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Rev A.H. Debram

'It's a long sharp

right now ... h

# UFO M

## Plane vanishes after 'loud metallic noise'

By ROBIN SOUTHEY



Mr VALENTICH

A MASSIVE sea and air search was continuing last night for a light aircraft which vanished over Bass Strait seconds after the pilot reported he was being followed by an unidentified flying object.

The pilot, Mr Frederick Valentich, 20, of Avondale Heights, a Melbourne suburb, was on a flight from Melbourne to King Island on Saturday night when radio contact was lost at 7.12 pm.

The plane, a \$43,000 single-engined Cessna 182, is owned by Southern Air Services, of Moorabbin. Only the pilot was on board.

In his last minutes of radio contact near Cape Otway Mr Valentich told Melbourne control he was being followed by a large aircraft with four bright lights travelling at high speed.

The Department of Transport last night released the following tape-recording of the ground-air conversation between Melbourne Flight Service and the missing aircraft.

This is the transcript:

7.06 pm: Pilot asked Melbourne Flight Service Unit whether there was any known traffic in the area below 5000ft.

Flight Service Unit: No known traffic.

Aircraft: Seems to be a large aircraft below 5000ft.

FSU: What type of aircraft?

Aircraft: I can't confirm. It has four bright lights. Appear to be landing lights. Aircraft has just passed over me about 1000ft above.

FSU: Is large aircraft confirmed?

Always  
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to fly:  
father

By CAROLYN ARMSTRONG

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FREDERICK Valentich's only ambition was to be a pilot, his father, Mr Guido Valentich, said last night.

"Once I took him down to Moorabbin and we went up in an aeroplane and ever since then he wanted to be a pilot," Mr Valentich said.

"I didn't take much notice until he was 17 and he joined the Air Training Corps."

A calm Mr Valentich explained last night that his son had left at 6.15 p.m. on Saturday to fly to King Island to pick up some lobsters for the officers of the Air Training Corps. "He intended to get back at 10 o'clock the same night," he said. "We were expecting him home because another family was having a social reunion, and he was coming too."

Frederick Valentich had never flown to King Island at night before although he had made three or four trips there in daylight.

The young pilot had an instrument rating and he had flown with an unrestricted licence since February.

He spent three years in the Air Training Corps before becoming an instructor.

He did most of his pilot training with Southern Air Services and had to pass only meteorology and aerodrome legislation before gaining his commercial licence.

"He was very keen, quite good and not over confident," Mr Valentich said.

Mr and Mrs Valentich have three other children, Richard 12, and twin girls, Olivia and Lara, 4.

FSU: What type of aircraft?

Aircraft: I can't confirm. It has four bright lights. Appear to be landing lights. Aircraft has just passed over me about 1000ft above.

FSU: Is large aircraft confirmed?

Aircraft: Affirmative. At the speed it's travelling, are there any RAAF aircraft in the vicinity?

FSU: Negative.

## "IT'S NOT AN AIRCRAFT"

7.08 pm. Aircraft: Melbourne, it's approaching from due east toward me. It seems to be playing some sort of game. Flying at speed I cannot estimate.

FSU: What is your altitude?

Aircraft: 4500ft.

FSU: Can you confirm you can't identify aircraft?

Aircraft: Affirmative.

7.09 pm. Aircraft: It's not an aircraft. It's . . . (break in transmission).

FSU: Can you describe aircraft?

Aircraft: It is flying past. It is a long shape. Cannot identify more than that. Coming for me right now. It seems to be stationary. I'm orbiting and the thing is orbiting on top of me also. It has a green light and sort of metallic light on the outside.

Aircraft then said the object vanished.

FSU: Confirm it has vanished.

Aircraft: Affirmative. Do you know what sort of aircraft I've got? Is it military?

FSU: No. No military traffic in the area.

7.12 pm. Aircraft: Engine is rough-idling and is coughing.

FSU: What are your intentions?

Aircraft: Proceeding to King Island. Unknown aircraft now hovering on top of me.

FSU Acknowledged that message.

There was then a long metallic noise on the radio and contact with the aircraft was lost.

Light aircraft began a visual and radio search when the plane failed to turn up at King Island on arrival time of 7.28 pm.

An RAAF Orion from Edinburgh, South Australia — a long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft — spent all day yesterday searching the area off Cape Otway where the plane disappeared. The pilot later reported having seen on oil slick in the area.

The Orion's navigator, Flight-Lieutenant Bill Sigston, said: "We've planted a marker buoy at the spot, about 16 miles north of Cape Wickham. Our aircraft will be able to fly direct to the spot tomorrow morning."

But the rescue co-ordination centre conducting the search from Melbourne remains mystified by the disappearance.

Conditions on Saturday night and all day yesterday were ideal, with fine weather, a mild north-westerly breeze and almost unlimited visibility.

The missing aircraft was carrying a lifejacket and a "black box" radio survival beacon transmitting on a high distress frequency.

The Australian Coastal Surveillance Organisation in Canberra has alerted all shipping and three crayfish boats equipped with radio are working their way up the west coast of King Island and toward Cape Otway on the Cessna's flight path.

A thorough land search of Cape Otway and King Island has failed to find any trace of the aircraft.

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# Plane in UFO mystery

FROM PAGE 1

The King Island flight service unit reported last night that wreckage would not be missed by an intensive search in such ideal conditions and the likelihood was that the plane was underwater.

The Department of Transport customarily treats reports of UFOs with scepticism.

An official spokesman said the pilot was not an experienced night flyer. He had been flying for 18 months and was building up hours for a commercial pilot's licence.

He had a night rating but had never flown to King Island in darkness before.

"It is possible that he could have become disorientated," the spokesman said.

"The aircraft could have inverted and he could have seen the reflections of the Cape Otway and King Island light-houses on the clouds above him."

No explanation has been given for the long, loud metallic noise heard by Melbourne control. But officials admit it was not normal.

Aviation experts were last night casting doubt on the

department's official explanation that the pilot could have been flying upside down.

The proprietor of Fogarty Fields Flying School, Mr Terry Fogarty, said it would be impossible for a pilot to fly upside down for more than 30 seconds.

Even then the pilot would be hanging in his seatbelt straps, covered in dust and books and unable to speak coherently on the radio.

In addition, the engine would fail because the Cessna 182 has a wet-sump engine which would be starved of oil.

Mr John Gorman, a private pilot who returned from King Island the same evening, said he passed Cape Otway at 5.48 pm.

"There was not a cloud in the sky," he said. "Visibility was first rate."

The lack of cloud or humidity appears to rule out St Elmo's Fire — a phenomenon which has led to a number of UFO reports from pilots.

In addition, it was scarcely dark at the time of the plane's disappearance and that would have further reduced the likelihood of the pilot's becoming

disorientated and flying upside down.

Reports from the search area indicate that the sea temperature was around eight degrees above freezing. But searchers believe a pilot would stand a good chance of survival in the water if he was wearing a life-jacket.