

the old battles" (Clark, 1977). Particularly noteworthy, even heretical, was Stringfield's suggestion that reports of **crashes of UFOs**, rejected by serious investigators ever since the **Scully hoax** of 1950, be reexamined in the light of testimony from such seemingly reliable sources as a Presbyterian minister and a former Wright-Patterson Air Force Base employee. Despite criticism from some ufologists, the next year Stringfield presented the first in a series of papers on "retrievals of the third kind" at the annual MUFON conference (Stringfield, 1978).

Soon such claims were occupying Stringfield's full attention, and he developed a number of sources, most of whose names he insisted on keeping anonymous. One of them was a physician who claimed to have performed autopsies on humanoid bodies for the Air Force. Though some of Stringfield's cases were later proven to be hoaxes (Clark, 1980a), in time other investigators overcame their resistance to the idea of crashed discs, after one alleged crash, a July 1947 episode known as the "Roswell incident," became the subject of extensive investigation and documentation (Moore, 1985; Randle and Schmitt, 1991; Schmitt, 1990). If Stringfield is proven right, history will record that he was a pioneer who reopened ufology's most important, albeit most-long-neglected, question.

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SWAN/CIA CONTACT STORY

If Frances Swan of Eliot, Maine, had not lived next door to retired Navy Adm. Herbert B. Knowles, practically no one would ever have heard of her. And if practically no one had ever heard of her, a UFO legend would never have been born.

The legend has it that on July 6, 1959, a Naval Intelligence officer established psychic contact with beings from another world. The incident occurred at CIA headquarters in full view of three high-level agency functionaries. Challenged to prove their reality, the aliens flew a UFO past the building. As three CIA men watched it through the window, the radar center at Washington National Airport was puzzled to find that its returns from that area of the sky had been "blocked off" in some mysterious fashion.

This is the story told in Robert Emenegger's *UFOs Past, Present and Future* (1974), based on testimony from those who participated in the event. The story, like all good stories, was one that grew in the telling. The real story goes like this:

In 1954 Mrs. Swan, a woman with a life-long interest in psychic and spiritual phenomena, confided to Adm. Knowles and his wife Helen that she was in contact with beings from another world. She traced

this association back to an incident that had taken place on Halloween night 1953, as she was standing on a ladder hanging decorations in the Grange Hall. A distinguished-looking stranger walked into the building. Because he didn't seem to know anybody, she engaged him in polite conversation, and he left not long afterwards. Though nothing out of the ordinary had taken place, the man impressed Swan, and she remembered him vividly.

Starting about six months later, she began hearing a whistling sound in her left ear. Then on April 30, 1954, at 5 P.M., she felt herself compelled to write these words: "WE COME WILL HELP KEEP PEACE ON EU DO NOT BE FRIGHTENED" (Fitzgerald, 1979). Three days later a second message was delivered via automatic writing. The communicator identified himself as Affa, calling from an enormous spaceship which had flown in from Uranus. (Affa's presence in earth's region of space had been noted already by **George Hunt Williamson** and Alfred C. Bailey, two Arizona men who reported receiving radio and telepathic messages from him and other extraterrestrials [Williamson and Bailey, 1954].) He was, he said, the stranger she had met in the Grange Hall. In the days that followed, other messages came in, not only from Affa but from other beings (among them Ponnar of Pluto and Alomar of Mercury) representing the Universal Association of Planets. They would announce their presence with an ear-piercing whistle or ringing.

On May 18 Affa asked her to write a letter to the Navy, which would be able to receive the space people's radio communications. Swan thought of her neighbor Adm. Knowles, whom she knew only casually, and went to relate the story to him. Knowles, as it turned out, was interested in UFOs and would later join the board of the **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena**. The Knowleses heard her out and noted her obvious sincerity; yet they had reservations about the reality of the space contacts. Still, when Swan told them that Affa had promised a *personal* appearance at Swan's home at 1:12 P.M. on May 26, they could not resist the invitation.

But when Affa did not show up, Knowles recalled, "Mrs. Swan appeared to be very much provoked ... and was indignant to the point where she declared

that if he couldn't produce for her she was about ready to be through with the whole deal. All at once, at about 1:25 P.M., she began to write the following message: 'I am very sorry person not to be able to get there at the time appointed'" (Fitzgerald, *op. cit.*).

Affa's nonappearance notwithstanding, Knowles had a list of questions for the Uranian. When he asked these questions, he recalled, "The answers came through without hesitation, any apparent premeditation or confusion on her part. She wrote swiftly and smoothly in a peculiar hand" (*ibid.*).

