

Building 18 at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

DAVID I. ANDERSEN

Aliens

FROM/1-G

reaching their knees. They also are emaciated and their sexual organs are atrophied. Nikon begins to have second thoughts about that high-five thing.

Could we maybe talk to the doctor, I ask Stringfield. No, he's sworn never to reveal his sources, most of whom have "disappeared."

Oh great, I tell him. We ask for the witnesses, and he says they're gone.

If it's all a hoax, Nikon and I determine, it's pretty elaborate. About three years ago, Jaime Shandera, a California television news producer working with author Moore, received a copy of a purported memo from a mysterious government group known as Majestic 12 — MJ 12 for short.

The memo, which was a briefing on UFOs directed to then-President-elect Dwight D. Eisenhower, refers to the Roswell incident and the transfer of aliens to Wright-Pat.

"All dates on the document check out," Shandera has told me from his Los Angeles home. "All individuals listed tie in with one another."

Is this MJ 12 business baloney? The CIA told ABC's "Nightline" it was just that in a broadcast June 24. But Shandera is sure he's onto something.

Nikon and I say goodbye to Stringfield. We plan to travel to Wright-Pat the next day.

At dinner that night, we meet a waitress who admits to having dated aliens (I'm not kidding). We leave her a big tip.

In the morning, Nikon glides the Adventure-Mobile to a visitors' gate at Wright-Patterson. We demand to see Building 18, where the aliens allegedly

'We investigated for 22 years. It's ridiculous to say the government possesses flying saucers. We can't hide the Iran-contra thing; you think we could hide this?'

Lt. Tim Cothrel

were kept iced down like the day's catch. We are sure we'll be thrown out.

Instead, a crewcut public relations officer pulls up in a 1966 drop-top, white Bonnevilles with fuzzy dice on the rear-view mirror and empty Mountain Dew cans in the front seat, and he says the strangest thing Nikon and I have heard during this adventure:

"Follow me."

Well, all right, let's go boogie with spacemen! We drive behind Lt. Tim Cothrel along air base roadways. Nice golf courses, Nikon notices. We imagine aliens and officers lounging in a 19th hole clubhouse. Perhaps we've been at this too long.

We reach the building. "If we were gonna collect UFOs," Cothrel tells me, "this would be the place. We do high-tech research and development here. There are some parts of the building almost no one is allowed into."

So, where are the little guys, huh? Nikon readies his camera for the moment of revelation.

"Oh, no," Cothrel laughs. "We investigated for 22 years. It's ridiculous to say the government possesses flying saucers. We can't hide the Iran-contra thing; you think we could hide this?"

Of course, you wouldn't know about what happened here 40 years ago, Lieutenant,

when the first aliens supposedly were brought in.

"True," he answers. "I just pray we're correct. Otherwise, I've been lying to a lot of people. Actually, it is a fun story. I'd love to believe it's true. And we have 8,000 acres and 4,000 buildings, so there's no way to prove we don't have aliens here. So this story'll go on forever. It's got legs."

We ask to enter the building. UFO lore holds that former Sen. Barry Goldwater of Arizona once tried the same thing, but the base commander prevented him. The place is off limits to civilians.

Besides, Cothrel gives us a look that says the armed guards would Swiss-cheese us in a heartbeat if we so much as open Building 18's front door. Nikon and I instantly decide it makes little sense to die for The Plain Dealer. We leave Wright-Pat and head back north.

As we ride, Nikon and I realize something significant: We have discovered nothing.

Sure, we talked to some interesting people and heard a bunch of swell stories, but where's the cosmic beef, you know?

That's precisely the problem with this UFO stuff. You learn all these titillating details that *might be* plausible, then you ask for proof and the UFO-logists say, well, the government's got it. Go to the government, and bureaucrats laugh in your face.

That's why Nikon and I decided to cut out the middlemen and make a straight pitch: If there are any aliens around who managed not to die in a fiery collision with Earth, give us a jingle at The PD.

We'd be happy to print your message to world leaders in the Living section, then maybe take you out for beers in the Flats. It's not Miami, but it beats getting dissected by internists.

Next week: In Search of Bigfoot.

We join our heroes spaced out in Ohio

Action! Adventure! Safe sex! The stories of Cuyahoga Jones and his partner, Nikon Dave, explode before you like in a movie, only it's not a movie because it's the Sunday paper. But that's not important now.

