

UFO POTPOURRI

no. 367

UFO debate continues half a century later

IRVING (AP) — Both sides in a UFO debate remain light years apart nearly half a century after the Army claimed briefly it had recovered a flying disc in New Mexico.

Experts at a weekend conference agreed the 1947 announcement in Roswell was a big mistake. They disagreed heatedly over how the mistake was made.

"The many rumors regarding the flying disc became a reality yesterday when the intelligence office of

the 509th Bomb Group . . . was fortunate enough to gain possession of the disc," said the 1947 release prepared by 1st Lt. Walter Haut.

Skeptics said there is no hard evidence the wreckage was anything other than the remains of a military balloon. That was the Army's final explanation after the wreckage was flown aboard a B-29 to Fort Worth.

The release was issued on the authority of an intelligence officer

who was unable to identify the wreckage, Philip J. Klass, former senior editor of *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, said at the national meeting of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal.

Some researchers of unidentified flying object reports believe the government goofed in 1947 by calling attention to the find — and has had to cover up the discovery ever since.

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Houston Chronicle

Monday, Oct. 19, 1992

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN
March 25, 1876

A Shower of Meat.

The Bath County (Ky.) *News* says: On Friday, March 3, 1876, a shower of meat fell near the house of Allen Crouch, who lives some two or three miles from the Olympian Springs in the southern portion of the county, covering a strip of ground about one hundred yards in length and fifty wide. Mrs. Crouch was out in the yard at the time, engaged in making soap, when meat which looked like beef began to fall around her. The sky was perfectly clear at the time, and she said it fell like large snow flakes, the pieces as a general thing not being much larger. One piece fell near her which was three or four inches square. Mr. Harrison Gill, whose veracity is unquestionable, and from whom we obtain the above facts, hearing of the occurrence, visited the locality the next day, and says he saw particles of meat sticking to the fences and scattered over the ground. The meat when it fell appeared to be perfectly fresh.

The correspondent of the *Louisville Commercial*, writing from Mount Sterling, corroborates the above, and says the pieces of flesh were of various sizes and shapes, some of them being two inches square. Two gentlemen, who tasted the meat, expressed the opinion that it was either mutton or venison.

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN
March 23, 1901

Prof. Pickering makes the following statement relative to the light flash from Mars: "Early in December we received from the Lowell Observatory in Arizona a telegram that a shaft of light had been seen to project from Mars (the Lowell Observatory makes a specialty of Mars) lasting seventy minutes. I wired these facts to Europe and sent out neostyle copies through this country. The observer there is a careful, reliable man and there is no reason to doubt that the light existed. It was given as from a well-known geographical point of Mars. That was all. Now the story has gone the world over. In Europe it is stated that I have been in communication with Mars, and all sorts of exaggerations have sprung up. Whatever the light was, we have no means of knowing. Whether it had intelligence or not, no one can say. It is absolutely inexplicable."

NATURE

AUGUST 11, 1898]

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IN connection with the reports which have appeared from time to time that Andrée's and other balloons have been sighted in the distance, it is worth while to direct attention to an observation recorded by Mr. F. F. Payne in the *Canadian Monthly Weather Review*. Looking at the sky one afternoon, Mr. Payne saw a large, grey, pear-shaped object sailing rapidly across, immediately behind a thin stratum of cirro-stratus cloud. At first the object was taken for a balloon, its outline being sharply defined, and its shape and size exactly corresponding to one; but as no cage was seen, it was concluded that it must be a mass of cloud, and after watching it for about six minutes, its mass became less dense and finally it disappeared. Whilst no whirling motion could be noticed, this balloon-like mass was undoubtedly of cyclonic formation, appearing less elongated when viewed at a distance probably of a mile and only about 30° from the zenith. The observation suggests an origin for strange war balloons and other aerial machines occasionally reported as having been sighted.

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN
August 1, 1896

Astronomical.

A dispatch from Geneva, New York, dated July 22, says:

"Prof. William R. Brooks, director of Smith Observatory, while observing the moon last night with the large telescope, made a most interesting and unique discovery. A dark round object was seen to pass rather slowly across the moon in a horizontal direction. Prof. Brooks believes that it was the passage of a dark meteor between the earth and the moon, far beyond the earth's atmosphere, so that it remained non-luminous. The observation is new in astronomical records."

