

# The Ordeal of John Ford

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THE ORDEAL OF JOHN FORD by Elaine Douglass

The arrest June 12 of Long Island New York UFO activist John Ford is deeply troubling. Founder in the mid-80s of the Long Island UFO Network (LIUFON), Ford became known for his relentless investigations of UFO events and for his startling allegations that alien craft had come down on Long Island three times in recent years and been retrieved by federal and local authorities.

The Suffolk County Long Island Police Department is one of the agencies John accused. John said the police helped recover a fiery object witnesses told John came down in Long Island's Southhaven Park in 1992. John made this claim at public meetings up and down Long Island, and he held a demonstration at Police Headquarters.

About a year ago scary things started happening to John Ford. He repeatedly phoned friends and said someone was harassing him and maybe, he thought, trying to kill him. Was there a campaign to destabilize John Ford?

If so, it reached its climax June 12 when John was arrested in a sting operation involving phone taps and a "wired" paid informant. Police charged John with conspiracy to murder and possession of radium without a license. Suffolk DA James Catterson told news reporters John Ford planned to murder an individual by the name of John Powell, head of the Suffolk County Republican Party, by putting radioactive radium in his toothpaste.

An improbable charge, to put it mildly. Nonetheless, the DA seemed unable to restrain himself in the media following John's arrest. He sponsored two press conferences, compared John to the unbomber, and made additional charges against John for which no indictments were subsequently returned. Amid a flood of sensational news, John's bail was set at half a million dollars. Naturally, he hasn't been able to raise it.

In the meantime, the UFO community, unused to investigators being arrested and charged with crimes, has met this unsettling drama with a stunned silence. Nor has John, on advice of his attorney, issued any statement in his own defense other than his plea of not guilty.

Not mentioned in the newspapers was John's claim of harassment, of himself and others in LIUFON: auto accidents (too many), vandalism of cars, and a physical attack on LIUFON member Joe Mazzuchelli, who was arrested with John June 12. Mazzuchelli says last winter 4 men dragged him out of John's truck, beat him up, and warned him to "stay out of our business."

Such are the allegations in this case. What is the truth? Is UFO investigator John Ford a potential murderer? Or is John the victim of a political arrest? Was he set up by people local to the Island or higher--people who got a little tired of John Ford's incessant allegations?

What were John's allegations? As anyone familiar with John knows, they were radical. For example, John believed that in 1989 Americans forced down an alien craft over Moriches Bay Long Island. He believed that in 1992 an alien craft crashed in Southhaven Park on the Island. And he considered the possibility that in 1995 another mysterious object came to earth in the Pine Barrens area of the Island and that "diversionary fires" were set to distract public attention.

John claimed the technology used to down the alien craft in 1989 came from Brookhaven National Laboratory on the Island. Based on his sightings investigations, John concluded UFOs were making regular flights over populated Hudson Valley and Long Island, much to the consternation of the coverup, which decided to do something about it. John further believed the Long Island police, fire, parks and other local agencies were commandeered by the federals to assist in these emergency operations

and then, naturally, gagged.

John claimed he had "sources" in the Police and Fire Departments who privately told him information on which he built his cases. And there were non-confidential witnesses, members of the public, who told John, for example, about a fireball coming to earth in Southhaven Park, about fire trucks and police cars that night, and that the Park was closed afterward. Yet the Fire and Police Departments denied it and the Park director said the Park was never closed. The details of John's cases are too numerous to cover here, but one treatment of the Moriches Bay case can be found in Len Stringfield's Status Report VI.

The thing about John was he wouldn't shut up. He went all over Long Island talking about a coverup of UFO events in which local authorities were deeply implicated. John founded LIUFON about 1985. From then on, he maintained a hot line. He investigated sightings and abductions. He held public meetings. He talked to the press. He sponsored conferences. He held demonstrations, he published a newsletter, he leafletted. John was tireless. I know John Ford, and he is the most determined UFO investigator I ever met.

He also has flaws, plenty of them. He is stubborn, for example. Yet John Ford's friends all attest he lived a moral life and never, as far as anyone can remember, threatened another person with bodily harm. According to John's attorney, John Rouse of Central Islip, "You can't believe how many people have called me to say they can't envision John Ford killing anyone, or even conceiving the intention."

Murder wasn't in John's character, people say, and breaking the law wasn't John's style. John Ford was a law and order advocate who spent most of his career as a Court Officer in the Suffolk County court system. John knew the law and how to use it. John was litigious, not violent. If John Ford had a gripe against you, he'd sue you in a minute.

Nor is John stupid. Even the Suffolk DA called John a "mastermind." If John was going to kill someone, would he use radium? It hardly kills people fast. Readers will recall the famous radium dial painters of the 1920s who licked radium paint brushes for 40 years before they got cancer.

Yet the DA would have us believe that John's "murder weapon" was radium. Toothpaste goes fast in a household of 4 people, like that of alleged murder target John Powell. Was Ford going to break in and put radium in Powell's toothpaste every week for 40 years until Powell got cancer?