Anyway, thrill with us as we present exclusively the daring exploits of that Roving Rogue of the Rust Belt, Cuyahoga Jones, renowned peregrinator (Ha! Ha! Look it up!) and alter-ego of a quiet, bespectacled Plain Dealer reporter. CJ loves danger, the unknown and those little free mints they keep in bowls near cash registers in restaurants.

Jones and partner/photographer Nikon Dave — a man of few words but many company-supplied cameras — traveled 1,200 miles throughout Ohio and the Lake Erie coastal towns of New York to bring you, the deserving reader, three stories about Startling But True Phenomena, which will appear in this space on consecutive Sundays.

In our first chapter, Cuyahoga goes in search of aliens. For years, Ohio has played a significant UFO role. The Air Force's primary investigation of UFOs was centered at a Dayton air base. And several people have said the Air Force has stored alien bodies there.

Sound like fun? Well, let's get rolling, as Cuyahoga Jones travels to southwestern Ohio to find the aliens. His report follows.

By **ALFRED LUBRANO**

STAFF WRITER

ON THE ROAD SOMEWHERE IN OHIO

Nikon Dave wheels the blue Adventure-Mobile south on Interstate 71, toward the Ohio River and a date with aliens from outer space.

Supposedly, 12 alien crafts have crashed to earth over the last 40 years. UFO mavens insist that the bodies of the aliens were taken to an Ohio air base, where they were kept on ice.

"Aliens on ice," I say to no one in particular. My overworked imagination provides an ugly picture: a Dorothy Hamill extravaganza with 250 European and Central American immigrants on skates.

I look out the window. Ohio south of Cleveland is as flat as the electronic curve measuring brain-wave activity among the spectators at a tractor pull. Great green acres of horizon-bumping farmland blur on each side of Nikon's stylish, whizzing vehicle.

Perhaps that is why the aliens come, I

decide. Maybe the state looks like a big runway from the sky.

Ohio — specifically central and southern Ohio — has long been associated with UFOs and aliens. Among UFO cognoscenti, it's known as a UFO corridor, through which numerous unidentified objects have flown.

As Nikon pulls in yuppie rock on the radio, I check my notebook to review the Ohio-UFO connection:

■ Around 20 years ago, Cincinnati reported more UFO sightings than any other American city at the time, with person after person saying they saw strange crafts diving toward the Ohio River. Some even thought there was an alien base underwater.

■ Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton was the center of Project Blue Book, the Air Force's 20-year study of UFOs between the 1940s and the '60s, which concluded that no extraterrestrials ever have been to a Cincinnati Reds game, or anywhere else on Earth, for that matter. Several UFO experts call Project BB a sham and say the U.S. intelligence community is covering up important UFO information. Why? Don't ask us.

(OVER)

BETH ROBBINS via **COUD—I**
THE GATE

■ Columbus-based Battelle Memorial Institute, one of the largest private research firms in the world, did a UFO investigation for the Air Force in 1953. It reportedly concluded that nearly 50% of UFO sightings then filed could not be explained.

The controversial report was sent to the National Archives in Washington. Archivist Ed Reese told me recently the report was "missing." Battelle isn't talking, at least not to me. Maybe the aliens have it.

Reese also casually mentioned that the CIA holds 900 pages of UFO info that it won't release to the Archives or anyone else "for reasons of national security."

■ The Ohio State University Radio Observatory in Delaware, O., conducts the only continuous, long-term search for cosmic life — the only one by Earth creatures, anyway. In 1974, the lab received what astronomer Bob Dixon calls a signal "of truly intelligent origin, truly from outside the Earth." The beam lasted only a minute and never repeated. Nicholas Sanduleak, an astronomy researcher at Case Western Reserve University and an avowed UFO debunker, says scientists classified the mysterious signal as a "Wow" event.

■ Finally, UFO researchers claim that clumsy aliens crashed into the Earth, and their bodies have been taken to Wright-Patterson.

Nikon's most fervent wish is to high-five an alien. I'd like to help him attain that goal.

Our first stop is the suburban Cincinnati home of Leonard Stringfield, a former Air Force intelligence officer who has devoted much of his life to UFO research.

He greets us warily. People still believe UFO "experts" are foot-sucking chuckleheads with tile grout for brains, although Air Force pilots, astronomers and even a U.S. president (Jimmy Carter) have claimed to have seen UFOs. I assure Stringfield we'll keep an open mind.

At 67, he's a distinguished presence, with a white beard and formal air. While Nikon shoots the man, I listen.

He tells us he saw UFOs in the service; they made enough of an impression to fuel his lifelong fire on the subject.

