

Ancient Astronauts Modern Mysteries

JOHN A. KEEL

CARLOS ALLENDE—UFO MYSTERY MAN

The Hayden Planetarium in New York City displays a very unusual meteorite which is composed of iron and distinctively shaped into an almost perfect cone. It doesn't look like a piece of interstellar junk but, despite its cosmic pockmarks, resembles a manufactured object. A small plate attached to the base identifies it as a gift from "Mrs. Morris K. Jessup"—a name well-known in UFO lore. In fact, entire books have been written about "Dr. Morris K. Jessup" and the supposed mysteries surrounding his life and death. Authorities such as Brad Steiger and Gray Barker have investigated the Jessup affair and published their findings in SAGA and elsewhere. Other ufologists, including Mr. and Mrs. James Lorenzen of the Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (APRO), have cried "hoax." The strange letters Jessup received from Carlos Allende have been widely reprinted until the whole Jessup-Allende correspondence has become the center of a major ufological legend.

Morris Ketchum Jessup was born in 1830, entered the banking business in New York in 1852, was successful, and became a rich man. He spent his later years in philanthropic work, financing scientific expeditions to the Arctic, and helping to found the Young Men's Christian Association and the American Museum of Natural History (he was president of the latter from 1881 to 1907). He died in 1908 at the age of 78 after a long and fruitful life. The cone-shaped meteorite was given to the Planetarium by his family.

A second Morris K. Jessup was born in the early years of this century and was apparently unrelated to the philanthropist. He went to the University of Michigan but never earned a doctorate. That did not prevent UFO enthusiasts from awarding him the title "Dr." Morris K. Jessup, however. In the 1920s and '30s he traveled extensively through South America as a staff member of expeditions formed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Carnegie Institute. It's not surprising that

some UFO researchers have often confused him with his earlier namesake.

Few scientists took flying saucers seriously in the 1950s. Hermann Oberth, the German rocket authority, occasionally spoke publicly about spaceships from another star system, but the American UFO scene lacked a scientific spokesman until M. K. Jessup focused on the subject. He published a number of books about UFOs which made some very worthwhile contributions to ufological thought.

Then on Apr. 20, 1959, Morris K. Jessup died of carbon monoxide poisoning in Florida, suicide.

MAN OF MYSTERY

Like all authors, Jessup's books drew piles of mail ranging from finely detailed reports of sightings to outlandish crackpot statements of belief. In the mid-1950s he began to receive extensive, but intriguing, letters from an ex-sailor named Carlos Allende. Allende claimed to have been present on a U.S. Navy destroyer conducting amazing experiments during WW II. A special kind of magnetic field was created around a vessel, he said, which rendered it invisible. The men aboard the ship had terrifying experiences while in this invisible state. Some became paralyzed while others caught fire, Allende alleged, and the experiments were halted.

Soon after Jessup's book *The Case For the UFO* appeared in paperback, a dog-eared copy arrived by mail at the Office of Naval Research (ONR) in Washington, D.C. Three different people had apparently written many notes and comments in the margins of the book, suggesting that three knowledgeable men had examined the book and knew more about the subject than the author. The men at ONR were fascinated by the book and its handwritten notations and called Jessup in for an explanation. He viewed the scribbles as some kind of joke and he recognized the handwriting of one of the annotators. It was identical to the hand-

writing in the letters from Carlos Allende. The style, spelling, and punctuation also followed the patterns of the Allende correspondence. Jessup gave ONR copies of the strange letters, warning the Navy men that he felt the whole thing was a hoax. But someone recognized things in the annotations that eluded Jessup. Some of the marginalia described aspects of the UFO phenomenon which remained totally unknown to civilian researchers until the late 1960s. ONR took the book much more seriously than Jessup and they did an extraordinary thing with it. They passed it on to the Varo Corporation in Garland, Tex. Varo was a Navy subcontractor and, in those days, was working on secret infrared devices. A Varo secretary, Ms. Michael Ann Dunn, meticulously prepared a typewritten copy of the entire book, including the scribbled marginal notes and comments, and the whole thing was printed. About 100 copies were made with Jessup's text printed in black ink and the notations appearing in red.

