werewolf and witch's salves. All of these substances are hallucinogenic. They also produce dry mouth, restlessness, delirium and, on occasion, toxic psychosis (all reported among users of the salve). The toxic effects on the central nervous system may last 48 hours.

So, is werewolfery simply the result of a drug overdose? I don't think so. Yes, drug effects have played a role in some cases. It seems unlikely, however, that any one explanation will suffice to explain all reported cases of lycanthropy. No doubt *some* people who claimed to be werewolves were suffering from the effects of potent hallucinatory drugs. Some were psychotic. Some may have been suffering from the effects of a psychological contagion, perhaps combined with mass poisoning by ergot.

Ergot, a fungus occasionally found on grain, contains chemicals similar to LSD. In France and England there have been several documented outbreaks of ergot poisoning during which large numbers of people in the affected areas barked and howled like wolves and foamed at the mouth. The last major outbreak occurred in Devonshire, England, in 1700.

Finally, it has been suggested that lycanthropy is really only a medical disease known as severe porphyria. This is a genetic disease. One symptom is a severe reaction to light, exposure to which produces skin lesions. These lesions may ulcerate, resulting in the destruction of cartilage or bone. The tissue destruction frequently occurs in the nose, ears and fingers. A brownish pigmentation of the facial skin may take place. The victim may become deranged, falling victim to mild hysteria, manic-depressive psychosis or delirium. Hair may grow on the face.

These are all werewolflike features but this rare disease probably accounts for few cases of werewolfery. In its most severe form this disease is extremely rare —too rare to help us explain something so widespread as the werewolf phenomenon.

Perhaps the only conclusion we can safely draw is that no single explanation accounts for all reports of werewolfery. Among the possible explanations, one or more of which may apply in any given case, for individuals' belief that they can turn into wolves are: psychosis, hallucinogenic-drug effects, religious mania, mistaken observation, coincidence, manifestations of archetypal behavior, hoax, delusional behavior brought on by fear of possession, immersion in folkloric beliefs — or perhaps, just perhaps, a bite from a werewolf!

"FATE", JANUARY 1988

UFO Crashes

Did a vehicle from another world

plunge to earth in a remote Nebraska county a century ago?

Part I

By Jerome Clark

IT MAY BE the most explosive document in the history of UFO research. Or it may be the most sophisticated hoax ufology has ever experienced. It purports to be a top-secret briefing paper prepared for President-elect Eisenhower on November 18, 1952. Its subject is an event which, if true, may alter the course of human history.

The document describes "Operation Majestic-12 . . . a TOP SECRET Research and Development/Intelligence operation responsible directly and only to the President of the United States. Operations of the project are carried out under control of the Majestic 12 (Majic-12) Group which was established by special classified executive order of President Truman on 24 September, 1947, upon recommendation of Dr. Vannevar Bush and Secretary James Forrestal."

Majestic-12, the document relates, came into being because of an event that occurred in early July 1947: the crash in New Mexico of a vehicle from another planet and the recovery of the wreckage and the remains of "four small humanlike beings [who] had apparently ejected from the craft at some point before it exploded." The investigation was given to a supersecret group headed by Dr. Bush, President Truman's science adviser. Its members included Secretary of Defense Forrestal, high-ranking military officers and prominent government-connected scientists. One of the scientists, Harvard University astronomer Donald H. Menzel, would go on to develop a reputation as a vociferous UFO debunker.

Although rumors of an MJ-12 project had circulated among ufologists for several years, the MJ-12 document came to their attention only this past May. On May 29 researcher William L. Moore, who had spent the previous 10 years investigating an alleged UFO crash which occurred in July 1947 near Corona, N. Mex., released the MJ-12 document to the UFO community and to the mainstream news media. In the coming weeks the MJ-

12 controversy would be covered in the *New York Times*, ABC-TV's *Nightline*, the *Washington Post*, *The New Republic* and any number of other news outlets not ordinarily given to respectful treatment of exotic (or even ordinary) UFO claims.

The first major press account, however, was based not on the Moore release, but on another, entirely independent surfacing of the MJ-12 document in England. British UFO researcher Timothy Good sometime earlier had been given a copy of the MJ-12 document by a source whom he refuses to identify. (Moore and his associates Stanton Friedman and Jaime Shandera state emphatically that they were *not* the source and they have no idea who was.) In late May, Good, the author of a book scheduled to be published in Great Britain in early July, *Above Top Secret: The Worldwide UFO Cover-up*, showed the document to Martin Bailey of the *London Observer*, which on May 31 reported its contents in a front-page story that would be widely reprinted throughout the world.

The *Observer* story also took note of the first stirrings of skepticism among ufologists, quoting Massachusetts-based investigator Barry Greenwood, a longtime student of official involvement in UFO study, as suggesting the document is a forgery. "A bitter debate is now likely to develop among UFO experts," Bailey wrote prophetically.

