

JUST



CAUSE

Address:

CAUS
Box 176
Stoneham, Mass. 02180

Rates: \$15 US, \$20 Foreign

Publisher: Lawrence Fawcett

Editor: Barry Greenwood

NUMBER 39

Citizens Against UFO Secrecy

March 1994

GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATION OF STRANGE LIGHT PHENOMENA - 180 YEARS AGO!

One of the goals of CAUS has been to trace the origins of government interest in aerial phenomena as far back as we can. Most previous conventional thinking had had UFO investigations beginning in 1947, the birth of modern UFO sighting reports. However, sightings were known to have been studied by the government during World War 2 (see Just Cause, June 1992, "First Official Foo-Fighter Records Discovered"). More government interest was traced further back into 1915 (see Just Cause, June 1992, "Unidentified Flying Objects Overfly US/Canadian Border - In 1915!"). There did not seem to be any way to push this type of story back before 1900 as we would be going beyond the origins of powered flight and, therefore, beyond the interest and concern of government over aerial vehicles as a conceivable threat to the security of the nation.

As usual, reality always has a habit of dazzling the mind when the mind seems to have been made up. In our historical searches of early journals and newspapers we had once come across an obscure reference to strange lights seen in Connecticut by a Commodore Decatur - no date, little detail. "Decatur" was the only specific with which to work, obviously a military figure.

In checking military biographical histories, we found that Commodore Stephen Decatur was a distinguished U.S. naval officer who participated in several heroic actions during the Barbary Wars of the early 1800s, and in the War of 1812. With Connecticut as a location and Decatur involved in the sighting of the strange lights, the incident had to be connected to the War of 1812, when much naval action was concentrated in the ocean off the coast of the northeastern U.S.

Consulting histories of the War of 1812, we discovered that we were right on target. It seems that something called the "Blue Light Affair" had occurred in late 1813. According to the brief account (see The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict by Donald Hickey, University of Illinois Press, 1990), a squadron of ships under Decatur tried to leave the harbor at New London, Connecticut, which at the time was under a British blockade. A set of blue lights had appeared in the area, interpreted by Decatur as a signal by traitorous New Londoners to the British fleet that the American ships were making a run out of the harbor. Decatur turned back the squadron and a major controversy ensued.

This information was helpful but still lacked detail to determine

exactly what was seen. We dug further and, based upon accounts contemporary to the time, we get the following story.

In the Connecticut Gazette, published in New London, for December 15, 1813, the first report appeared:

"It will astonish every American who has one spark left to kindle into a flame the love of our country, when we state as a fact, for which we vouch - that on Sunday evening last, when the report was current that our squadron would put to sea before the next morning -- in the course of the night Blue Lights were raised on the heights both at Groton and on this side of the entrance of our harbor; evidently designed as signals to the British fleet. This has excited the highest indignation, and the most decisive measures are taken to direct and bring to condign punishment the traitorous wretches, who dare thus to give the enemy every advantage over those great and gallant men, who in the war with Tripoli, and in the present contest, have surrounded the American Stars, with a lustre which cannot be eclipsed."

A follow-up report responded to questions of doubt about the reality of the initial event by outside press (Connecticut Gazette, December 21, 1813):

"We stated in our last number that on Sunday evening preceding, when the report was current that our squadron would put to sea before morning, blue lights were raised at the entrance of our harbor, evidently designed as signals to the British fleet. The correctness of this statement has been questioned by newspapers at a distance; we therefore now state, and state on the authority of Commodore Decatur, Capt. Jones and Capt. Biddle, that the officers and men of the Hornet stationed as look-outs, distinctly saw and noticed Blue Lights shown on both sides of the river; and that soon after, signals were made from one of the enemy's ships, which they presumed were in consequence of those made from the shore. The officer of the Macedonian who was rowing guard, on the same evening, together with all the men composing the boat's crew, saw blue lights made on both sides of the river, and immediately returned to the ship to report the same to his commanding officer. These persons are familiar with the making of signals, and could not mistake the common lights of the shore, for blue lights."