The following day Knowles wrote Rear Adm. **C. F. Espe**, head of the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), and enclosed some of the messages. He passed on Affa's suggestion that ONI try to communicate with Affa through Band CMM-306, repeating the signal M4 M4 A F F A. When there was no immediate response, Knowles wrote again on June 6. "Believe me," he said, "these messages are *real*.... Communication *has* been established with earth through Mrs. Swan.... Can you read these communications and believe they are the product of Mrs. Swan's imagination?"

On June 8 two ONI officers, **Capt. John Bromley** and **Harry Baltazzi**, called on Swan and through her interviewed Affa. After declining to appear personally, Affa agreed to communicate via radio at 2 P.M. on the tenth. But no such transmission came through, and on July 8 Adm. Espe wrote Knowles to say, in effect, that ONI would pursue the matter no further. It turned the letters over to the Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics. A security officer there, John Hutson, developed a personal interest in the case and so informed Knowles, who invited him up to Maine. On July 24 Hutson took up the invitation and stayed at the Knowles residence for two days.

On his return to Washington, **Hutson gave the FBI a report of his visit**. On July 29 an agent interviewed him, and on August 9 **J. Edgar Hoover** sent an account of the interview to the Air Force's Office of Special Investigations, with copies to the Director of Naval Intelligence and to the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, U.S. Army. Hoover wrote at the end of the memo: "No further action is being taken in this matter by this Bureau" (Clark, 1989).

The incident was forgotten for five years. Then one

day in 1959 U.S. Navy Cmdr. Julius Larsen, an ONI liaison officer to CIA's Photographic Intelligence Center in Washington (not, as some later accounts would have it, "CIA headquarters"), found the material in a file and decided to follow up on it. Larsen, a young, enthusiastic man, had a keen interest in spiritualism and required little convincing of Affa's existence. On July 5, with the Navy pilot who had accompanied him, he called on the Knowleses, in whose company he spent the evening interviewing Swan. He became so excited that he tried his own hand at automatic writing. Though the communicator signed himself Affa, Swan insisted it was not her Affa. "He swallowed everything," she said later. "He just went overboard" (Fitzgerald, *op. cit.*).

Back in Washington the next day, Larsen headed for the office of the Center's director, Arthur Lundahl, whom he knew to be interested in UFOs and other strange phenomena. Lundahl listened carefully, as did his assistant, Lt. Cmdr. Robert Neasham, on loan from the Navy. Neasham knew something about UFOs; he had been involved in the Navy's analysis of the Utah film, said to be of a group of UFOs in the daylight sky.

Lundahl and Neasham urged Larsen to try to contact the extraterrestrials. Larsen entered a mild trance state and asked questions aloud. When he "heard" answers inside his head, he wrote them down. The communicator again signed himself Affa.

When Neasham challenged Affa to appear in person or to let them see his craft, Larsen suddenly switched from writing to speaking and said, "Go to the window." Lundahl saw nothing out of the ordinary, but Neasham insisted that a spaceship was hiding behind some fluffy clouds. Many years later Lundahl told ufologist W. Todd Zechel, "At no time did I see a spaceship or a UFO and to the best of my knowledge neither did [Neasham]" (Zechel, 1978). Neasham also claimed that he had contacted the radar people at Washington National Airport and heard from them that the particular quadrant of the sky in which the UFO supposedly appeared had been "blocked out." There is no independent evidence to support this assertion.

Lundahl suggested that Neasham contact Project Blue Book and ask its acting director, Maj. Robert

Friend, to stop at PIC headquarters next time he was in Washington. But Neasham was less casual about it; he urged Friend to come immediately for a briefing. Friend showed up on July 9 and heard Neasham's version of the episode. Larsen even managed to elicit messages from the space people, but they turned down his request for a fly-over.

When Friend returned to Blue Book headquarters at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, he prepared a memo and submitted it to his superior at the Air Technical Intelligence Center. In the folklore that would grow around the incident, this memorandum would become known as a "CIA document." In any case, Friend's superiors told him to forget about it; they would take care of it. That was the last word he would hear about it from official sources.

The matter rested until years later when J. Allen Hynek found Friend's memo in the Blue Book files and copied it. Subsequently the document came into the hands of the producer and scriptwriter for a documentary film, *UFOs: Past, Present and Future* (which would also be published as a paperback book). Under the impression that it was a CIA document, they discussed the matter with Maj. Leo Vrana, a technical adviser assigned to the film by the Department of Defense, and Vrana sent a copy to the Secretary of the Air Force Office of Information (SAFOI). Meanwhile historian David M. Jacobs, also serving as a technical consultant on the film, interviewed Friend. Friend called SAFOI to ask permission to discuss the incident. SAFOI told him to go ahead since the filmmakers already had the memo. Later Jacobs recounted the incident in his *The UFO Controversy in America* (1975).

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