By the end of the summer the press, whose open-minded treatment of the MJ-12 controversy was drawing criticism from the *Columbia Journalism Review* and other self-styled media watchdogs, responded with an almost audible sigh of relief to an August 20 press release by the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, which charged, in the words of chairman Paul Kurtz, "This represents one of the most deliberate acts of deception ever perpetrated against the news media and the public." CSICOP's release was reported in an August 25 Reuters story which summarized the debunkers' claims without contacting Moore, Friedman and Shandera for their response. This deviation from standard journalistic practice seemed indicative of the media's desire to drop, with no further ado, what had become an uncomfortably hot potato.

In fact, as Moore and Friedman demonstrated in a point-by-point refutation of the debunkers' charges, the MJ-12 issue remains unresolved. Yet, even as they were winning the argument in the short term, Moore and Friedman faced the daunting task of establishing the document's authenticity. By fall they had only some intriguing circumstantial evidence which fell far short of proof.

Real or bogus, the document was a long time coming. It was only the latest (although certainly the most sensational) development in a story whose antecedents go back 100 years.

* * *

THE FIRST spaceship to crash-land on American soil met its fate on June 6, 1884, in remote, sparsely-populated Dundy County in south-central Nebraska. The crash was witnessed by cowboys engaged in a roundup.

As the *Nebraska Nugget*, a weekly published in Holdrege over 100 miles away, reported shortly thereafter, the cowboys were alerted by a "terrifying whirring noise over their heads." When they looked up, they saw a blazing object plunging earthward until it fell out of sight on the other side of a bank.

On their way to the impact site the cowboys found a trail of "fragments of cog-wheels and other pieces of machinery lying on the ground . . . glowing with heat so intense as to scorch the grass for a long distance around each fragment and make it impossible for one to approach it."

One of the cowboys, Alf Williamson, succumbed to the intense heat and fell to the ground, his face blistered and his hair "singed to a crisp."

After retrieving their injured comrade, the group retreated along the trail the craft left in its wake. The *Nugget*'s anonymous correspondent reported, "The sand was fused to an unknown depth over a space of 20 feet wide by 80 feet long, and the melted stuff was still bubbling and hissing. Between this and the final resting place there were several other like spots where it had come in contact with the ground, but none so well marked."

The cowboys left to secure medical help for the unconscious Williamson. Soon, according to the *Nugget*, local people were flocking to the scene. As night fell the ship was still glowing.

But by the next morning, when a party led by the district brand inspector, E. W. Rawlins, arrived on the scene, "the smaller portions of the vast machinery had cooled so that they could be approached, but not handled. One piece that looked like the blade of a propeller screw, of a metal in appearance like brass, about 16 inches wide, three inches thick and 3½ feet long, was picked up on a spade. It would not weigh more than five pounds, but appeared as strong and compact as any metal. A fragment of a wheel with a milled rim, apparently having a diameter of seven or eight feet, was also picked up. It seemed to be of the same material and had the same remarkable lightness.

"The aerolite, or whatever it is, seems to be about 50 or 60 feet long, cylindrical, and about 10 or 12 feet in diameter."

This remarkable story was reprinted in other Nebraska news-

papers. A follow-up account, datelined Benkelman (the Dundy County seat) and headlined "THE MAGICAL METEOR/ It Dissolves Like a Drop of Dew Before the Morning Sun/ The Most Mysterious Element of the Strange Phenomenon," related that as the anonymous reporter and a dozen other persons watched in amazement, the ship's remains vanished in a blinding rainstorm.

Only the most gullible readers could have missed the tongue-in-cheek reference to the object's dissolving "like a spoonful of salt" — the substance with which, the writer is slyly hinting, we should take his story. For those who didn't yet get the joke, the writer avers that, except for the small detail that Williamson was permanently blinded, "otherwise he does not appear to be seriously injured."

The first — and ostensibly more serious — of the two 1884 accounts was rediscovered in the early 1960's and led both the *Omaha Herald* and University of Nebraska folklorist Roger Welsch to conduct inquiries to determine if any of Dundy County's older citizens recalled such an event. In 1985, not knowing of the subsequent newspaper account in which the hoaxer all but confessed, I interviewed several lifelong residents of the area. They were able to confirm that the individuals mentioned in the account existed but only one of them, 88-year-old Ida Toler of Benkelman, had heard the crash story.

Mrs. Toler, the president of the county historical society, told me her father had worked on the property (which belonged to rancher John Ellis, allegedly one of the witnesses) where the crash supposedly had occurred.

"I grew up hearing pioneer stories but never did I hear this one until my son sent it to me in 1964 or 1965," she said. She spoke with a number of older people in the area "but I could never find anyone who had ever heard of it." Neither could Welsch when he conducted his own investigation.

* * *

THE DUNDY County story is not the only 19th-Century tale of a crashed spaceship. The most famous of them is the story of the Martian craft that crashed into Judge Proctor's windmill on April 17, 1897, in Aurora, Tex.

The report appeared in the April 19 issue of the *Dallas Morning Post*, in the midst of a month-long flurry of excitement about alleged sightings of mysterious "airships." In retrospect it is difficult to determine how much truth, if any, lies in these reports, although there is good evidence that the more outlandish of them — those describing landings and encounters with human and nonhuman occupants — were tall tales concocted by newspaper editors and journalists whose motive

was to amaze or amuse readers and to boost circulation.