The Niles Weekly Register made the news about the strange blue lights national in its December 25, 1813 edition, announcing how the lights appeared on the heights around New London, again in the belief that they were traitorous signals.

In the meantime, infuriated by the seemingly traitorous act, Commodore Decatur sent a letter from New London, dated December 20, 1813, to the Secretary of the Navy, William Jones:

"Some few nights since, the weather promised an opportunity for this squadron to get to sea, and it was said on shore that we intended to make the attempt. In the course of the evening two blue lights were burnt on both the points at the harbor's mouth as signals to the enemy, and there is not a doubt, but that they have, by signals and otherwise, instantaneous information of our movements. Great but unsuccessful exertions have been made to detect those who communicate with the enemy by signal. The editor

of the New London Gazette, to alarm them and in the hope to prevent the repetition of these signals, stated in that newspaper, that they had been observed, and ventured to denounce those who had made them in animated and indignant terms. The consequence is that he has incurred the express censure of some of his neighbors. Notwithstanding these signals have been REPEATED, and have been seen by twenty persons at least in this squadron, there are men in New London who have the hardihood to affect to disbelieve it, and the affrontery to avow their disbelief. I am, sir, with the highest consideration and respect, your very obedient and humble servant, STEPHEN DECATUR."

We should interject at this point the curious way in which the Blue Light affair parallels modern-day UFO flaps. First, we would like to stress that in no way can one make of the blue lights evidence of extraterrestrial intervention. We are dealing with the sighting of unexplained lights and that is all.

We have a number of "expert witnesses," i.e. military men attesting to the reality of the lights. With little wasted time, other news media outside of the sighting area expressed doubts about the lights. A comment from the Rhode Island American for example, quoted in Niles Weekly Register of January 1, 1814, represented this attitude:

"In our paper of Friday last we republished from the N. London Gazette, an account respecting the exhibition of blue lights, on the heights near that place, designed as signals to the enemy's fleet. We were unwilling to believe that any of our citizens could be guilty of so gross an outrage on the laws of their country; and are happy now to have it our power to state on the authority of a respectable paper published at Norwich, that the statement was TOTALLY INCORRECT. It appears that on the night of Sunday the 12th inst. blue lights from the enemy's ships were discernible from our guard boats; but none were seen proceeding from the land."

So here we see an authoritative attempt to debunk the reports by the witnesses from an upstanding newspaper. The blue light witnesses, when confronted with such negative observations, reacted angrily, asserting that the lights were indeed real. Additional, but contradictory, reports appear, verifying lights but not the ones on the heights above New London. These new sightings support an explainable scenario for the lights, being simply lights from British ships, and getting the citizens of New London off the hook for being thought to be traitors.

How much politicking was influencing some of the press coverage is unknown. The fact was lights were seen and a serious debate erupted. What was the truth? Niles Weekly Register, January 8, 1814:

"It is astonishing to observe the efforts made to invalidate the truth of the report respecting the 'blue lights' exhibited on the shores of New London. With impudence unparalleled, the facts are denied in toto, and the thing is twisted and turned a thousand ways to weaken its force; for the people are alarmed and shocked at the vile treason, and begin to see the lengths to which the attachment of some to the enemy, will carry them.-- But these folks have sown for themselves a full harvest of mortification, and we hope they may reap the crop in repentance: they had not yet seen Decatur's letter to the secretary of the navy. Hardened as they are, they will not say that it is false."

Further, January 12, 1814, Connecticut Gazette - "On Sunday night

about 10 O'Clock blue lights were again exhibited on both sides of the river and were answered by all the British ships. At this time a sloop was passing Fort Trumbull. The lights were distinctly seen by a number of military and naval officers."

Apparently, enough was enough! On January 24, 1814, the U.S. House of Representatives heard testimony on the "Blue Lights" affair:

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Blue Lights.

JANUARY, 1814.

MONDAY, JANUARY 24.

Two other members, to wit: from New York, SAMUEL M. HOPKINS and NATHANIEL W. HOWELL, appeared and took their seats.

