecker Mountains east of Watsonville on December 28, and *Monterey Mayor George M. Clemens said he saw a bright object over Monterey Bay on the evening of January 29.*"⁴

What are we to make of stories like the above? The non-UFOlogist—and even, unfortunately, some UFOlogists—wax sceptical on the mere grounds that both claims are fantastic. This is no argument at all, for the very idea of the flying saucer is close to being incredible in itself. Moreover, we simply do not know enough about the UFO mystery to dismiss a reported incident because it contains details which to us sound improbable; the fact is that alleged saucer encounters can usually be rejected only by the presence of adverse *external* factors—for example, the witness' known unreliability. We cannot do as one well-known UFO researcher has done: ignore

reports of humanoid ufonauts, regardless of evidence, because we deem it more probable that the saucer intelligences are "amorphous blobs."⁵

Regrettably, as yet our data on the Houffer-Weaver and Padrick cases are incomplete. Nonetheless, initial examination definitely gives us a rather favourable impression of both.

To start with, one questions whether the American Government would go to the trouble of silencing hoaxers, particularly considering that, if they are liars, Houffer, *et al.*, would serve the Air Force line better by being allowed to publicize their reports and coincidentally drawing ridicule to the rest of the UFO subject.

But it is perhaps more significant that these present "contactees" have included details in their accounts that have appeared before in other occupant reports. In the absence of more direct evidence (in the first case there *was* direct evidence—the photograph—but for our purposes we shall have to forget it), this is the only remaining method of substantiation.

Case No. 1. "Little men," of course, are nothing new to UFO students. Their running abilities have been attested to in at least one other instance.⁶

Of particular interest, though, is the reference to the beings' attire: one-piece, skin-tight suits apparently made of a kind of light metal. Readers of this REVIEW will recall similar clothing allegedly worn by the visitors which "Adhemar", Gary Wilcox, Herr Linke, and others have described. It is also significant that, according to contributor J. Vyner, the strange being known as Springheel Jack dressed in "close-fitting garments of some glittering material like oilskin or metal mesh."⁷

Case No. 2. Human-like ufonauts have figured in a number of presumably reliable landing reports, although usually (but not always) witnesses have claimed that the beings had *blond*, rather than black, hair.⁸

But one minor statment in Padrick's story should strike a responsive chord in the minds of REVIEW readers: "the light inside the ship," he says, ". . . was indirect and seemed to come from the walls."

In two separate ufonaut encounters recorded in the January/February 1965 issue,⁹ we are told that the "contactees" were puzzled by the origins of the light illuminating the interior of their respective UFOs—almost as if, indeed, "the light came from the walls."

If either story is true, our guess is that it is the first one discussed above. The evidence for it—what little there is—is more convincing than the rather circumstantial data surrounding Padrick's claim.

Perhaps, however, ours is personal preference,

for UFOlogists are more comfortable around "little men" than benevolent space people. Yet I think that it would be a mistake to confuse Sid Padrick with the professional claimants as typified by George Adamski. There is little in his story that smacks of the arrogance of those businessmen who profit by spreading The Message of the Brothers. He even at one point admits being "frightened—very much so—all the time," and adds, "I didn't know what [Ziena] was talking about."

One can find no inspirational value in his claim; quite to the contrary, one senses a faintly ominous tone to the whole affair. When Ziena says he and his crew came for "exploratory reasons only," Padrick is sceptical—"I think it was more than that." Ziena acts strangely evasive, as though preferring to allow as little as possible to be known concerning his mission. No comfort for the cultist here!¹⁰

Curiously, what may prove, in retrospect, to have been the greatest contribution of the Padrick report may not be the story itself, of whose authenticity we can never be certain. Although quite at a loss to explain what we have reprinted below, we quote the following without comment, letting the reader draw his own conclusions. The italics are ours, but the words are those of Sid Padrick, as told to UFOlogist Lucius Farish:

"I was severely warned before a release of this info (*sic*) to the newspapers that I would become a subject of extreme persecution, ridicule, harrassment (*sic*) and vandalism by all people who have known me in the past. *However, I wish to make it known that something completely different has taken place. I have had none of this; every person who has contacted me up to now who knows me personally has called with very high praise and congratulation. All letters I have received have been from highly-respected people throughout the country. I have received hundreds of telephone calls from over the country from very notable ministers, scientists, teachers, and college professors.*"

Beside this, even "Mr. Ziena" and his crew are forgotten.

Notes

¹The Roanoke, Virginia, *Times* and the Waynesboro *News-Virginian*, January 28.

²The Richmond *Times-Despatch* and the Staunton *Leader*, January 29.

³Our news source is rather vague on the question of why Padrick left the ship. We infer that the machine flew a short distance to the top of a hill a few miles from the witness' home, although this is only implied. However, the statement that Ziena "allowed [Padrick] to go outside *when the ship landed on the hilltop* . . . to see a landmark for identification" certainly indicates that the UFO did not spend all its time on the ground after the witness boarded it.

