

Chuck Clark, an astronomer who has written a guide to the area, unfolds a map of the secret Air Force base, which is also known as "Dreamland" and tells tales of aircraft moving at impossible speeds between the mountains at each end of the valley. "If the authorities were completely open about it, the government would fall, the economy would collapse, religions would go crazy," he said. "Think about the implications."

The stories started in earnest in 1989, when a former U.S. government physicist said he had been researching the properties of an alien spaceship at the base. Some believe it was a craft that was said to have crashed at Roswell, New Mexico, in 1947.

The Pentagon refuses all comment on the remote, closely guarded facility. Military specialists say it has been used to test new and secret aircraft such as the Stealth bomber and that these account for most or all supposed UFO sightings.

This does nothing to shake the faith of the believers, who spend their time comparing notes on the Internet and say the U.S. military has simply learned to incorporate captured alien technology into its most advanced planes.

Pat Travis, 53, runs "The Little A-le-Inn" with her husband and says the motel's seven rooms are full for most of the year. They also do well from selling T-shirts, baseball caps, coffee mugs and other tourist paraphernalia.

"We get people from all over but it's not just business. There are strange things going on round here and some baffling questions," she said. "The government started off lying about it and now they have to keep on lying."

UFO sightings have been reported at a local ranch up the road towards the base. A man from California, who says he is an alien ambassador in human form, visits Rachel several times a year. Others come with claims of alien abduction.

There are grainy photographs several years old of the hangars and buildings that make up Area 51, but guards now prevent tourists from making their way along rough tracks to the mountain ridge from where the base can be observed.

Harold Singer, 34, helps run the Area 51 research center in Rachel -- a trailer filled with maps, satellite photographs and information. "It's growing more popular because of the end of the millennium," he said. "Every thousand years or so people say the world is going to end, they look for answers elsewhere."

His friend Marcus Pizzuti is an earnest artist who makes model aliens for the tourists. Dressed in army fatigues and wearing a pistol, Pizzuti lives in a tiny shack with his collection of pet desert lizards, boxes of the cigars he loves to smoke and a picture of his mother on a shelf.

Asked to explain why his model aliens resemble humans, even though they have larger, bald heads, he has a ready answer. "I think that we humans were made in their image, that they made us," he said. "These beings travel through the cosmos, creating new races."

So far, the only craft to have landed in Rachel is an F-16 fighter that crashed near a trailer during NATO wargames a few years ago. The only hint of danger comes from cattle that occasionally wander onto the road, into the path of cars.

The people here have yet to find that elusive visitor from another planet, but at least now they can make a living.

The state government of Nevada wants to cash in on the UFO tourist boom as well; it has designated the road that runs past Rachel as "The Extra-Terrestrial Highway" and put up signs showing flying saucers.

Experts on UFOs meet here for regular conferences and the stars of "Independence Day" visited this year as part of the huge publicity drive for the film, leaving a commemorative plaque behind.

"Man, you should have seen this place before the UFO thing," Singer said. "There wasn't nothing here. Nothing at all."

[W7]*****

Source: CNN
Date: 23rd November 1996

UFO footage stirs sensation in S. Korea

SEOUL (AP) -- A local television network showed footage of a shining object floating motionless in the sky early Friday morning.

The YTN pictures showed the object suspended in midair for about 10 minutes before it suddenly moved and disappeared.

UFO experts in South Korea said the object could have been a spaceship judging from its movements -- motionless in the sky for several minutes, and moving in several different directions before disappearing altogether.

According to South Korean Air Force officials, there were no scheduled flights at that hour.

South Korea has been hit by UFO fever in recent weeks due to alleged sightings by local photographers, which have gained widespread and prominent coverage in newspapers throughout the country.

[W8]*****

Source: Sunday Telegraph newspaper
Date: Sunday 5th January 1997

Message in the bones: we might not be alone

Bigfoot & Co

Robert Matthews

UFOs, frogs falling out of the sky, the Beast of Exmoor - perfectly sensible people have reported seeing all these things at some time or another, but all have been rejected as utterly ridiculous by scientists.

They all have something else in common: despite the protests of the scientific community, there is nothing intrinsically impossible about any of these phenomena. One might not like the idea of the Earth being visited by aliens, say, but that's a long way from proving that such visits are impossible.

Happily, every so often new discoveries leave the know-it-alls scraping egg off their faces, such as the identification of "rocks from the sky" - meteorites - as genuine chunks of interplanetary matter, and the discovery of the "extinct" coelacanth swimming happily in the Indian Ocean.