ISAAC WILLIAMS, jr., also appeared, was qualified, and took his seat, as one of the Representatives from the State of New York, in the place of J. M. Bowers, who has been declared not entitled to a seat.

Mr. JENNINGS presented a petition of the Legislature of the Indiana Territory, that the judges in said Territory, appointed by the authority of the United States, may be instructed to submit to and perform certain judicial services required of them by the said Legislature.—Referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. EPPES, from the Committee of Ways and Means, reported a bill for the relief of Henry Fanning; which was read twice, and committed to a Committee of the Whole.

BLUE LIGHTS.

Mr. LAW observed that there was a subject which for some time past had caused much speculation, and excited some irritation. It has appeared in a variety of shapes, and given rise to many observations. It has been the theme of public prints. It has been solemnly introduced in debate on this floor—it has been ushered before the public, through the Head of a Department, and has acquired unusual currency, and some degree of credit, by the manner in which it has gained publicity. That which was at first mere rumor, has, by a species of official acts, become in some measure confirmed; and characters, perhaps not intended to be embraced, have been implicated, and exposed to erimination and reproach. From zeal to impute blame to one class of citizens, it may, on due examination, be found they have cast odium on men of another description, whom I presume they had no intention to injure. Eager to spread the story, they may find, on further inquiry, they have involved their friends as well as those they deem their enemies. Had the subject been confined to vague rumor, it certainly would not have deserved the trouble of an examination in this place. But when we consider it comes before the public in the form of a letter addressed to the Head of a Department, from a highly distinguished and meritorious officer, and through that channel issued to the world with a sort of official authenticity;—when we consider it has been more than once repeated by honorable gentlemen within these walls; and, above all, when we consider on whom the stigma must attach, if the report be founded on fact, it rises above idle report, assumes a character of importance, and presents a subject for investigation not beneath the dignity of this House. I allude to the *blue lights*, so called, which are said to have been displayed at or near the harbor of New London, in the manner stated by gentlemen some days since in this place; for surely no men ought to rest under such foul reproach, without proof of the fact. It is a charge, if not of direct treason within the limits of the Constitution, in adhering to the

enemy, giving them aid and comfort, is at least a charge of giving that enemy light and information, whereby they may be better able to carry on the war, check the movements and defeat the operations of our own ships. The resolution I am about to submit, is not induced from a belief in my mind that it is correct in fact; for I have no hesitation in declaring it as my belief, grounded on information derived from gentlemen in that vicinity, of the first respectability, that it is incorrect. Nor do I seek the inquiry because I think the State from whence I came can be chargeable with acts which the Constitution forbids; or that I am willing to believe my native down contains among her citizens men so abandoned as to light torches, as signals to the enemy, which would in all probability lead to the destruction of their own dwellings. The conduct of the citizens of Connecticut is well known, and gratefully acknowledged by the General Government, in protecting their property, when they were unable to protect it themselves—their conduct in keeping at bay the proud and insulting ships of Great Britain, which, without their voluntary aid, might have captured or destroyed a part of that Navy which sustains our hopes and buoys up the national character, would seem to forbid and preclude all suspicion against them as the perpetrators of such deeds. Sir, the State of Connecticut has felt a pride in protecting that charge, unfortunately committed to their care. But if men, of whatever station or politics, are to be found, who attach to them the slightest suspicion of treachery, in relation to the American ships now in that harbor, they will, on a plain statement of facts, at once dismiss their jealousies and acquit that State and its citizens from the charge raised against them, or the suspicion, if it does not vanish, must be extended to others for whom they are not responsible.

