

Witness says Kecksburg meteorite was alien craft

By MARK TOMEO
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GREENSBURG, Pa. — Shortly before sundown Dec. 9, 1965, thousands of observers from Ontario to Pennsylvania watched an orange fireball hurtle across the sky. The object left a long smoke trail visible for up to 20 minutes over Michigan and Ohio, and falling debris sparked numerous small blazes along its path. Private pilots near Detroit noted feeling shock waves as they saw it pass, and reported an aircraft had exploded and was going down in Lake Erie.

But the object passed over the lake, made a 30-degree turn midway between Cleveland and Akron, Ohio, and finally landed in a densely wooded area near Kecksburg, Pa., at about 4:45 p.m.

By 7:30 p.m., the U.S. Air Force and state police had roped off the area, commandeered the local firehall and a farmhouse as command centers, clamped a news blackout on the events and, in the words of some residents, imposed martial law.

Curiosity seekers jammed the narrow roads leading to the village as government officials, the military and the media converged on the scene.

The local paper, The Greensburg Tribune-Review, carried a story the next day saying an object had fallen and the Army had taken over, but provided no details. A follow-up story, entitled "Flying Object + Search = Zero," quoted a state police source as saying the object was a meteorite which broke up in the atmosphere, and that nothing had been removed from the site.

Despite eyewitness reports that the

"What I saw changed the way I think, the way I look at things."

—Pete...fireman on the scene

"In the ditch was the 'airplane' or object of the search, but it was totally foreign. There was no wings, glass, fuselage, or rotors; no shrapnel like an explosion. It was round and metal, seven to nine feet wide — at least the part we could see, I don't know how much was buried — I could easily have stood up in it."

—Pete...says military took object out under armed guard

military retrieved a large object from the woods that night, concealed it under a tarpaulin, and hauled it away under the cover of darkness, the Air Force refuses to confirm it found anything.

The event changed the life of 16-year-old Stan Gordon of nearby Greensburg. A budding UFOlogist who even then helped the UFO Research Center in Pittsburgh with its hot line and paperwork, Gordon has spent the 22 intervening years researching the Kecksburg crash.

'War of the Worlds'

"It was just like 'War of the Worlds' happening right in our backyard," he said.

Gordon went on to found the Pennsylvania Association for the Study of the Unexplained, a research group that serves as a clearinghouse for reports of unusual phenomena.

He doggedly pursued a paper trail he contends shows the military was keenly interested in recovering the object from the woods and then just as determined to cloak the whole affair in official secrecy.

Nearly 22 years after the

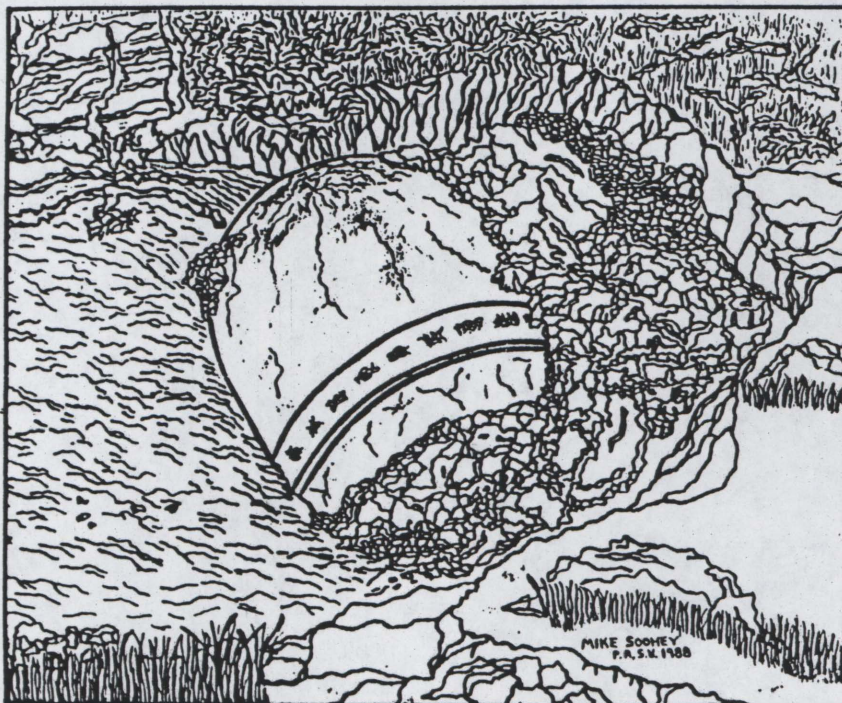
Kecksburg object fell, Gordon was manning an exhibit last August at a local mall as part of National UFO Information Week. The event, which included UFO materials and video presentations, drew thousands of spectators.

One mall stroller overheard a PASU member discussing the Kecksburg case, and interrupted to say he had been part of the civilian search team that first located the object. Indeed, the man said he stood at the edge of the hole the object made in the ground when it struck, and looked down at something he couldn't understand.

What he saw changed his life as surely as it changed Stan Gordon's.

"Pete," as Gordon calls him, was a 19-year-old volunteer fireman from around Latrobe in 1965. Like thousands of others, he saw the fireball pass over that afternoon. A little later, the fire alarms went off, and as his was a mutual aid company, the dispatcher ordered it to Kecksburg to search for an airplane that had exploded and crashed in the woods.