According to the *Post* account (datelined Aurora, a village 30 miles north of Fort Worth in Wise County, and by-lined S. E. Haydon), at 6:00 A.M. on the 17th early risers saw "the airship which has been sailing through the country" as it flew north across town. It was traveling so close to the ground that observers thought it might be experiencing mechanical difficulty.

"It sailed gradually over the public square, and when it reached the north part of town collided with the tower of Judge Proctor's windmill and went to pieces with a terrific explosion," the *Post* stated, "scattering debris over several acres of ground, wrecking the windmill and tower and destroying the judge's flower garden."

In the wreckage searchers found the "badly disfigured" body of a being whom one T. J. Weems, identified as the "United States signal service officer at this place and an authority on astronomy," declared to be a "native of the planet Mars." Papers found with the body contained undecipherable "hieroglyphics."

Haydon's account continues, "The ship was too badly wrecked to form any conclusion as to its construction or motive power. It was built of an unknown metal, resembling somewhat a mixture of aluminum and silver, and it must have weighed several tons.

"The town is full of people today who are viewing the wreck and gathering specimens of the strange metal from the debris. The pilot's funeral will take place at noon tomorrow."

The Aurora story is only one of many fantastic airship tales getting straight-faced treatment in the Texas press that month and it was quickly forgotten. The next mention of it came nearly 70 years later, when Houston Post; reporter Frank Masquelette rediscovered it while doing research for a series of stories on the 1897 airship scare. Through the editor of the *Wise County Messenger* Masquelette was able to verify that a Judge J. S. Proctor had lived in Aurora in 1897.

Soon afterwards ufologists descended on Aurora. They quickly concluded, after learning that none of the older residents remembered such an event, that the tale was a hoax.

That would have been that if the story had not been revived once more, this time in 1973, by *Dallas Times Herald* aviation writer Bill Case, and International UFO Bureau director Hayden Hewes. In a March 25 *Herald* article Case reported that Hewes had located the crash site. Case recounted the incident, inserting errors in date and time and incorporating material from other airship reports. Area

newspapers picked up Case's version of the story and soon investigators, reporters and curiosity-seekers were bedeviling the locals with questions.

In May a self-described treasure-hunter named Frank Kelley appeared in Aurora and declared that a metal detector gave the same readings at a certain grave in the town cemetery as it did at the crash site. Metal fragments were unearthed at the site and sent out for analysis. That same month a local man who till then had refused all interviews said he knew of the crash from firsthand experience: shortly after the incident his father had taken him to the site and shown him the wreckage. He said, however, that he remembered nothing about a body. Except for that one detail, his account repeated detail for detail, error for error, the widely-published Case version.

Meanwhile Hewes, convinced that he had reason to believe an extraterrestrial being was buried where the metal was found, showed up in Aurora on a Sunday morning determined to dig — only to be thwarted by angry townspeople who armed themselves and kept him from entering the cemetery. The cemetery association was able to prove the plot belonged to the Carr family.

Stung by criticism from townspeople and fellow ufologists, Hewes withdrew from the case and pronounced the incident a hoax. The investigation was picked up by the Texas-based Mutual UFO Network. Two nonagenarian former residents of Aurora led MUFON's investigators to a heretofore-unnoticed grave site, near the edge of the cemetery. Under the limb of a gnarled oak tree was a peculiar circular grave with a rough stone on which the outline of a cigar-shaped object with portholes was crudely inscribed.

Then two other local persons claimed to recall the crash. One, a 91-year-old woman, recalled that her parents had told her about the incident. She claimed she had forgotten about it until the recent spate of newspaper articles jogged her memory. A 98-year-old man from a nearby town said he had heard about the crash from two friends who had seen the wreckage.

The analysis of the metal revealed it to be an aluminum alloy used during the 1920's to make cookware. Both the cemetery association and MUFON's Earl Watts concluded that the metal had been planted at the site.

The controversy created a furor within the community, splitting it between those who favored further investigation and those who opposed it. The latter held that the grave contained the body of a victim of a turn-of-the-century spotted-fever epidemic and that to exhume it would be to bring back the dis-

ease. Brawley Oates, the man who owned the property on which the crash supposedly occurred, reported that he was getting calls from individuals who claimed to be associated with the army or the CIA and who were expressing interest in the metal fragments and the occupant of the grave.

Eventually the district court blocked the exhumation effort. The affair was over, probably forever.

In the late 1960's Wise County historian Etta Pegues looked into the story. She found that Judge Proctor had no windmill and that T. J. Weems was not a signal service officer but a blacksmith. Among the old-timers Pegues interviewed was Mrs. Robbie Hanson who declared, "It was a hoax. I was in school that day and nothing happened."