It will be recollected, that Commodore Decatur arrived with his squadron in the harbor of New London the beginning of June last, being driven into that port by a superior British force, which has continued to invest that port, and will continue to blockade it, doubtless with an intention of depriving the country of the skill and exertion of that valuable and distinguished officer, during the present war. At this time, one year after war was declared, the United States had not troops at that place adequate to the protection or defence of the ships; at this critical moment the State of Connecticut, although not approving of the war, called forth her patriotic sons, and the inhabitants of New London were not backward on the occasion to protect the coast of the country, defend their own soil, exposed to danger by the acts of the General Government, and resist the enemy. At the beat of the drum, they repaired to the scene of danger; they occupied the adjacent heights; they guarded the points of the harbor and defended the coast. For months, during the time these watchmen, faithful to themselves and their country, were on duty in your service, no charge of disloyalty was heard against them—no surmises of treason were circulated

From:

"Annals of
Congress"

13th Congress
2nd Session

pgs. 1123-28

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Blue Lights.

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against the citizens. About the first of November, the United States having collected, as was supposed, a competent number of troops, and having repaired the fort on the east side of the harbor, the detachments from Connecticut were dismissed, with the thanks of that State and the approbation of the General Government. From this period the United States troops, occupying the forts on each side of the harbor, commanded the adjacent heights, kept or ought to have kept guards on the points near the enemy's ships, to watch his movements and detect any improper intercourse from the shores. Yet on these very heights and points, these wicked torches, these mysterious lights, are said to have been raised, if they were exhibited as represented. Now, sir, I know the officers commanding on this station; they are faithful and honorable men—and I am bound to presume they have performed their duty; but the report casts censure on them, or at least implies a neglect of duty and want of vigilance in them, which I am unwilling to attach to them, without further proof. The subject merits inquiry; if the report is correct let the censure fall on those who have incurred it—if incorrect, let the reproach be wiped away. With a view, therefore, to ascertain the facts correctly, I move the following resolution:

Resolved, That a committee be appointed to inquire whether any treasonable correspondence has been held, or information given, by means of blue lights, or signals by fire, given from the shores at or near the harbor of New London, in the State of Connecticut, to the blockading squadron off that harbor, whereby the enemy might learn the state, condition, or movements of the American ships, under the command of Commodore Decatur, now in that port; and that the committee be authorized to take evidence by deposition, or otherwise, as they shall deem necessary, and report thereon to this House.

The House agreed to consider the resolution.

Mr. MOSLEY.—Mr. Speaker, I hope the resolution offered by my honorable colleague will be agreed to, and that a committee may be appointed to make the inquiry proposed. It could, perhaps, hardly be expected that this subject of blue lights should claim the attention of this House, were it not for the consequence given to it by the various circumstances which have just been stated by the mover of the resolution, and which I need not repeat.

Sir, as a citizen of Connecticut, I feel no particular solicitude, lest the character of that State should suffer by any representations which have been made, or which may be made on this subject.

From the best information I have been able to obtain, I am very much inclined, with my colleague, to discredit the reports which have been put into circulation respecting these blue lights. I am induced to believe, that upon due examination it will be found, that there has been some mistake in this business. But, admitting that these blue lights have in fact been seen in the manner represented—it is clear from the statement made by my colleague, who resides at New London, and must be perfectly acquainted with

the situation of the country, as well as from the representation made by a great number of the most respectable citizens of that place, that they could not be made by any private person without detection. Troops of the United States were standing on each side of the harbor, and, it is to be presumed, they would guard each of the points where these blue lights are said to have been exhibited.

There are, or ought to be, guards or patrols constantly maintained, and especially in the night season. No person could, therefore, without discovery, exhibit these lights at the places where they are said to have been seen. It follows therefore, if they were indeed seen, as has been represented, either that these troops must have been criminally inattentive to their duty, or themselves privy to the deed. Neither of these conclusions ought to be drawn upon slight ground. And this view of the case makes it more important, that the proper inquiry should be had. I hope, therefore, that the subject may be duly investigated by a committee of this House, and that the public may be possessed of the true state of facts respecting the blue lights, which have excited so much attention and assumed so much importance.

As to any animadversions which they may have occasioned in this House, I do not attach so much importance to them, as they appear to merit in the estimation of my colleague.

Blue lights, I presume, have occasionally been brought into debate, as certain other terms frequently are, without any real or specific meaning, but simply by way of ornament or embellishment to a speech, such as Old tory, British gold, Henryism, &c.; and if any honorable gentleman should at any time consider that blue lights, regularly interspersed in his speech, would render it more lucid or brilliant, I certainly would not wish to deprive him of any benefit which he may propose to himself from the use of them in this way.

