

# Ancient Astronauts Modern Mysteries

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## THE PHANTOM UFO INFORMANTS

The following scenario has been repeated hundreds of times during the past 28 years. A local UFO enthusiast, in a small and remote community, goes out on a "sky watch," staying up all night in a cemetery, gravel pit, lover's lane, or lonely hill top where flying saucers have been previously sighted. The sky is overcast, the crisp night air bone-chilling, and the observation site is usually deserted—except for our hero or heroine. Suddenly a tall figure emerges from the gloom and approaches the ufologist. Usually he is dressed in some kind of U.S. military uniform representing the Air Force, the Navy, or even the U.S. Marines. He smoothly engages the UFO seeker in casual conversation, commenting on the weather and other mundane subjects. Then he switches the topic to flying saucers. His branch of the service is very interested in UFOs, he admits in a confidential tone. In fact, the government is planning to issue an important statement very soon (he usually names a date) confirming the existence of extraterrestrial life and the reality of flying saucers.

When the ufologist returns home from his encounter, he quickly grabs the phone and starts calling friends to tell them the news. The story spreads rapidly by phone and mail and is even confirmed by other ufologists in other areas who have had similar meetings and conversations with mysterious strangers.

But, of course, the appointed date comes and goes without any announcement from any official source. A very old game has been played on the anxious UFO believers.

This is known as "The Rumor." It appears and is circulated every few years, usually in the wake of a massive UFO flap. It was circulated in 1949, just prior to the publication of *Project Grudge*, the Air Force's attempt to explain UFOs as weather balloons and birds. It swept the country in 1952 and again in 1954. By then nationally syndicated columnists like the late Dorothy Kilgallen and Walter Winchell were

publishing the story and crediting some "reliable source." In 1974, following the great UFO wave of October 1973, The Rumor was back in circulation. Newcomers to the field unknowingly spread the fabricated story at lectures and UFO conventions. National tabloids picked it up and headlined it. The announcement was slated for June 1974, they declared. But when that month came and went without even a peep from the Pentagon, the date was moved back to December 1974. The government's silence still remained unbroken.

### PHANTOM LEAKS

The Watergate debacle proved, once again, that it is impossible for the government to keep any secrets, even when an intensive effort is made to cover something up. Yet, the UFO believers contend that thousands of Air Force men and government personnel have concealed the truth about flying saucers from us for nearly a generation. Disgruntled C.I.A. agents have, in the meantime, broken their oaths of secrecy and published books about that far flung agency, but no one connected with UFO research in the government has come forward with any kind of statement about what we know or don't know about flying saucers.

Ms. Kilgallen allegedly got her UFO tips from someone highly placed in the British government. Other reporters credited distinguished military leaders such as Generals Douglas MacArthur and George C. Marshall. Still others claim that military officers had come to them with sensational UFO disclosures only after they had been assured of complete anonymity. Sometimes very unlikely writers would be picked for these leaks. The late Frank Scully, a columnist for the show business newspaper *Variety*, wrote a book based on the testimony of a television repairman who hid behind the name "Dr. G." According to "Dr. G.," a UFO had crashed somewhere in the southwest in 1949 and the Air Force had collected it, together with the bodies of several

"little men," and hidden it all somewhere. This crashed-saucer story has since become a perennial favorite with the rumor mongers and reappears after every UFO flap.

The late Frank Edwards, a radio newscaster and author, unwittingly circulated many of the rumors of the 1950's. In 1966-67, I became the target of the rumor mongers. Officials in Washington, who had proven to be reliable sources of other kinds of information, kindly told me of upcoming official statements about UFOs. Fortunately, I kept their stories to myself and, of course, none of these rumors materialized. Other reporters were not so cautious. The ufological world braced itself for a startling government revelation in June 1967. Guess what happened? Nothing!

Another system for launching rumors involves the telephone. The reporter receives several calls from a well-spoken, serious-sounding man who claims to hold a high position in the Air Force or the government. At first, the man passes along legitimate news tips which check out. Then he begins to discuss UFOs and offers the reporter some variation of The Rumor. The reporter swallows the bait and writes a story which ultimately proves to be pure hogwash and, in some cases, even discredits the reporter forever. The reporter never does meet his mysterious informant face-to-face. Sometimes photos are involved in these hoaxes. The reporter will receive a batch of UFO photos in the mail, then the mysterious caller will explain that they are authentic and come straight from the secret files of NASA or the Air Force. But after the reporter publishes the pictures, vouching for their authenticity, they are exposed as complete hoaxes.