Moreover, Pegues wrote, if the "Aurora story had been factual rather than fiction Cliff D. Cates would have included it in his *Pioneer History of Wise County* which he published in 1907. It would have sold him a billion copies. Also, if it had been true, Harold R. Bost would have included it in his *Saga of Aurora*. It would have been the highlight of his theme. But neither men [sic] mentioned it because it had been forgotten as any other piece of fiction would have been forgotten."

Pegues believed that Haydon concocted the story to draw attention to Aurora and to revive its fortunes. During the 1890's the town, established in 1873, had rapidly declined after the railroad passed it by, a disease epidemic killed or drove away many residents, a fire destroyed the western half of town and the boll weevil wiped out the cotton industry.

The Aurora story is not without loose ends. A determined believer could argue that the old-timers who said they remembered a crash deserve to be taken seriously. After all, UFO debunkers and proponents alike have taken at face value a 93-year-old woman's testimony, delivered 79 years after the fact, that one day in April 1897 she overheard a conversation that led her to believe the famous LeRoy, Kans., calfnapping-by-airship story was a hoax.* And the business about the grave seems puzzling, although perhaps if we knew more about the circumstances of its rediscovery it would be less so.

On the whole, however, whatever "evidence" there is for the crash's having occurred outside S. E. Haydon's imagination is slim indeed when compared to the evidence against it. Starting with the nonexistence of the windmill with which the ship is supposed to have collided and the false description of T. J. Weems' credentials, we have also to consider the absence of

*See my "The Great Airship Hoax," February 1977 FATE.

reports of this extraordinary event from area histories written only a few years later.

Furthermore, a reading of other airship reports from the *Dallas Morning News* gives the game away. The paper was treating the matter as a hilarious joke, although, in the manner of the telling of any good tall tale, the teller pretends he is serious.

For example, one report, which appeared one day before the Aurora story was featured, is of a Kaufman County airship which resembled a "Chinese flying dragon . . . a monster breathing red fire through its nostrils. . . . The legs were the propellers. . . ." The same issue of the *News* reports that a Farmersville "eye witness," a "Mr. Hildreth," saw "three men in the ship and . . . heard them singing 'Nearer My God to Thee' and . . . distributing temperance tracts." A few paragraphs later we read of a Waxahachie airship whose "machinery seemed to be worked by a woman who was running a patent [sic] resembling a sewing machine."

These yarns, all from the area of north-central Texas surrounding Dallas-Fort Worth, give us some sense of the way in which airship hysteria unleashed the imaginations of people still in the thrall of the tall-tale traditions of the Western frontier. There is no evidence that the *Morning Post*'s readers believed for a moment that a Martian spaceship plowed into Judge Proctor's windmill. Apparently it was only their humorless descendants who were slow to get the joke.

This is Part I of a three-part article.

★

I HAVE A GUN. . . .

IN FEBRUARY 1986, while passing the time before going on a date, an unemployed man named David Morris, 21, of Beckenham, Kent, England, penned a note reading, "I have got a gun in my pocket and I'll shoot it off unless you hand over the money." He took the note with him to three shops in the West Croydon district of London.

At the first place, a drugstore, the clerk, a young woman, rejected the note because she thought it contained an obscene suggestion. Morris left and went next door to a hardware store, where an Asian assistant looked blankly at the note and informed Morris that he couldn't read English. At a fast-food restaurant the person behind the counter apologized when Morris handed him the note. He couldn't read without his glasses, he explained.

When Morris was arrested soon afterwards, he told police, "I've been a twit. . . . I only pretended to have a gun." He was put on probation for two years.

"FATE", JANUARY 1988

UFO CRASHES

Is the U.S. government hiding the greatest secret of all:
the wreckage of alien spacecraft and the bodies of their occupants?

Part II

By Jerome Clark

MRS. G. knew the Ultimate Secret.

She learned it, as others have before and since, while working at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. Possessed of a high security clearance, she was given the task of cataloging all incoming UFO material. She processed about 1000 items, seeing to it that they were photographed and tagged. Some of these items were from the interior of a crashed UFO which had been brought to the base.