Sir, it cannot be necessary, I apprehend, to add further remarks at this time. The committee proposed, I hope, will be appointed, that it may be ascertained if practicable in the first place whether any blue lights have in fact been displayed as signals to the enemy; and if so, by whom, and in what manner. That the odium of so detestable and treasonable a deed may fall where it ought.

Mr. GRUNDY, of Tennessee, said the sensibility displayed by the gentlemen from Connecticut on this subject was most honorable to themselves; and he certainly concurred with them in the hope that upon examination it would appear that no portion of the people of that State were capable of an act so base and dishonorable. So far, however, as his mind had been impressed, he differed from the gentleman who appeared to think there was no foundation for the report. It ought to be recollected that the commander of the American squadron, whose authority could not be questioned, had stated what was his impression, derived from the information of the officers and men under his command. The same impression was confirmed on the mind of Mr. G. by the statements

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Turreau's Letter.

JANUARY, 1814.

of newspapers on the spot, conducted by those who differed from him in politics, narrating the circumstance which had been alluded to. He should vote for the inquiry, but he did not wish to see a departure from the regular course. The inquiry belonged properly to the Naval Committee, he conceived—because it was the Navy which was intended to have been particularly injured by the exhibition of those lights. He moved to amend the resolution so as to refer the subject to that committee.

Mr. FISK, of New York, said he was sorry to hear a wish expressed by the gentleman from Tennessee for the proposed inquiry. When he looked at the principle of this motion, he trembled at the consequences of its adoption. What was the principle? It was nothing more than a proposition to exercise, through a committee of this House, the inquisitorial power to inquire whether treason has been committed in a particular instance. He hoped no such precedent would receive the sanction of the House.

Mr. ERBES, of Virginia, remarked, that the adoption of such a resolution as this would place the House of Representatives in an awkward situation. It was unquestionably the right of the House to inquire into all things connected with subjects of legislation; but, to justify this inquiry, it ought to be for some specific object. He, therefore, proposed to amend the motion, so as to constitute a committee to inquire into the expediency of providing by law for the punishment of persons who hold out blue lights to the enemy, or commit other acts of a like nature, not amounting to the crime of treason.

Mr. ROBERTS, of Pennsylvania, on the ground that the House appeared to be embarrassed by the nature of this question, and not prepared to decide on it, moved that it lie on the table.

Mr. LAW explained his motive for submitting the motion. It was not on account of its intrinsic importance, but from the importance which he had attached to it by its frequent introduction and assertion on the floor of this House.

Mr. JACKSON, of Virginia, said he was not prepared, nor did he know that he ever should be, to act on the subject, and, therefore, he wished the motion to be laid on the table. Was this House, he asked, to be erected into a court of inquiry or judicature for criminal offences? Notwithstanding, in this case, an offence has been committed, as was proved by testimony the most irrefragable—an offence which he hoped the attorney of the district would, as was his duty, direct an inquiry into—yet this House were to be called upon to travel out of their duty to inquire into it. He hoped time would at least be given for deciding on the propriety of the proposed inquiry.

Mr. ROBEA, of Tennessee, opposed the motion to lay the resolution on the table, because he wished it to be decided by a direct negative. The pendency of such a motion he apprehended would have the effect to prevent or arrest proper inquiry elsewhere.

Mr. CALHOUN, of South Carolina, said this was not an object worthy the attention of the House,

because it was too diminutive. The object avowed by the mover, that is, to defend the character of the State of Connecticut from injury on this head, was not a sufficient one for this House to proceed upon. No one had been cruel enough to charge the act in question on the citizens of New London, or on the State of Connecticut. He hoped it would lie on the table.