For years, explorers and forest workers have claimed to have seen large, human like beasts stalking the Earth's wilder places, from Oregon to the Himalayas. Yet despite first-hand accounts and even photographs by people of the eminence and integrity of Sir John Hunt and Eric Shipton, the vast majority of scientists have no truck with the idea that we share this planet with another human like species.

Now those who have rejected sightings of Yeti, Bigfoot and other "mythical" hominids may soon have to apologise, following new discoveries made at a remote site in Java.

According to tests on fossils found in Java, not one but three different human species co-existed on Earth around 35,000 years ago.

The theory of human evolution is notoriously controversial, but few palaeo-anthropologists doubt that modern humans - homo sapiens - are descended from homo erectus, a species which emerged in Africa around 1-6 million years ago.

Until now, no one has much worried about what happened to homo erectus - the general view is it just slowly evolved into homo sapiens as the millennia rolled by, finally disappearing around 300,000 years ago.

But now radioactive dating tests carried out by Carl Swisher of the Berkeley Geochronology Centre and his team are making that Darwinian disappearing act look a little too easy.

The researchers have been working on samples taken from a site at the Solo River in Java, where the skulls of 12 prehistoric hominids were found in the early 1930s.

Variously catalogued over the years as the remains of animals and humans, most palaeo-anthropologists now agree that they are remnants of homo erectus.

To confirm this diagnosis, a number of research teams have tried to date the remains - a task made difficult by the reluctance of the Javanese authorities to allow test samples to be taken from the skulls.

This has forced researchers to date samples taken from around where the skulls were found.

In 1985, a Japanese team dated the surrounding volcanic rock at around 250,000 years. While such a date is entirely consistent with the homo erectus picture, it could also be utterly irrelevant, as the origin of volcanic rock has little to do with the existence of humans.

Swisher and his colleagues decided to get closer to dating the skulls themselves by tracking down animal teeth that were found alongside them. Using two independent methods, the team came up with an astonishing result: the teeth were no more than 53,000 years old, and could be a little as 27,000 years old.

In other words, homo erectus survived for 250,000 years longer than anyone thought - and not only failed to "fade away", but actually co-existed with modern humans.

The situation is more remarkable still, as there was a third species of hominid around 40,000 years ago: the Neanderthals.

These hairy humanoids mysteriously vanished around 35,000 years ago - and not surprisingly, some have pinned the Yeti legend on the existence of die-hard Neanderthals in the Himalayas and elsewhere.

If Swisher and his team's dating results - reported last month in the journal Science - stand up, homo erectus managed to cling on almost 10 times longer in some parts of the world.

All those supposedly "ludicrous" sightings of hairy men by mountaineers and the like suggest that for man and his close cousins, 1997 could just be business as usual on planet Earth.

[W9]*****

Source: The Mail on Sunday newspaper
Date: Sunday 26th January 1997

Ray gun that will zap the scrap in space

>From Willima Lowther in Washington

Astronauts building an international space station high above the Earth are to be protected by a massive ray gun.

It is not that they fear an attack by aliens. Instead the ground based weapon will be used to zap space junk - thousands of pieces of debris - ranging from screwdrivers dropped by astronauts to small meteoroids.

The junk orbits Earth at 18,000 mph and could cause irreparable damage to the space station. Any such debris seen heading towards it will be targeted by the gun, and vaporised or pushed into another orbit.

The 25 million pound Sterling station is expected to have an aluminium shield strong enough to fend off flying rubbish up to a centimetre long.

Ground-based radar will monitor all approaching debris over 10cm long - the smallest size that can be tracked - and the station will be moved to another orbit.

Shuttles

The ray gun will deal with pieces between 1 and 10cm in length.

Dr George Gleghorn, chairman of Nasa's National Research Council

Committee, said: "A hit would could be catastrophic. A 10cm piece of debris would probably pass right through the shields and tear a hole in the station wall."

Assembly of the space station - a joint effort between Nasa and the Canadian, Russian, Japanese and European space agencies - will start in November and take five years. Sections will be shuttled out by rocket and fitted together in orbit.

Six scientists will live aboard the base, conducting experiments with an eye to one day colonising Mars. It will have two 'lifeboat' shuttles to carry them back to Earth in emergencies.

[W10]*****

Source: The Associated Press
Date: January 6, 1997

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) -- It wasn't even close to an encounter.