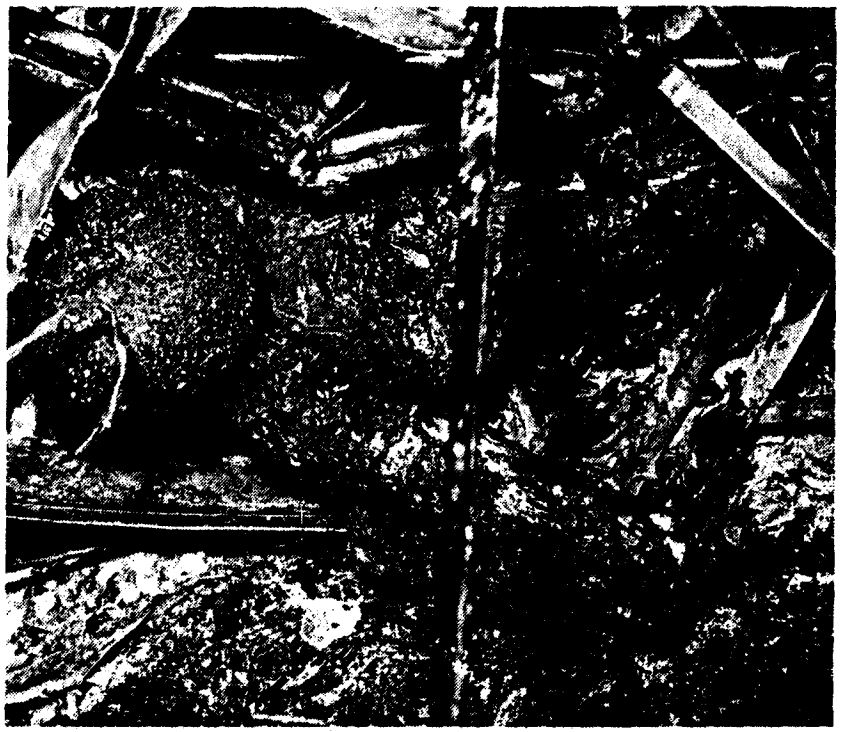
She also saw two bodies carried on a cart from one room to the next. The bodies, preserved in chemicals, were of generally human appearance, although they were only four or five feet tall and had larger-than-normal heads and slanted eyes. She was not told how long the bodies had been at the base.

In 1959 Mrs. G. retired because of ill health. Before she died, she told Charles Wilhelm, a teenage UFO buff who did yard work for her, what she had seen. "Uncle Sam can't do anything to me once I'm in my grave," she said.

A certain medical scientist, whose identity is known only to ufologist Leonard H. Stringfield, also knows the Ultimate Secret. He knows it because he has performed autopsies on dead humanoids "held," Stringfield reports, "in cryogenic preservation at Wright-Patterson AFB and at certain medical institutions in the USA." The scientist says the entities are four feet tall and gray-skinned. Their heads are large and hairless, with slanted eyes and slit-like mouths. Their bodies are thin. They look so much alike that they could have been formed in the same mold.

In the mid-1960's Sen. Barry Goldwater, a major general in the air force reserve, sought direct access to the Ultimate Secret. When he tried to get clearance to enter the room at Wright-Patterson where, as persistent rumor had it, the air force stored UFO wreckage and bodies, "I was understandably denied this request," he wrote an inquirer on March 28, 1975. "It is still classified above Top Secret."

The story of the Ultimate Secret has circulated for 40 years. It usually goes like this:



Perpetrator of ghoulish hoax claimed this picture depicted body of extraterrestrial in UFO wreckage. Careful observers, noting aviator glasses near figure's face, correctly deduced this was a human pilot.

In the late 1940's and early 1950's — and perhaps later — several flying saucers crashed in the Southwestern United States. The remains, which included the bodies of gray-skinned humanoid beings, were retrieved by government and military agencies. The material was taken for study to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and subsequently some of it was sent elsewhere. The entire matter is highly classified and only a small number of individuals within the government know the whole story. The secrecy has been maintained both to prevent panic and to keep the Russians from knowing that we have access to extraterrestrial technology. At the appropriate time the government will release the information.

Is this fantastic story true? Or is it simply a modern legend — the ufological equivalent of the apoc-

ryphal tale of alligators in New York City sewers?

In this and the next issue of FATE we'll look at the evidence and see if we can arrive at an answer.

* * *

AS FRANK SCULLY told it, what happened was this:

On March 25, 1948, a flying saucer crashed on a rocky plateau east of Aztec, N. Mex. When air force investigators and government scientists arrived on the scene, they crawled through a broken porthole and came upon the bodies of 16 small humanlike beings dressed in "the style of 1890." Their skin was charred a dark chocolate color, apparently as a result of the rush of terrestrial air through the shattered window.

After a thorough study the scientists concluded that the vehicle "probably flew on magnetic lines of force." It was, they decided, most likely from Venus "because," Scully was told by his source, the pseudonymous "Dr. Gee," who said he had participated in the recovery operation, "they would probably be three or four times as large as human beings on this planet, and since the people on the grounded disc ship ranged in height from 36 to 42 inches, that . . . ruled out Mars." The Venusians were human in every respect except for their size and apparent immunity to tooth decay.

Soon afterwards a crash occurred in Arizona and 16 bodies were taken from the wreckage. A third spaceship went down near Phoenix, leaving two dead occupants. All three craft had dimensions divisible by nine.

Scully first reported this story in his *Weekly Variety* column on October 12, 1949. His sources were Silas Newton and Leo GeBauer (also known as "Dr. Gee") who represented themselves respectively as a Texas oilman and a government scientist specializing in magnetics, but who in fact were veteran confidence men. Scully, honest but credulous, neither questioned their testimony nor sought independent verification of it before writing a best-selling book, *Behind the Flying Saucers* (1950), which repeated these wild claims.

The hoax was exposed in 1952 in a famous *True* article by J.P. Cahn who concluded that the flying-saucer story was a ruse to attract the attention of potential investors in a bogus oil-detection device allegedly linked to extraterrestrial technology. Years later, in the early 1980's, William L. Moore conducted an exhaustive investigation of the hoax, uncovering a great deal of additional information.