Mr. WRIGHT, of Maryland, expressed his surprise at the proposition of this inquiry from the side of the House in which it originated—a surprise which was not lessened by a recollection of the sensibility in that quarter the other day, when a motion for inquiry of a nearly similar nature, in the conduct of Governor Chittenden, had been proposed from this side—

The SPEAKER here interposed, and required the confinement of debate to the motion pending, viz: To lay the subject of debate on the table.

And the question was taken to lay the resolution on the table, and decided thus: For laying it the table, 89; against it, 42.

So Mr. LAW's motion was laid on the table.

The term "Blue Light Federalist" eventually became incorporated into the U.S. political lexicon to describe a traitorous person.

A strong effort had been made to conduct a full-blown inquiry into the New London blue lights but the resolution brought forth by the representative from the state of Connecticut was tabled and apparently no further action was taken to investigate the cause of the lights. Thus ended the first government inquiry into strange luminous phenomena.

Lights seen on shore, off shore. Fingerpointing in every direction as to who saw what, when and how. Henry Adams, in his History of the United States of America During the Second Administration of James Madison (Scribner's Sons, 1891, Vol. 1, pgs. 279-80) assessed the situation:

"Decatur's charge roused much ill feeling, and remained a subject of extreme delicacy with the people of New London. Perhaps Decatur would have done better not to make such an assertion until he could prove its truth. That blue lights, as well as other lights, were often seen, no

one denied; but whether they came from British or from American hands, or were burned on sea or on shore, were points much disputed. The town of New London was three miles from the river's mouth, and Decatur's squadron then lay at the town. At that distance the precise position of a light in line with the British fleet might be mistaken. Decatur's report, if it proved anything, proved that the signals were concerted, and were burnt from 'both the points at the river's mouth.' If the British admiral wanted information, he could have found little difficulty in obtaining it; but he would hardly have arranged a system of signals as visible to Decatur as to himself. Even had he done so, he might have employed men in his own service as well as Americans for the purpose. Decatur's letter admitted that he had made great exertions to detect the culprits, but without success."

UFO SKEPTIC'S CLAIM AND ITS INTERESTING CONSEQUENCE

During the December 27, 1993 airing of the nationally-syndicated television program, the Montel Williams Show, UFO critic James McGaha, a retired Air Force major, was enlisted by the show to present a "con" view of UFOs. McGaha, a member of CSICOP (the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal), gave a standard negative assessment of the subject, but at one point injected this statement into a discussion of the Air Force's handling of UFO reports:

"And in fact, the Air Force regulation today very explicitly says, no member of the United States Air Force may take a UFO report. It's a violation of Air Force regulation. That's a court-martial offense."

We were rather astonished to hear this since in all the years that we had dealt with government agencies, CAUS had never heard of a single instance of an Air Force representative being prosecuted for accepting a UFO report. Air Force officials do refer UFO witnesses to civilian law enforcement agencies, as McGaha later correctly stated, but we knew of no substantiation for the first remark.

Perhaps we were misinformed, or uninformed, about this and McGaha, being a retired officer, knew better. We decided to check and contacted the Air Force Legal Service Agency, which oversees the Air Force's military justice system. In a letter dated February 9, 1994, Loren Perlstein, Associate Chief of the Military Justice Division of AFLSA responded:

"We have researched our files and found no cases involving even the word 'UFO' or 'unidentified flying object', much less anyone being prosecuted for anything related to UFOs. This of course does not preclude the existence of a regulation such as the one described in your letter, so we contacted the legal section at Headquarters, Air Force Space Command. Like us, they have no knowledge of any such regulation. From a practical point of view, we know of no reason why anyone who accepts a UFO report would be court-martialed."

The Air Force's response decisively rebuts McGaha's claim. Yet it goes further on another angle. We were fascinated to see that there apparently isn't a single case in the Air Force's legal system where UFOs were an issue in a prosecution. There of course have been widespread claims through the years that UFO witnesses were threatened with pension revokation, fines or prison terms if such stories became public. JANAP 146 (Joint Army Navy Air Force Publication) for many years required that

UFO reports by military personnel be kept from the public, a violation of which could be prosecuted under the U.S. Communications Act of 1934, as amended, and Title 18 of the U.S. Code, Chapter 37, as amended. Both involved fines and/or prison terms. We know that military UFO reports have been leaked to the public a great many times. But none of this has ever been brought to a court-martial! If such cases were prosecuted secretly, then we would like to know, with hard paperwork, who was affected in this way, considering that the Air Force is saying that no such cases existed.