BY JOHN F. SCHUESSLER

P. O. BOX 58485

HOUSTON, TEXAS 77258-8485

Lying by the Book

Dissembling by public officials is probably as old as government. Certainly the practice has become a tradition in Washington. During the 1950s and 1960s, for example, U.S. Army planes carried out mock biological warfare attacks against American and Canadian cities by spraying them with live—though supposedly harmless—bacteria. If local officials asked what was going on, the army said it was testing a radar-deflecting chaff.

One might think that such prevarication—whether justified or not—is done on an ad hoc, seat-of-the-pants basis. That might have been the case previously, but no more. The Bush administration has actually drafted regulations on the use of deception to provide cover for secret programs. Bureaucrats' passion for secrecy, it seems, is exceeded only by their passion for codification.

The regulations are part of the National Industrial Security Program Operating Manual, which sets forth security procedures for government agencies and contractors involved with classified programs. Recently the Department of Defense generated a supplement to the manual for "special access" (also called "black") programs, whose existence cannot even be acknowledged. Dated May 29, 1992, and stamped "draft," the supplement states:

Cover stories may be established for unacknowledged programs in order to protect the integrity of the program from individuals who do not have a need to know. Cover stories must be believable and cannot reveal any information regarding the true nature of the contract. Cover stories for Special Access Programs must have the approval of the PSO [Program Security Officer] prior to dissemination.

The supplement also notes that special access programs must have "nonattributable" telephone lines,

also called "Hello lines," connecting them to the outside world. Personnel who answer such a telephone must "state the proper salutation, e.g. Good Morning or Hello. Do not use the company name."

Steven Aftergood of the Federation of American Scientists, which made the supplement public, professes to be shocked at the cover-story policy, which he calls "officially sanctioned lying." "One can see situations where this might be warranted, maybe in the midst of wartime," he says. "But this is not sufficiently well defined to convince me that it is limited. It's obviously a very dangerous practice, because it can corrupt the public discourse."

Susan Hansen, a spokesperson for the Pentagon, grumbles that the document on cover stories was confidential. "Whoever sent it to you was unauthorized," she says. She points out, furthermore, that the document is an unapproved draft version that "does not represent the policy of the federal government."

But does this statement itself represent a cover story? According to a Senate staff member specializing in security issues, the Bush administration has already implemented the cover-story policy—with the complicity of some congressional oversight committees. Indeed, the administration has consulted with Congress before disseminating cover stories about several "major programs" to the media, the staffer says. Such as? "Sorry, I can't tell you that," he replies.

The staff member emphasizes that Congress, although it gives its approval to cover stories when the need for security seems clear, does not actively participate in the deception. Indeed, Congress is trying to reduce the need for such deception by cutting the number of black programs to a minimum. "It's a very uncomfortable situation in the democratic framework to lie about what you're doing," he acknowledges. —John Horgan

★ The Houston Post/Tuesday, October 27, 1992

CAMPAIGN

White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater labeled Perot's charges "crazy" and compared him to people who believe in UFOs.

"This man simply can't tell the truth," Fitzwater said, and challenged the media to investigate Perot's allegations.

Otherwise, the voters might elect "a paranoid person who has delusions," he said.

Asked why the White House bothered to rebut Perot's allegations, Fitzwater said, "we don't have any choice. He makes those kinds of charges, we have to respond."

Houston Chronicle

Tuesday, Oct. 27, 1992

"I am sick and tired of you all questioning my integrity without a basis for it," Perot said. "I am sick and tired of you ignoring the people who can confirm the articles when you print or run your stories."

Despite his protestations that he could accept the Bush campaign's denial of any smear campaign and did not want to dwell on the subject, the allegations dominated Perot's briefing and the presidential campaign news Monday.

In Denver, Fitzwater denounced Perot's charges as cheap politics but conceded that Perot really believes the Bush campaign tried to sabotage his campaign.

"It's so crazy that he seems to have latched onto this theory, much like other people latch onto UFO theories. And he seems to believe it," Fitzwater said.

He called on the media to investigate "this crazy man's theories" and help "prevent us from electing a paranoid person who has delusions."