Thousands of Israelis crowded Tel Aviv beaches early Monday, watching for extraterrestrials whose arrival was predicted by self-proclaimed Israeli psychic Helinor Harar.

As the theme music from the TV show ``The X-Files'' resounded from loudspeakers, she shouted: ``Israel will be the center for UFO landings.''

Crews set up cameras across the country in hopes of filming the visitors, who Harar predicted would arrive Sunday night. But the only object she spotted was a plane about to land at Ben-Gurion airport.

Harar, who predicted Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's upset election victory, later told Israel TV she had a new date for a landing -- Feb. 14, Valentine's Day.

And she ventured another prediction: "Until they fly over Hebron, there will be no agreement.''

Israel and the Palestinians are negotiating a troop pullout from the West Bank city.

[W11]*****

Source: Albuquerque Journal,
Date: December 3, 1996

RUMORS OF ALIENS TRAIL COMET

Charges that a spacecraft is headed for Earth behind the Comet Hale-Bopp have taken on a life of their own

By John Fleck
Journal Staff Writer

An alien spacecraft is headed toward Earth, tailing Comet Hale-Bopp. NASA and the U.S. government know about it and are suppressing the telescope images that would prove it. Those charges, lurking on the Internet and talk radio since the comet was discovered in 1995, have exploded in recent weeks. The talk has been fueled by nationally syndicated late-night talk show host Art Bell and discussion groups on the Internet, where anyone who wants can weigh in. Despite debunking by scientists, the conspiracy theories have gained a momentum of their own, with the scientists who offer explanations immediately lumped in with the conspirators.

The debate has grown so intense that, two weeks ago, one Internet critic called Alan Hale, the New Mexico astronomer who discovered the comet, "an Earth traitor" after Hale helped debunk one of the latest "mystery spaceship" sightings. "This whole thing is nutty," said Hale, who said he is alternately amused and aghast at the uproar surrounding the comet that bears his name. The most popular tale is that the spacecraft is either out to destroy us or save us.

The government knows about it, according to the conspiracy theorists, and is keeping it from the public. Their evidence is a hodgepodge of speculation, information allegedly gathered telepathically from the aliens and astronomical data that, scientists say, have been misinterpreted out of ignorance. Neither Bell nor any of the other chief conspiracy theorists responded to Journal requests

for comment.

Hale-Bopp would seem an unlikely subject for an international cover-up, scientists say, simply because anyone who wants can take a look. Now 270 million miles from Earth and growing brighter, the potential comet of the century is hanging out there for anyone with a cheap telescope or even a pair of binoculars to see.

Hale, who lives in the mountains outside Cloudcroft in southern New Mexico, has been observing the comet every night it's visible, and hasn't seen anything amiss. "Don't take my word for it," he says. "Go out and look at it." Since Hale and amateur star-gazer Thomas Bopp discovered the comet in July 1995, the conspiracy theorists have latched onto the comet with a vengeance.

The evidence for the alien presence is hung from bits of truth. As astronomers gather more data on the comet's orbit, they have revised their calculations of its orbit. That has led to calls from conspiracy theorists that Hale-Bopp has "changed course," something no comet could do.

Conspiracy theorists have also made much of a perceived paucity of publicly available images from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Hubble Space Telescope. Hubble comet pictures taken in September and October, published recently in the magazine Science News, do not seem to have reduced the vehemence of those arguments. For the record, NASA scientist Jay Bergstralh, who is heading up a portion of the space agency's comet research efforts, said he has heard of no such conspiracy.

The discovery of "mysterious objects" in telescope pictures of the comet has been trumpeted by the conspiracy buffs, only to have astronomers identify them as stars in the backgrounds of the pictures.

"What's upsetting is that they won't take the time to learn," said Harvard-based astronomer Daniel Green.

If there was a mysterious object flying alongside the comet, said Green, amateur and professional astronomers around the world watching the comet would have seen and reported it.

"That's the way science works. That's the way astronomy works. You can't hide anything," said Green, who works for the International Astronomical Union, an international clearing house for such information.

The "mysterious object" pictures have nevertheless raised the conspiracy talk to a crescendo in recent weeks, led by late-night talk radio host Bell, whose syndicated show runs in Albuquerque on KOB AM (770) from midnight to 4 a.m. Last Thursday night, a guest on Bell's program claimed to have "remotely viewed" the alien spacecraft, using a sort of telepathic eyesight.

Hale said the Internet has been both a curse and a blessing. Anyone with a computer and a telephone connection can "publish" information on the Internet, a worldwide computer network. That has allowed the Hale-Bopp conspiracy theories to spread quickly, but it has also given scientists an equal forum.