⁴The San Francisco *News Call Bulletin*, February 12.

⁵As an illustration of the danger of such reasoning, we might point out that this same individual, unable to destroy Father Gill's story, holds that the missionary saw only "amorphous" forms in the cockpit of their UFO. Actually, of course, the witness in his report clearly described the occupants as "men" engaged "in human activity of some sort."

⁶". . . on August 19, 1949, two Death Valley, California, prospectors . . . reported seeing a disc crash-land and two little men jump out. The men chased the beings but lost them in the dunes; when they got back, the disc had disappeared." (John Nicholson, in "Little Green Men," *Fantastic Universe*, May 1958.)

⁷J. Vyner, "The Mystery of Springheel Jack," *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW*,

May/June 1961.

⁸See, for instance, Olavo T. Fontes, "Report from Brazil", *Fantastic Universe*, August 1958.

⁹Gordon Creighton, "The Most Amazing Case of All: Part I", and Charles Bowen, "A South American Trio: on the road from Córdoba."

Perhaps even more relevantly, Swedish student Olaf Nielsen refers to the interior of a UFO he claims to have boarded (our italics): "The cabin was of a pale green colour, lit by a faint diffused light that had no source. *One would have said that the light came from the walls themselves.*" (Quoted by Gordon Creighton in *The Italian Scene—Part 4*, *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW*, July/August 1963.)

¹⁰"One must always bear in mind whilst investigating contact reports that

the most important evidence available is the witness himself. The investigator will be used to ascertaining whether the witness is giving objective or subjective judgements about speed, height, etc., but does he note what coloured words the witness uses? By coloured words I mean those likely to carry emotional overtones. To give an extreme example here is part of a fictitious account of a contact of the "evangelical" type: the spaceman radiated a feeling of warmth, well-being, peace and calmness. His voice was soft and melodious and his expression echoed his words: 'We of the Brotherhood wish you Earthlings to cease your nuclear explosions.' " (Peter F. Sharp, B.Sc., in *The Truth: Some Suggestions for the Investigator* *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW* November/December 1963). Obviously none of these details, so prevalent in the fraudulent claim, are to be found in Padricks' story.

Mercury's Atmosphere

By H. J. Hinfelaar

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MERCURY, because of its close proximity to our Sun, has always remain some kind of enigma to our astronomers. Its distance of 36,000,000 miles from our main source of life makes it a hard-to-observe-planet for our telescope watchers. Whether right or wrong, our astronomers maintain that it keeps one side of its face towards the Sun with the result that the night side of the tiny planet was considered to be almost as cold as space—whatever temperature that may be. So much for our stalwarts at the telescope.

However, observations made this year at the Parkes radio-astronomy station in New South Wales indicate that the side of Mercury which is never warmed by the Sun has a temperature of about 60 degrees Fahrenheit. This is interpreted to mean that the planet has a slight atmosphere which carries some of the warmth from the sunlit side to the colder regions (the dark side). The existence of a slight atmosphere had earlier been found by Dr. Dollfus when he made polarisation studies at the Pic du Midi Observatory in France.

The well-known Russian astronomer, N. A. Kozyrev, who first detected leakages of gas on the Moon, and who is also known for his studies of the Venusian atmosphere, recently made a spectroscopic search for signs of an atmosphere on Mercury. He concluded that the planet had an atmosphere about 1/10,000th that of the Earth. Kozyrev believed that the Mercurian atmosphere

would consist of atomic hydrogen, which would not be heated by the Sun's direct rays but only by contact with the 600-degree heat of the rocky sunlit surface. Then, assuming that atomic hydrogen was present, he predicted that the dark side of the planet must have a temperature of about 86 degrees, a figure that is close to that later found by radio observations.

When the lunar impact rocket, Lunik II, discovered an ionosphere above the Moon, John W. Townsend, Assistant Director of Goddard Space Flight Centre, was the first to state that this could only mean that the Moon has a definite atmosphere. At that time our scientists were already aware that the first Sputnik, while orbiting above our own ionosphere, was unable to detect oxygen on a spectroscopic search.

If we are to accept Parkes' radio-astronomers statement that Mercury has a slight atmosphere, it naturally follows that it must also have an ionosphere. If it has an ionosphere, we cannot be at all sure of Kozyrev's belief that Mercury's atmosphere is made up of atomic hydrogen. After all, our own ionosphere contains atomic hydrogen, but an ionosphere is not an atmosphere and even Kozyrev's spectroscopes would be unable to pierce it in order to determine the quality of its atmosphere.

Not that we doubt that Mercury has an atmosphere, but we somehow have a feeling that it does not consist of atomic hydrogen.

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