It seems to us that given the extensive leaks of military UFO information, including large amounts of witnesses' testimony in crashed-saucer incidents, and Air Force denials at having prosecuted a single UFO-related case, there should no longer be a concern for "national security" with regard to unidentified flying objects. All current or ex-military personnel should feel comfortable in discussing UFO information without fear of legal retaliation. The Air Force, in their entire history, and by their own admission, have done nothing to punish any individual on this basis.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY - All subscribers, correspondents and exchange publications must send communications to CAUS, Box 176, Stoneham, Massachusetts 02180. This will be the only CAUS headquarters address hereon.

Due to an impending retirement and move to Florida, Lawrence Fawcett will be indefinitely suspending his activities with CAUS.

Larry Fawcett and this editor revived Just Cause in 1984 after a hiatus from its original publication schedule under Todd Zechel, then Larry Bryant. We felt that the logical follow-up to the appearance of CLEAR INTENT (now THE UFO COVER UP) was to publish a newsletter to update the various news events and document releases on government UFO activity past and present. As a result of what we had learned not just before but after the book came out, Just Cause evolved into its present form - an organ that reports, analyzes and often critiques events related to government interest in UFOs, as well as civilian UFO research's attitudes towards the same.

Rather than being drum-beating advocates of government conspiracies executed to a perfection unlike that seen in any other field of endeavor, we wanted to be more realistic. Like just about everyone who has been involved in UFOs for any length of time, we believed that the government somehow had the "answer" to the phenomena. Quite often government gaffes lent strong support to the notion that answers were being hidden.

We no longer believe that the government, or any government, has an answer. We do believe that much information is still being withheld from public view. Maybe an answer is there but it will have to be found. Our belief in anything doesn't matter -- proof is what matters. This is why we were created as an organization; to sift what is in government records and give straight assessments. There are still gaping holes in the history of the UFO phenomena and we have undertaken to deal with that aspect as well. The present is understood only in the context of the past.

Larry Fawcett's devotion to UFO investigations dates back more than thirty years. He was the Early Warning Coordinator in New England for the Air Force's Condon Committee, a prime investigator in the famous "Andreasson Affair," and a tireless lecturer. He will be taking a well-deserved break. There will be no appreciable change in Just Cause, except that now the editorial "we" will be the "I" of this editor. Good luck Larry!

THE MANTELL "UFO" - A SMOKING GUN, MAYBE!

(We wanted to do a more extensive treatment of this story for the current issue. However, late information is still being analyzed, and we feel it is important to begin the report now and not delay further an already-late newsletter.)

For those unfamiliar with the Mantell story: On January 7, 1948, a series of UFO incidents took place over central Kentucky. Beginning about 1 PM, reports came to the police about a strange object over Elizabethtown, Kentucky. Additional reports from other towns increased concern, so the state police contacted Fort Knox military police to advise them of a circular object, 250-300 feet in diameter, moving westward. Fort Knox police in due time advised authorities at Godman Field near Fort Knox. Tower personnel at Godman were now involved as witnesses, describing the object as like a "parachute with the bright sun shining on top of the silk." Another said, "It appeared round and whiter than the clouds that passed in front of it and it could be seen through cirrus clouds." Still another thought it looked like "an ice cream cone topped with red." The object seemed to remain stationary for about 1½ hours.

A flight of four P-51 aircraft were in the area, ferrying grounded aircraft from Marietta Army Air Base in Georgia to Standiford Air Field in Kentucky. Among the pilots was Captain Thomas Mantell of the Kentucky National Guard.