Star of fire'



NOT A METEORITE — This rendering shows the object "Pete," a volunteer fireman, claims he saw near Kecksburg in 1965 while searching for a downed airplane. He said the military

removed it and told everyone a meteorite had fallen.

(Mike Soohy — Courtesy PASU)

The original call came from Mrs. Arnold Kalp, a Kecksburg resident whose children were playing outside and saw what her son described as a "star on fire." From her neighbor's porch, she could see a column of blue smoke rising above the trees a mile away.

She called into a local radio program discussing the fireball, to say whatever it was had crashed near her home. The announcer called the state police.

Meanwhile, Pete and his unit loaded up and drove down to Kecksburg in their squad truck. The searchers organized into teams for a grid search and were issued walkie-talkies and flashlights.

After an hour's search, Pete's team got a call from another saying it found something. They hurried over to find another team pointing at an object semi-buried in the ground.

Describes object

Pete, now in his 40s, described the find in a 1987 taped interview played by Gordon during a visit to his home.

"It plowed a path as it came in at probably a 25- or 30-degree angle, taking off the tops of trees 15 or 20 feet high. It didn't make a crater but a trench about seven feet deep at the end, and the unique thing is there was no fire. I was amazed 'cause it was a fireball when it went over. It wasn't hot, there was no steam or vapor, the trees were snapped off but they weren't burnt."

"In the ditch was the 'airplane' or object of the search, but it was totally foreign. There was no wings, glass, fuselage, or rotors; no shrapnel like an explosion. It was round and metal, seven to nine feet wide — at least the part we could see, I don't know how much was buried — I could easily have stood up in it."

"The metal was an unfamiliar color like tarnished silver or off-colored gold, something in between. I'm a machinist and I've never seen metal like it again, either solid or liquid."

"It looked like a deflated beach ball pushed down and crumpled up and toward the bottom it had a ring or a bumper eight to 10 inches wide raised up from the surface. I couldn't see all of it, but it had a radius to it."

"This bumper had writing, like ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics — straight lines, dots, different figures — nothing I could understand."

"Nobody wanted to go down into the hole, even though the ground wasn't burned, and we were talking about what to do. I guess it was 15, 20 minutes until the first person in was a state policeman. Right behind him was a man with no uniform, but who reeked authority (later identified as a state police detective)."

"They ordered us out, evacuated the search teams. Military people were coming up the road carrying firearms, military trucks and state police cars were coming up. They roped off the area. I saw an Air Force van."

"When we got back to the firehall, the military threw us out of there. It was wall-to-wall military. They took a house too. A little later a flatbed truck with something big covered in a tarpaulin, it had an escort in front and back with lights flashing, it left the area and it wasn't slowing down for no one."

"Word came out it was a meteorite

but, the military came out with guns and 10 or 12 trucks and cars, a payload on a flatbed. That was no meteorite, no plane. It was something other than Earth origin."

Similar story

The family whose house was commandeered told Gordon much the same story about how a military truck was driven into a field and something large loaded on it. They said the Air Force officers at their home were armed and wearing rubber gloves, and they observed men in decontamination suits.

Even though it was clear to the searchers the object they found was manufactured, they were told by the military it was a meteorite.

"I would say it was definitely alien," Pete said on the tape. "They knew and wanted to keep it away from the public to avoid panic."

PASU members won't go quite that far, but say available military records about the event hint at the deployment to Kecksburg of a crack intelligence team from the Air Force's Foreign Technology Division.

"One thing the newspaper learned the night of the incident was that the military unit that did the recovery was the 662nd Radar Squadron from the Oakdale Army Facility," Gordon said. "We filed Freedom of Information Act requests to verify the military involvement. The first thing we got was a Project Blue Book file which consisted of witness reports, news clippings and internal memos from various government agencies."

The Air Force's evaluation of the case was "Astro," meaning meteor. The Blue Book file mentions nothing about the recovery of an object, but states "the search was called off about 2 a.m. and nothing was found."

The file notes a call went out to the Oakdale Radar Site and a "three-man team" had been dispatched to Kecksburg to investigate and pick up an object that started a fire.

"When we found the this unit was officially involved, we went after their records," Gordon said. "We eventually got it from the Air Force Historical Center at Maxwell AFB. This document provided mission information, staff lists and a record of activities for the month of December 1965, and Dec. 9 is a blank."

The record showed the unit was involved in an exercise called Cree Arrow I on Nov. 18, 1965, and another called Roundhouse Bravo on Dec. 13.

"How could so much equipment and personnel be mobilized yet the log show no activity that day," Gordon asks.

A tantalizing hint turned up in a related document on Air Force intelligence team personnel, unearthed by researcher Robert G. Todd. It describes the quick response teams which locate, recover and deliver descended foreign space vehicles, debris and UFOs as "comprised of three men each."

Search continues

So Gordon continues the search for others who may have seen the object. The only other fireman Pete knew who also saw it has died. He said he stood around it with six or seven other guys but had no idea who they were or where they can be found.

"The object in the woods, he said, is "something I'll carry to my grave." "What I saw changed the way I think, the way I look at things."