Jessup was later given several copies of the Varo edition which he distributed to a few trusted friends. A man identifying himself as Carlos Allende dropped into the Varo offices, had a chat with the company's president, and received a few copies of the book. All the other copies were distributed by Varo to interested scientists and Navy personnel. For years thereafter rumors about the edition circulated among civilian UFO researchers but very few were privileged to see a copy. Most regarded it as just another myth in a field riddled with rumors, legends, and myths. However, the name Carlos Allende soon became very well-known. He became one of ufology's most famous men of mystery.

HOAX OR HORROR?

Allende's tale of the invisible ship was spread far and wide even though no one was ever able to confirm it in

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any way. Allende had mentioned a brief item that had appeared in a Philadelphia newspaper about the affair so researchers plowed through the newspaper files for weeks without success. During WW II, Joseph Dunninger, a famous magician, received considerable publicity when he claimed he had a method for making ships invisible. It's possible that Allende's story stemmed from the Dunninger news releases.

Men purporting to be the "real" Carlos Allende turned up frequently at various UFO conventions around the country. They came in all sizes and spoke with a number of accents. Mysterious voices claiming to be Carlos or "Carl Allen" also telephoned UFO researchers in the late 1950s and early '60s, usually warning them to stop their UFO studies. One Carlos Allende even presented himself at a dinner for the late Gen. Douglas MacArthur in the Waldorf-Astoria (General MacArthur was obsessed with the flying saucer mystery).

Morris K. Jessup's suicide caused a wave of alarm to sweep through the thin ufological ranks. Had he been liquidated by the government for knowing too much about flying saucers? Actually he was a deeply troubled man with marital and career problems. He had been depressed for months and his suicide was a carefully planned act. He wrote farewell letters to a number of his friends and tidied up his personal affairs before he ran a hose from the exhaust of his car into the window on the driver's side.

With Jessup's death it seemed that the mystery of the Varo edition and Carlos Allende would never be solved. But Carlos continued to write long letters to investigators like the late Ivan T. Sanderson, and in 1969 he visited Coral Lorenzen of (APRO) and presented her with a copy of the Varo edition. Another copy was read by the late Dr. Edward Condon, head of the ill-fated Colorado University UFO study project. Steven Yankee, an independent researcher, somehow acquired a microfilm copy of the book which he later lent to author Brad Steiger.

After Steiger wrote several articles

about the Allende-Varo puzzle he received mail from several different people, all claiming to have firsthand knowledge about the Philadelphia experiment or about Allende. A woman professing to be Allende's widow also wrote. Mrs. Lorenzen flatly dismissed the entire affair as a hoax. But, of course, it could hardly be a hoax if copies of the Varo edition existed. Varo and Jessup knew that Allende had written some—if not all—of the notations. No one ever claimed that the notations were the work of spacemen. Allende modestly claimed credit, and even expressed anger in some of his letters when authors tried to place the blame on someone else. Some of the marginal comments written in 1956 dealt with developments in physics (the so-called "New Physics") which did not occur until nearly 20 years later. More important, perhaps, is the fact that certain medical effects of the UFO phenomenon were discussed knowledgeably in the Varo book, effects that were largely ignored by the UFO investigators of the 1950s.

ALLENDE WRITES AGAIN

In 1970, I began to receive lengthy letters from Mexico, supposedly au-

thored by Carlos Allende. I asked for some proof of his identity and soon received photostat copies of his seaman-ship papers and other relevant documents, including a copy of his income tax form and one letter written by Morris K. Jessup to Carlos Allende. He repeated his earlier claims, acknowledged his role in the Varo business, and rambled on about his personal problems. I am convinced that the man in Mexico was the same man who earlier visited the Lorenzens, and was the same letter-writer who bemused Morris K. Jessup.

A long time UFO investigator in Clarksburg, W. Va., Gray Barker, recently acquired a copy of the Varo edition somehow and obtained copyright clearances so he could reprint the whole thing in a limited edition. Now copies of this once legendary book are available on the open market. Today officials of the Varo Corporation refuse to comment on what was once one of ufology's stormiest teacup tempests. The only question that remains is: why was the U.S. Navy and the Varo Corporation so interested in the scribbles in a paperback book, even when Jessup, the author, regarded the whole thing as nonsense? ★