Stringfield gets up from his chair and walks Nikon and me into his indoor garden, a humid

glass box filled with tropical plants, lizards and toads. He chooses this strange setting to continue his odd tale.

"This is the biggest story since Jesus," he says as a thunderstorm rages. Jesus was a pretty big story, I concede.

"I'm not just a kook talking about UFOs," Stringfield continues. "I've spoken with 28 firsthand witnesses who have seen alien crafts and bodies. I don't have proof, but my sources are good.

"All witnesses say the same thing: Wright-Pat has been involved with investigating the aliens, and bodies were sent there. I talked to many guards who've seen them. By 1966, there were 30 bodies there."

Nikon and I exchange puzzled glances. Stringfield goes on to explain the so-called Roswell incident, in which several witnesses saw a disc-shaped object crash into the desert in New Mexico in July 1947.

Authors Charles Berlitz and William L. Moore wrote a book about the occurrence, in which the Air Force and an independent radio reporter initially corroborated the crash scenario.

The next day the Air Force said, heck

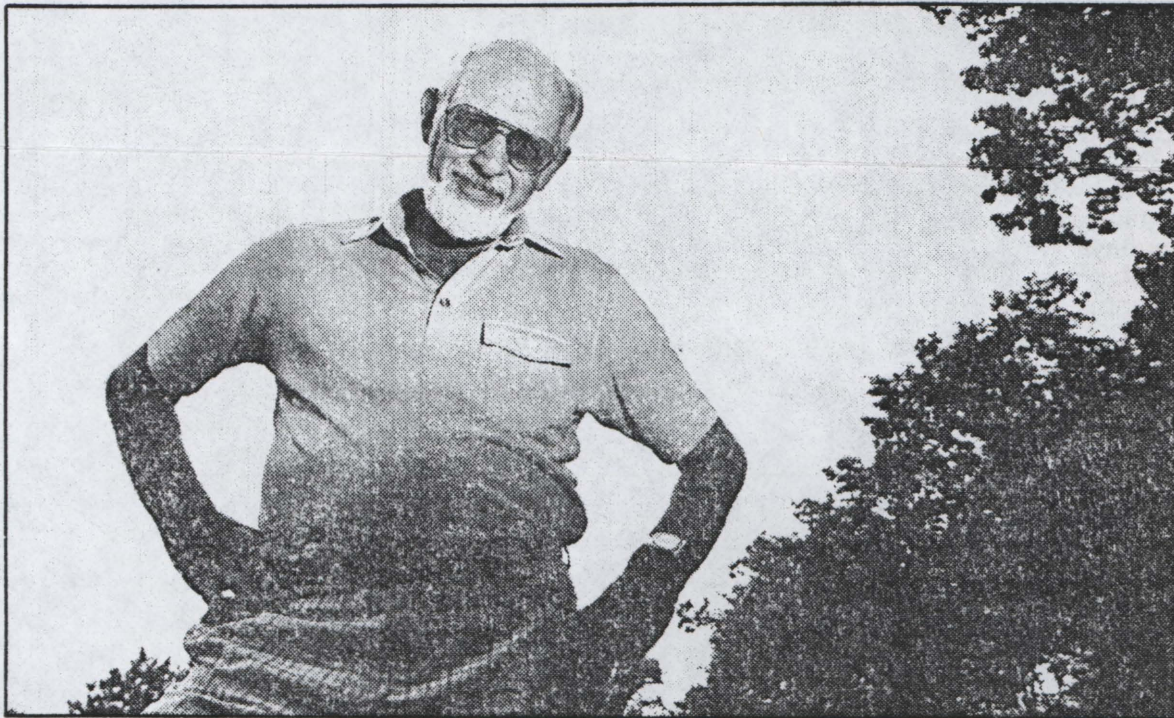
no, fellas, that was no alien craft, that was a weather balloon. Sorry about that.

Military disinformation notwithstanding, the aliens on board didn't survive the crash, so they and their craft were brought to Building 18 at Wright-Pat, Stringfield says.

After delivering this information, he lets fly another bombshell: He says he's interviewed a doctor who's done an autopsy on the aliens. The findings:

The alleged dudes are 4 feet tall, with large heads, webbed hands, no digestive tract, no voicebox, gray iguana-like skin and long arms

SEE ALIENS/4-G



PD/DAVID I. ANDERSEN

LEONARD STRINGFIELD: "I'm not just a kook talking about UFOs. I've spoken with 28 firsthand witnesses who have seen alien crafts and bodies."