Moore especially wanted to know what the sources for Newton and GeBauer's crashed-saucer story were. Had the two based the Aztec tale on an allegedly real event which had taken place elsewhere? Rumors of recoveries of crashed discs were

circulating as early as 1947, in fact within two weeks of Kenneth Arnold's June 24 sighting ushering in the UFO age.

Moore discovered that Newton and GeBauer took the clue from a publicity stunt engineered by a flamboyant filmmaker named Mikel Conrad. In August 1949 Conrad, who was about to release a B picture entitled *The Flying Saucer*, declared that the spaceship scenes in the film were of an actual saucer in government captivity. The allegations sparked an uproar, even more so after Conrad produced an "FBI agent" to verify the story. Even Conrad's press agents were fooled, if only temporarily. When they determined that the "agent" was an actor, they resigned, publicly apologizing for their unwitting role in the scam. Meanwhile the air force launched its own investigation. When confronted by Air Force Office of Special Investigations officer James B. Shiley, Conrad confessed that he had concocted the tale to promote the movie.

Newton, who followed the controversy in the Los Angeles newspapers, knew too of a recent report by two Death Valley prospectors who allegedly saw a UFO spin out of control and crash into a sand dune. Two humanoid occupants emerged and fled the scene, with the prospectors in hot pursuit. After giving up the chase, the miners returned to the site of the crash, only to discover that the craft was no longer there.

When Newton told this story to Scully, he changed its location to "near Phoenix, Ariz.," and turned the prospectors into "scientists" who had forced the UFO down using sophisticated instrumentation. He also said he had the story from the "scientists" personally.

There seems no doubt that Scully was a victim, not a perpetrator, of the hoax. At the same time, however, there is no reason to believe his protestation that "Dr. Gee" was a composite of "eight men who had given me pieces of the story." And his response to Cahn's charges, resorting to the traditional ploy of the loser in an argument, amounted to little more than an ad-hominem attack on the reporter's character and a studied avoidance of any substantive issues.

In late 1953 Newton and GeBauer went on trial in Denver for conspiracy to commit confidence crime. They were given suspended sentences and ordered to make restitution to investors. In February 1955 Newton was back in court, this time for selling $15,000 in worthless securities in a Utah uranium claim.

Moore, who describes Newton as "the type of character best avoided by anyone with money in his pocket," found that Newton's legal troubles went back at least as far as 1928. When he died in Los Angeles in 1972, Moore writes (*1985*

MUFON Symposium Proceedings), "there were no fewer than 140 claims filed against his estate by individuals who in most instances claimed Newton had 'borrowed' money from them in order to exploit a variety of oil or mining claims. Numerous others inquired, but when they discovered that Newton's estate totaled only about $16,000 (and that based mostly on arbitrary valuations of an assortment of mining leases), they did not pursue the matter.

"The total of the claims that were filed exceeded $1,350,000.00, with many of the accompanying affidavits alleging salted mining claims or oil having been pumped into the ground by night in order to be pumped back out by day for the benefit of investors.

"As late as 1970, he was under indictment in Los Angeles on two counts of grand theft, and civil lawsuits came and went with considerable regularity."

It is hardly surprising that nobody around Aztec has any memory of a UFO crash, although at various times local reporters and law-enforcement officials have searched for evidence to support the Scully-Newton-GeBauer story. According to Moore, Aztec, a town of 5000 people in northwestern New Mexico, was chosen as the location of the tale because in August 1949, just as the UFO hoax was being generated, Newton sent GeBauer there — and specifically, according to the recollection of GeBauer's widow, to a "canyon east of town" (probably Hart Canyon, the alleged site of the crash) where he was to demonstrate the oil-detecting device for the locals.

The Aztec hoax is revived periodically. In 1974 Robert Spencer Carr, a retired University of South Florida professor of mass communications, got national publicity when he retold the tale, with some embellishments. In 1987 William S. Steinman and Wendelle C. Stevens released a 625-page book entitled *UFO Crash at Aztec* which draws on speculation, rumor, unnamed informants and unbridled paranoia to defend and elaborate on the original story. In the Steinman-Stevens version, Newton and GeBauer were honorable men whose good names were destroyed by an unscrupulous journalist and by a sinister secret government agency which "was determined . . . to set an example for anybody else who might decide to divulge information concerning this very sensitive subject to the public, and to divert public attention completely away from the story of crashed saucers and little bodies."

Whether by design or not, the discrediting of the Aztec story insured that reports of crashed UFOs and recovered bodies did not receive a polite hearing from ufologists for a long time to come. Such reports did not figure in popular speculations about a government UFO cover-up. Donald Keyhoe, who in influential books such as *The Flying Saucer Conspiracy* (1955) and *Flying Saucers: Top Secret* (1960) argued that the air force knew UFOs to be extraterrestrial but was hiding that fact from the American public, did not use crashed-disc stories to advance his case. In the late 1950's and early 1960's, when Keyhoe directed the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena, which lobbied for Congressional hearings on the cover-up, he and NICAP paid little attention to such claims, simply filing those that came their way while concentrating their attention on ostensibly more credible reports of suppressed photographs, films, radar records and other evidence.