And would an individual who thought people were watching him leave illegal radium in the back of a pickup truck in front of his house? I repeat, John knew the law.

The charges against John strain credibility, but that didn't seem to embarrass the DA. As I mentioned, Catterson was so eager to incriminate John that he made several serious charges at his press conferences for which no indictments were returned. "This," says attorney John Rouse, "is called poisoning the jury pool."

Catterson's overstep raises questions: Did the DA believe he had more evidence against John than he ended up with? How good is the remaining evidence? Is it possible the DA never thought he had evidence to convict John of anything, and that instead the purpose of the arrest is simply to ruin John Ford's reputation and wipe him out financially with legal bills?

The purported case against John rests on the taped conversation made in John's house the night of his arrest. According to police, the wired informant engaged in conversation with John and Joe Mazzuchelli about doing away with Powell and another local politician via the radium in the toothpaste route. After this the police, who were waiting outside, burst in and arrested John and Joe.

The tape has now been released on discovery. "It's unintelligible," says Preston Nichols, John's friend in LIUFON. "All I can clearly hear on that tape," Nichols says, "is the informant talking and John laughing like whatever they're talking about is a big joke."

Attorney John Rouse doesn't disagree. He's waiting for an "enhanced" version of the tape to see if the conversation becomes clearer. Rouse warns, however, that John's situation is serious. If a jury believes the DA's charges, John Ford could get 25-75 years at an upstate NY prison.

As for the radium, it was allegedly found outside in John truck. Outside is where the police were, waiting and listening to the informant talking with John and Joe. Could the police have planted the radium?

And finally, unless John was to be encouraged and entrapped, why use an informant at all? If the police believed John was plotting a murder, why not bug his house for a couple of weeks and get the whole scoop? The answer might be that the purpose of the informant was to lead the conversation in an incriminating direction.

I have in my files a letter from the Suffolk County Police Department, dated April 1993. I wrote to them, at John's request, complaining about police violations of LIUFON members' civil rights. They had been leafletting near Southaven Park and going house to house looking for witnesses--constitutionally protected activity. The police stopped them and ordered them out of the area. This was the kind of thing John did, and this was the kind of response he got from the Suffolk Police, as far back as 1993.

There is plenty of reason to think the Suffolk Police were "out to get" John Ford. And no member of the UFO community can be confident they understand the arrest of John Ford if their only source of information is the sensational media reports orchestrated by the Suffolk DA. That is why John's colleagues, including myself in Washington, DC, LIUFON vice president Steve Iavarone, and Tony West, Richard Jones, Preston Nichols, and Joe Zupardo in New York, Don Jernigan of Ohio, and Kelly Freeman of Florida, have organized the John Ford Defense Committee. Our purpose is (1) to give people true information on the arrest of John Ford, and (2) collect funds and other resources essential for John's defense.

My support for John Ford, and the support of the other members of the Defense Committee, is based on our conviction that John did not, would not, and could not conspire to murder anyone. On this point our support is complete and total.

As for John's allegations, I speak only for myself and not for other members of the Defense Committee. I always found John's allegations hard to believe but impossible to dismiss--because John had evidence and what he claimed was perfectly possible. Taken as a whole, what John Ford's claims suggest is a low intensity military conflict between the United States and the aliens. Is that possible? Yes it is.

Would the US government like to shoot alien craft down? Yes. Has this country had 50 years to work on a weapon that might accomplish that? Yes. Would the government be particularly anxious to stop UFOs from flying low over Hudson Valley and Long Island? And in event of an exigency, would local authorities have to be involved to hold the lid on? Yes and yes.

Just because John's allegations "fit" doesn't make them true. But the fact is, John had evidence. John claimed 3 events on Long Island. Even if he was wrong on 2 of them, if he was right on only one, John had a tiger by the tail. If so, it's no surprise somebody would try to destroy John Ford.

And there's that curious coincidence about Moriches Bay, which more than a few persons have pointed out. Moriches Bay is where John said the United States brought down an alien craft in 1989, and Moriches Bay is where TWA flight 800 mysteriously crashed in August. The cause of that crash, readers are aware, has so far eluded federal investigators, and in particular investigators are unable to explain the reports of more than 20 persons who say they saw an unaccountable light streaking toward flight 800 before it went down.

John Ford is the first UFO investigator to be seriously persecuted by the authorities. Shall we sit idly by while our colleague's life is destroyed? If John Ford is silenced, who is next? Contact the John Ford Defense Committee at web site [www.iwaynet.net/~pic](http://www.iwaynet.net/~pic) or email [elaine26@juno.com](mailto:elaine26@juno.com)

The Committee needs funds for John's legal defense and donations of several kinds: a psychiatrist expert witness; professional audiotape analysis; and a Long Island-based legal investigator. Please also write personal letters to: John Ford (8-29-48), Suffolk County Jail, 100 Center Dr, Riverhead NY 11901.

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