Obviously there is someone out there who is interested in spreading these false rumors, and perhaps even more interested in discrediting reporters who get involved in the UFO subject. In Europe, our phantom informants use the mails extensively. Ufologists scat-

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# ANCIENT ASTROS

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tered all over the continent are busy corresponding with visitors from other planets. Some of these space-grams are fascinating, well-written, and filled with all kinds of interesting information. But it is hardly likely that they are written by humanoids from another world.

## THE CASE AGAINST THE C.I.A.

The nuclear physicist, Dr. Leon Davidson, became interested in UFOs and, after extensive study, he concluded, and stated in print, that the UFO phenomenon was the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency and that all these bizarre manipulations were the handiwork of C.I.A. agents. Others, like Maj. Donald E. Keyhoe, tried to prove that the U.S. Air Force was the culprit.

But why would the Air Force, the C.I.A., or any other government agency waste time, money, and personnel conducting a seemingly pointless campaign to spread nonsensical rumors, discredit witnesses and reporters, and simultaneously contribute to the belief in visitors from another planet? The tactics described here are often too complicated and too expensive to be the work of random practical jokesters. Hundreds of people, all over the world, have now had similar experiences with these phantom informants. A large part of the UFO lore is based entirely on the products of the rumor machine. The "hospital rumor," for example, has turned up in many countries and swept through South America and Europe. This rumor claims that a local hospital (in London, Lima, or Tokyo) has a floor that is sealed off from the general public. A room on that floor harbors a genuine being from outer space who is being kept alive by modern medicine. A variation of this was the 1950's rumor that a tall being in a long cloak and hood, with very hairy hands and arms, had secretly been admitted to the White House to confer with the President. That tale first appeared as a short story in a magazine. But most of the other space age rumors are not so easily traced.

Separating rumors from fact becomes more difficult with each passing year because the rumors far outnumber the facts. Innocent UFO contactees add to the confusion by passing along stories allegedly told them by the UFO occupants. The most common story of this type describes how the peaceful space beings made a forced landing in a field in Nebraska, or Argentina, or France, and a frightened farmer shot at them, wounding or killing some of them.

Like the story of the little men pickled in a bottle at some Air Force base, the wounded-spaceman rumor is revived after every UFO wave.

## CAN THE TRUTH BE HIDDEN?

Is there any truth to any of these rumors? Innumerable investigators have devoted years trying to track them down but the searches have always been futile. Most of the rumor-based stories dissolve in the hands of a thorough researcher, and some become so discouraged they decide that all UFO stories are rumors and hoaxes. This is not true, of course. But the rumor mongers have done their job well and discredited the entire UFO scene.

Suppose a flying saucer should actually crash somewhere? Would the government be able to keep it a secret? I doubt it. Within a few weeks the story would start to leak out via the hundreds of people who would have to deal with the object, transport it, open it, and examine it. Someone would talk. Someone would probably even write a book about it. And the remains of the wrecked saucer would probably end up on display at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C.

On the other hand, if the saucer fell into the hands of non-government scientists it could conceivably remain a secret for a long time. Being unable to explain it, the scientists might try to hide the saucer in a warehouse somewhere.

When Sir Martin Ryle and his team of radio-astronomers first detected radio signals from deep space in 1967, they initially speculated they had intercepted "a navigational beacon, fashioned by an extraterrestrial race." They held meetings and decided to initially keep their discovery a secret from the public. It remained a secret until they realized the signals were the product of a "pulsar," a distant star that was generating all kinds of electromagnetic propagation. But if any scientist anywhere should actually stumble across real evidence of extraterrestrial life you can be sure that his first interest would be the protection of his reputation, and his discovery would remain secret for months—maybe even years. Eventually, rumors of his find would probably leak out . . . but they would be buried quickly in all the false rumors of ufology. In fact, the most effective way to keep the discovery hidden would be to spread other kinds of rumors as camouflage. And, indeed, many of the UFO rumors seem to be serving that very purpose . . . camouflaging some deeper, carefully concealed truth. ★