* * *

YET, EVEN AS mainstream ufologists ignored them, rumors of crashed discs maintained a life of their own and it was practically impossible for anyone interested in UFOs not to hear them from time to time. Curiously, most of the rumors did not appear to be based on the Scully story, which in many ways is atypical.

Scully's little men, for example, were entirely human; their only truly unusual feature was their short height. Few of the other accounts contained references to 1890-style clothing, Venus, magnetic propulsion or dimensions divisible by nine.

Except for the placing of the crash in the Southwest, by and large the other stories were different. The humanoids allegedly seen at the crash site or at their subsequent resting place at Wright-Patterson AFB were nearly always described as gray-skinned humanoids with slanted eyes, slitlike mouths and large heads. Similar beings had been reported by apparently sincere witnesses in close-encounter cases which ufologists were willing to take seriously, but when the same entities appeared in pickle jars — well, that was another story, best ignored.

In fact, the stories were not particularly impressive. Most were not firsthand. Most, like folktales everywhere, happened to somebody somebody knew. When informants claimed to be speaking from direct experience, they had no one else to substantiate their claims. Furthermore, if it was difficult to believe in one crashed UFO, it was impossible to believe in dozens — and the many on-site observations seemed all to refer to separate events. Could even the most gullible believe in *dozens* of crashed UFOs — when not one reasonably-documented case had yet to come to light?

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LEN STRINGFIELD of Cincinnati, Ohio, had been involved in UFO investigation since 1950. Between 1954 and 1957 he edited an excellent newsletter, *C.R.I.F.O.*

Orbit. In September 1955 the Air Defense Command approached him and asked if he would screen the UFO reports he received and send on the best ones. He was also told that the Ground Observer Corps in his area had been instructed to forward reports to him for his evaluation. The ADC gave Stringfield a telephone code number which would connect him with the command filter center.

Stringfield agreed to cooperate but was warned that the cooperation would go only one way. An officer told him, "My only request is that you *not ask any questions*."

It was clear from the beginning that the air force was more interested in UFOs than it was letting on and that, moreover, it was hiding some of what it knew. Stringfield was particularly struck by an incident which occurred late in August 1955, when he was alerted to an imminent attempt by air national guard jets to intercept UFOs that were being tracked by radar between Columbus and Cincinnati. Ground Observer Corps personnel over a 37-mile stretch from eastern Ohio to western Kentucky were watching the objects (fast-moving, brilliant white discs) from the ground and from his own location Stringfield could hear the jets, although he could not see them because of clouds. He learned the next day that at least two radars, one at Lockbourne AFB, the other at the Greater Cincinnati Airport, had tracked the objects. By any standard this was an extraordinarily evidential UFO case.

But when a reporter for the *Cincinnati Times Star* called Wright-Patterson (home of the air force's Project Blue Book), a spokesman denied that the incident had taken place.

As the years passed, Stringfield kept this and similar experiences in mind. He did not doubt that a cover-up existed; he did, however, begin to think that maybe what was being covered up involved matters even more interesting than well-documented radar-visual cases. In time he started quietly to rethink the crashed-disc story.

In 1977 he published *Situation Red, The UFO Siege!*, which sought to revive both the extraterrestrial hypothesis of UFO origin (a notion that had largely fallen out of favor among ufologists) and the idea of the cover-up (also judged passé). In doing so, he marshaled the usual evidence familiar to readers of Keyhoe's books (and of Stringfield's old *Orbit*) but he also devoted 10 pages to crashed-disc stories.

One of them concerned a Presbyterian minister who related that when he was a boy, he and his father, also a minister, were visiting Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry when they got lost in a labyrinth of corridors. Trying to find an exit, they entered a room

with a large, glass-covered case. Inside the case they were startled to see a number of preserved bodies of small humanoid beings. At that moment they were discovered and the father was taken into another room, where he was detained and forced to sign papers swearing him to silence.

Stringfield had the story second-hand, from another individual to whom the minister had communicated it, and so it didn't amount to much as evidence. Of course there was no way to prove it *wasn't* true, either. But it did seem more than a little unlikely that someone would come upon the Ultimate Secret in a public facility such as the Museum of Science and Industry.

Somewhat more impressive was the story of the pseudonymous "Fritz Werner," identified as a former engineer at Wright-Patterson. Werner swore in an affidavit signed in the presence of Massachusetts ufologist Raymond Fowler that "during a special assignment with the U.S. Air Force on May 21, 1953, I assisted in the investigation of a crashed unknown object in the vicinity of Kingman, Ariz." He further stated, "A tent pitched near the object sheltered the dead remains of the only occupant of the craft. It was about four feet tall, dark brown complexion, and had two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, and a small round mouth."