But with Hale-Bopp getting brighter and likely to be major public spectacle next spring, Hale expects the wild talk to continue. "It's just going to get worse," he said.

[W12]*****

Source: New Scientist
Date: October 1996

WHERE ARE ALL THE EXTRATERRESTRIALS?

Ian Crawford wonders how common technological civilisations are in our Galaxy

THE possible evidence for ancient life on Mars has rekindled the age-old debate about life in the Universe. Certainly, if life evolved independently on Mars, why not also on just about every suitable planet in the Galaxy? But it doesn't necessarily follow that "advanced" life, and therefore technological civilisations, are also common. Far from it.

The first reason is the "absence of evidence". There are two parts to this: the failure of the SETI programmes - the search for extraterrestrial intelligence - to detect extraterrestrial radio signals, and the lack of evidence for extraterrestrial visits to Earth. The SETI argument is admittedly weak because only a small number of stars have so far been covered, and these at a limited range of radio frequencies. The second argument is stronger, and was dealt with in 1975 by Michael Hart in his seminal paper "An explanation for the absence of extraterrestrials on Earth" (Quarterly Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society, vol 16, p 16).

Hart pointed to the lack of evidence for alien visits to Earth. Certainly, Earth has never been "taken over" by extraterrestrials, as this would have put an end to our own evolution. There are only three plausible explanations. First, interstellar spaceflight is impossible. Secondly, cultural or political factors prevent alien civilisations from achieving interstellar travel, or otherwise persuade them to leave life on other planets alone. Thirdly, ET civilisations are rare or absent.

It seems unlikely that interstellar spaceflight is impossible. Even today, we can envisage propulsion strategies which might make it possible to reach between 10 and 20 per cent of the speed of light, permitting travel between nearby stars in a few decades (see The Starflight Handbook by Eugene Mallove and Gregory Matloff, John Wiley, 1989). Any civilisation with this technology would be able to colonise every planetary system in the Galaxy in about 10 million years, which is only onethousandth of the age of the Galaxy. Thus, any attempt to reconcile the "absence of evidence" with a Galaxy teeming with technological civilisations must rely on the "sociological" explanations identified by Hart. The most important of these are: that ET civilisations destroy themselves before they can develop interstellar spaceflight; that ET civilisations have no interest in colonising the Galaxy; and that ET civilisations have strong ethical codes which prevent them from interfering with primitive life forms.

The problem with all these explanations is that they appear plausible only if the number of civilisations is quite small. If the Galaxy contains thousands of technological civilisations (as SETI optimists often suppose), is it likely that they would all destroy themselves, or be content with a sedentary existence, or be super-ethical? The implausibility of such arguments appears particularly great if we consider that the only civilisation we know anything about, namely our own, has not destroyed itself and shows every sign of being expansionist. Moreover, it is not especially ethical in its treatment of other forms of life. Earth has been wide open to interference from outside for billions of years, and yet there is no evidence that this ever happened. This would seem to imply that extraterrestrial technological civilisations are either absent (as Hart argued), or at least sufficiently rare for some combination of "sociological" explanations to plausibly account for the absence of evidence.

The history of biological evolution on Earth supports this conclusion. Life first appeared about 4 billion years ago, yet the Earth itself is only 45 billion years old. The fact that life arose so quickly suggests that this step is relatively easy for nature to achieve. This is consistent with current biochemical thinking, which, in the words of Nobel prize-winning biologist Christian de Duve, is coming round to the view that "life is almost bound to arise ... wherever physical conditions are similar to those that prevailed on our planet some four billion years ago" (Vital Dust, Basic Books, 1995). If life did evolve independently on Mars, this conclusion would be greatly strengthened.

However, while the rapid appearance of life on Earth augurs well for the prospects of simple life in the Universe, subsequent evolutionary history leads us to expect that more "advanced" forms of life will be quite rare. This is because multicellular life did not appear on Earth until about 07 billion years ago. For more than 3 billion years Earth was inhabited solely by single-celled microorganisms. In contrast to the rapidity with which the first bacteria appeared, this may imply that the evolution of more complicated life forms is very difficult. If this was the case, the transition to multicelled animals might occur on only a tiny fraction of the millions of planets that may be inhabited by single-celled organisms.

These two lines of argument lead to the same conclusion: while life may be common in the Galaxy, "advanced" multicellular life, and

therefore technological civilisations, are probably extremely rare.

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