

Ancient Astronauts Modern Mysteries

By John A. Keel

Spies In The Sky

Several million years ago a super-civilization in some distant galaxy launched an unmanned satellite to our solar system. Its purpose was to search for life and, if it found any, to keep tabs on the development of such life. The satellite is still functioning and circles the Earth periodically, presumably sending reports back to its home planet.

The above may sound like a crackpot theme from some obscure mimeographed fringe journal but is actually a theory that has been suggested by a number of leading scientists after repeated observations of an artificial satellite of unknown origin. The object was first sighted by Dr. Lincoln La Paz, of the University of New Mexico, in 1953 . . . 4 years before the Soviet Union launched Sputnik I. As more reports poured in from observatories around the world, the Department of Defense assigned Dr. Clyde W. Tombaugh to search for the strange "bo-gey." Dr. Tombaugh was the distinguished astronomer who had discovered the planet Pluto in 1930.

The results of Dr. Tombaugh's study were never formally released by the Pentagon. Nothing further was heard about the object until December 1957, when Dr. Luis Corrales of the Communications Ministry in Venezuela photographed it. The first man-made satellite, Sputnik I, had been launched two months earlier, and he was taking pictures of Sputnik II as it passed over Caracas. His photograph revealed a trace of a *second*, unknown object closely following the Soviet's dog-carrying satellite. Laika, the first earthly animal to enter space, had company!

The Black Knight

While both the U.S. and the Soviet Union were racing to launch relatively small satellites into orbit in the late 1950s, astronomers and military tracking stations were following the course of something *huge*. On Jan. 4, 1960, scientists discovered 2 large objects in a polar orbit. At that time neither the U.S. nor Russia had succeeded in achieving a polar orbit. The objects were estimated to weigh at least 15 tons. The largest U.S. satellite then was 450 pounds, and the largest Soviet satellite was 2,925 pounds.

Late in February 1960, the U.S. Department of Defense formally announced that an unidentified satellite was circling the globe. It was tracked and studied by several different observatories and the National Space Surveillance Control Center at New Bedford, Mass. Prof. Alla Masevich, the Soviet scientist heading the Russian Sputnik tracking program, flatly denied that the mystery satellites belonged to the Soviet Union.

The press labeled the intruder "The Black Knight," and it became a topic of much discussion.

It vanished as mysteriously as it had arrived. But it has quietly reappeared from time to time though the news has been buried in the fine print of NASA's weekly catalog of debris and objects orbiting the Earth.

Echoes From Space

If a satellite from another world does exist, is there any way we might communicate with it? Dr. Ronald N. Bracewell of Stanford University addressed this problem in an article in the British scientific journal *Nature* (May 28, 1960). He noted that communication with planets in other star systems would be difficult, if not impossible, because of the great distances involved. But if some other civilization has already planted a satellite in our solar system there might be some way we could communicate with it. The question is: How?

Radio experimenters in the 1920s noted a strange phenomenon which they labeled LDE—long delayed echoes. Signals transmitted from Earth sometimes came bouncing back several seconds later, as if they had been reflected back by something in space. In a few instances these LDEs returned *days* later. This technically was improbable unless something was picking up the signals in space and *retransmitting* them!

Researchers in Norway, Holland, and France recorded LDEs in 1927, 1928, and 1934. The echo pulses were delayed from 3 to 15 seconds, and the researchers kept careful records which were duly filed away and eventually forgotten. In more recent years, LDE has become an extremely rare phenomenon. However, in the period 1957-1961 when the Black Knight was

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most active, all kinds of odd radio signals were received by radio astronomers, Ham operators, and military stations.

Greetings From Epsilon Bootes

A young Scottish astronomer named Duncan Lunan reviewed the LDE records of the 1920s and set out to decode them. He laid out the LDE data on a graph, using the pauses between the echoes as dots. To his excitement, a map began to take shape.

"The dots made up a map of an easily recognized constellation," Lunan said. "The Constellation of Bootes in the northern sky. The curious pattern of delayed echoes was actually a pattern of star positions."

He worked up other LDE maps and found that they all seemed to center around Epsilon Bootes, a star in the constellation.

"If Lunan is right in his thinking, this material did contain a message," Dr. Bracewell declared after studying Lunan's graphs. "It is saying that the people or entities came to Earth from the Constellation Bootes."

Lunan submitted his findings to the prestigious British Interplanetary Society. Kenneth Gatland, vice president of the society, noted, "Lunan's findings are utterly astounding. I have studied the maps and must come to the same conclusion he did."

Other scientists have endorsed Lunan's discovery and new plans are being made to launch a fresh search for LDEs with special equipment.

Bridging Time

Epsilon Bootes is hardly our next door neighbor. The star is some 103 million light-years from Earth, meaning that the Black Knight would have to be so constructed that it could survive and function for a mind-boggling period of time. Unless, of course, time and space are far different from our human conception and a superior technology could somehow bridge this vast distance in a shorter period of time.

Lunan's star charts are not perfect. In fact, they are off by about 13,000 years. That is, they show Epsilon Bootes in the position it held 13,000 years ago. This suggests to Lunan that the satellite was placed in orbit between 11,000 and 13,000 B.C.

A number of alternate theories are springing up. Suppose, for example, that visitors from Epsilon Bootes looked our planet over thousands of years ago and decided to leave a little memento behind when they left. Instead of erecting a monument like the pyra-

mids, they decided on orbiting an object that would be safe from earthquakes, floods, and other natural calamities. So they launched the Black Knight, rigging it so it would be activated thousands of years later when, according to their calculations, mankind would have progressed to a point where we could receive and interpret the signals.

Beings who came from Epsilon Bootes would undoubtedly view the universe from the position of that star, and their star maps would be hard for us to decipher. But Lunan's maps view the universe from the Earth's position 13,000 years ago, a period, incidentally, that coincides with the myth of the lost continent of Atlantis. Could our fragile memory of Atlantis really be a memory of the visit of the Sky People? Did they construct the Black Knight and send it into orbit from Earth?

The Fatal Flaw

The biggest flaw in Lunan's (and Bracewell's) theory is the dependence on the radio echoes of yesteryear. During the 1920s there existed a top secret project to develop a system for use by spies of piggybacking secret messages on the beams of conventional radio stations. One method was to intercept a signal and rebroadcast it later with breaks containing the secret message. Another method was to cut into the conventional signal with static which was really a code. More advanced systems were later developed by the Germans before WW II. A spy merely located his equipment a mile or 2 from a commercial or even a military radio station, and he could use their signal to broadcast his own messages without fear of detection.

So it's very possible that the LDE phenomenon was a part of the early experiments and were totally unrelated to the Black Knight. The pauses and fluctuations which fascinate the scientists could be a code like Lincos when sent in a different way. Radio messages received in Norway and Sweden in 1934 were clearly connected to the "ghostflier" wave then taking place in those countries, and some of those signals did piggyback on the beams of commercial radio stations.

Still, the concept of an alien satellite broadcasting to Earth is an exciting one. "Once we firmly establish its existence, we must interrogate it," Anthony Lawton, head of a British computer firm, said recently. "When it realizes it is in touch with an intelligence, it could be ready to give up the enormous store of information which it must have."

But if the Black Knight exists as a computerized satellite, what message will it have for us? Will it tell us something about life on other worlds, or will it just recite forgotten memories of our own distant past? **★THE END**