Fowler was shown an old diary entry dated May 20, 1953, indicating that the next day he was to go on a "special job." The next day he wrote he had been on a "job I can't write or talk about." Fowler thought the paper on which this was recorded looked "aged." When he interviewed former employers, he was told that Werner was well regarded as a "highly competent and moral individual."

On the other hand, Fowler noted, he had first heard of the story after Werner told a freely-embellished version of it to a group of schoolchildren. Fowler found other contradictions as well, although he thought that they might be "memory lapses."

Perhaps. But William Moore, who has spent the last decade investigating crash stories full-time, went to Kingman in 1982, examined newspaper accounts from the period and interviewed long-time residents, including retired law-enforcement officers, and concluded the alleged crash never happened. In my opinion the Werner story is one of the very few that can be traced back to the Scully hoax. Werner's account is identical in at least five significant details with the tall tale Newton and GeBauer told:

(1) Two of Scully's discs crash-landed near proving grounds in the Southwest. So did Werner's saucer.

(2) Scully writes of a case in which researchers were dispatched from Phoenix to study the crashed

vehicle. So were the specialists in the Werner account.

(3) Scully's saucers, like the one Werner reports, were composed of something resembling aluminum.

(4) The interior of one of Scully's craft consisted of two "bucket seats" in front of an instrument panel. Inside Werner's were two "swivel seats" in front of "instruments and displays."

(5) The skin of Scully's ufonauts was "charred to a very dark chocolate color... [apparently] as a result of [terrestrial] air rushing through that broken porthole window." Werner's humanoid's skin was "dark brown. This may have been caused by exposure to our atmosphere."

None of this is sufficient to prove that Werner's account is false but it is surely enough to raise doubts. Defenders counter that Werner, who was taken to the site blindfolded, was not *certain* the location was Kingman; he only thought it was. They can also point to a story told by a retired air force metallurgist, a "Major Daly," who claimed he was taken blindfolded to a "hot and sandy" location where he saw a crashed saucer and for two days analyzed metal samples from it. This informant asserted the incident happened in April 1953, just a month before Werner's similar supposed experience. Stringfield suggests "it is possible that Daly used the wrong month."

Of course. On the other hand, as we have seen, Werner's story is open to question and Daly's claim has never been investigated. Unless substantial new evidence emerges, there is no reason to take the stories seriously. Extraordinary claims such as these require rather better evidence.

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THE COVERAGE of crashed-disc stories in his book put Stringfield on the receiving end of many others and on July 29, 1978, at a conference of the Mutual UFO Network (held, ironically, in Dayton, Ohio, home of Wright-Patterson), he declared the crashed-disc question to be a serious one. He went on to cite 22 "abstracts" summarizing claims made by various sources, most of them anonymous.

Even the skeptics (I was one, and not alone) found the material fascinating. It was, however, only suggestive at best and depended, since so many of the informants were anonymous, on the listener's confidence in Stringfield's ability to tell the difference between a sincere person and a liar. Mostly Stringfield provided insufficient information for investigators to conduct their own inquiries. He explained that this was because many of his informants sought no publicity for fear of official retribution and did not want anybody to be able to trace them.

The most dramatic moment came when Stringfield played a tape recording of a young man's account of his experience at Fort Riley, Kansas. Stringfield called him only "AK," although untypically his full name was known to other ufologists — which, as it turned out, would lead to the undoing of the case.

AK said that at 2:00 A.M. one night in November 1965 (although later, when investigators found AK had left the service five months earlier, he changed the year to 1964) he was taken from guard duty at the motor pool and driven, with three other enlisted men, to a remote area of the base. There they were put into the back of a 10-ton truck and driven to another site, where they met three officers. One was Fort Riley's commanding officer who personally handed each of them a full clip of M-14 ammunition and indelicately informed them that their private parts would be shot off if they talked about what they were about to see.

A few minutes later, after a short hike, the soldiers came to an area where a large oval object rested.

"An army chopper was flying above the object and shining a powerful light on it," AK reported. "At times the chopper would fly a short distance away and light up the area away from the object. The object I guarded was . . . 35 to 48 feet in diameter, had a fin on the end and an exhaust port, or some kind of hole below the fin. It also had a row of squares all around its rim.... The object was completely dead and never moved during the 2½ hours that we guarded it. I can only tell you that this was no known object of the U.S. Army. I had read little about UFOs until after that happened; since that date I have read many books on the subject and know that the object I guarded that morning in Fort Riley was truly something out of this world!"

Soon after he told his marvelous tale to the MUFON audience, AK contacted a publicity agent and made the rounds of radio talk shows. He also claimed at one point that mysterious men were calling him and warning him to keep silent, although later he would say the "threats" had nothing to do with either him or the supposed UFO incident.

Investigator Todd Zechel located Gen. Johnathon O. Seaman, who was the commander at Fort Riley during AK's tour of duty there. AK claimed it had been he who handed him the ammunition and delivered the threats. Over the phone Zechel identified himself as one of those who guarded the flying saucer 10 years earlier. One of the other guards was talking, Zechel said, and now reporters were pressuring him to tell what he knew. What should he do?

Seaman responded politely, although his manner indicated he