Asked by Godman Tower to investigate the UFO, three of the aircraft, including Mantell's, sped off in pursuit. Mantell's wingmen broke off the chase at 22,500 feet, but Mantell continued despite being ill-equipped with no oxygen for high-altitude flight (the original flight plan called for a cruising altitude of 4000 feet, well below the need to use oxygen). Mantell closed in on the UFO, describing it as being metallic and of tremendous size. At 3:18 PM, Mantell's plane dove into the ground at Franklin, Kentucky, killing him instantly.

It was determined that in all likelihood Mantell blacked out at high altitude of oxygen deprivation and lost control of the P-51.

What was the object? Initially, the planet Venus was the Air Force's choice explanation but later discarded that, opting for a Skyhook balloon (a then-classified, large-diameter balloon planned to be used for reconnaissance and research), probably, according to the Air Force, launched from Clinton County Air Base in Ohio sometime earlier.

Clinton County had their own UFO activity thereafter. At 7:35 PM, January 7th, a point of light was sighted to the southwest by base personnel. At first it appeared to remain stationary and gave off a red glow, but shortly after it began a series of up and down movements, changing from red to green and eventually disappearing southwestward at 7:55 PM.

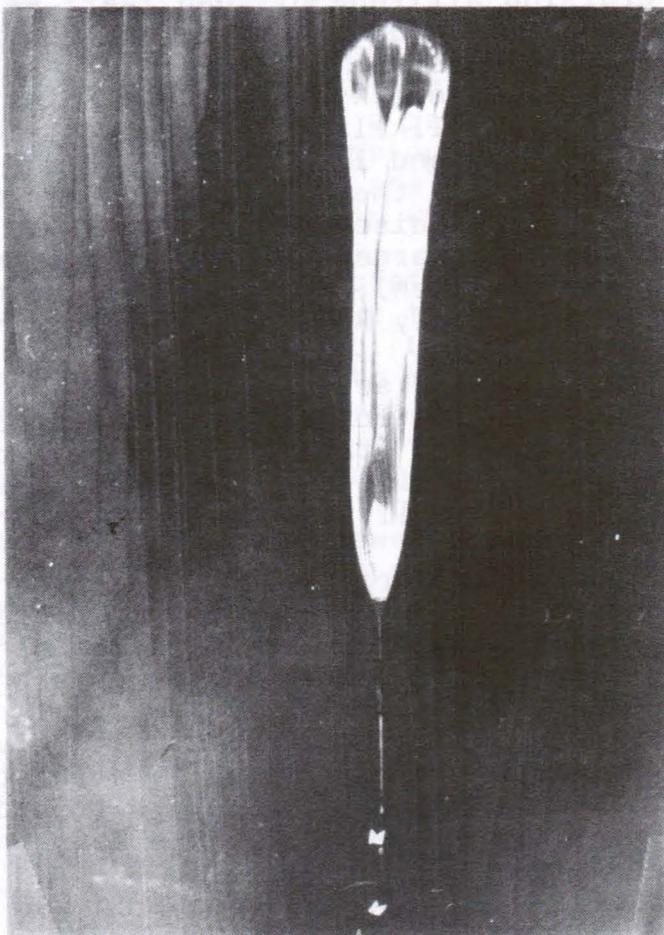
Another witness saw the object through binoculars and said that the object was cone-shaped with the pointed end down, colored white and changing to red while trailing a green mist. The bouncing movement was noted as well, seeming like a flare being tossed in a thermal air current.

A Nashville, Tennessee astronomer from Vanderbilt University had seen a strange object in the south-southeast shortly after the Mantell encounter. He described it as a pear-shaped balloon with a cable and basket attached, moving SSE at 25,000 feet at 10 MPH between 4:30-4:45 PM.

It is necessary to retell this famous incident in UFO research

because it will all be very important in our next report in trying to assess what really happened to Mantell and what was responsible for all of the other sightings in and around Kentucky on January 7, 1948.

In the meantime, the following photographs are included with this report. Their relevancy to the Mantell story and how they were found will be explained in the next issue.



Photographs of a Skyhook balloon launching from Camp Ripley, Minnesota by personnel of the General Mills Research Laboratories.

Courtesy:
Professor Charles Moore