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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Gordon Cooper's Edwards AFB Sighting?

From: David Rudiak <DRudiak@aol.com>
Date: Wed, 9 Jun 1999 13:43:02 EDT
Fwd Date: Wed, 09 Jun 1999 18:49:24 -0400
Subject: Re: Gordon Cooper's Edwards AFB Sighting?

>From: Steven J. Dunn <SDunn@LOGICON.COM>
>Date: Mon, 7 Jun 1999 11:33:13 -0700
>Fwd Date: Wed, 09 Jun 1999 00:58:33 -0400
>Subject: Gordon Cooper's Edwards AFB Sighting?

>A couple years ago, I saw a television interview with Leroy
>Gordon Cooper where he claimed to have seen a UFO land on a
>runway at Edwards AFB.

>After a fruitless session of looking on the web, I now ask:
>does anyone out here in mailinglistland have any further
>information on this sighting?

The date was May 3, 1957. The landing wasn't on a runway but
out on a dry lake bed on the Edward's range. Cooper said he saw
the film immediately afterwards that had been shot by two range
photographers, but hadn't personally witnessed the incident.
The L.A. Times and a few other newspapers the next day reported
that something had happened, but an A.F. spokesperson downplayed
the incident as being a mirage. ("The desert air does crazy
things.")

The most complete account I've seen was by Dr. James McDonald in
his Congressional testimony of July 29, 1968. He tracked down
the two range photographers, and also the range director, and
interviewed them. He also apparently spoke to Cooper, but
maintained his anonymity.

McDonald wrote that the range photographers, James Bittick and
John Gettys, said they first saw the object maybe 500 yards off,
but the first photos were taken when it was about a mile off.
"Both said it had a golden color, looked somewhat like an
inverted plate with a dome on top, and had square holes or
panels around the dome. Gettys thought that the holes were
circular not square. It was moving away from them, seemed to
glow with its own luminosity, and had a hazy, indistinct halo
about its rim, both mentioned. The number of shots is
uncertain; Gettys thought perhaps 30. The object was lost from
sight by the time it moved out to about five miles or so, and
they did not see it again. They drove to the base and processed
the film immediately. All three of the men I interviewed
emphasized that the shots taken at the closer range were very
sharp, except for the hazy rim. They said the dome and the
markings or openings showed in the photos. The photos were
taken by the Base military authorities and were never seen again
by the men. In a session later than day, Bittick and Carson
[the range director] were informed that they had seen a weather
balloon distorted by the desert atmospheric effects, an
interpretation that neither of them accepted since, as they
stated to me, they saw weather balloons being released
frequently there and knew what balloons looked like. Accounts

got into local newspapers, as well as on wire services."

McDonald then notes that, "I have not seen the photos alleged to have been taken in this incident, I have only interviewed the two who say they took them and a third person [obviously Gordon Cooper] who states that he inspected the prints in company with the two Askania operators and darkroom personnel."

Obviously something happened. Gettys and Bittick also completely corroborated Gordon Cooper's account of what he saw on the developed film when Cooper finally went public about the incident.

A year ago I visited Edward's AFB and looked up the base historian, who talked a lot about his PhD and thought very highly of himself as a military historian. He was a typical UFO skeptic, very opinionated but short on specifics. If there was anything at all to this UFO nonsense he, as a high and mighty AF historian, would certainly have heard about it by now. He was cleared right to the top, so he claimed, and could bust generals right down to privates if they didn't share information with him. (He really did say this stuff.)

He knew vaguely about Cooper's claims, but kept insinuating that Cooper must be mentally unbalanced. He obviously knew nothing about the incident being reported in the papers or the corroboration of Cooper's account by the range photographers and the range director. No, Cooper was nuts and it never happened.

Another famous Edward's UFO incident this self-opinionated base PhD historian knew absolutely nothing about was the multi-sighting, multi-witness incidents of July 4, 1947 at then Muroc AAF. He didn't believe me, so I told him he could look up the AF case reports that are reproduced on Jan Aldrich's Project 1947 Web page.

I then asked him if he would bring out the base logs, newspapers, and anything else for these dates, that might note anything happening. Well, I was wasting my time, he said. There's nothing there. As it turned out, he was right. The otherwise very detailed base logs had nothing on either of these incidents, or on another well-known Edward's radar visual incident of Oct. 7, 1965, from which there is several hours of audiotape, including of the jet interceptor scramble, radar photos, and the report from the base "UFO officer", which he said he had personally uncovered and turned over to one of those "UFO buffs." (These are now publicly available) As an aside, astronaut Edgar Mitchell has recently stated that he was at the base at the time this happened.

Well, what about that incident, I asked? What were those objects? He muttered something vague about how he might have an answer after talking to some of the people, but he wasn't going to share it with me.

Anyway, I bring this up to counter claims by skeptics that if some UFO incident really happened at a military base, then such items as the base logs would definitely have something on it. That's simply not the case. These were three very well-documented incidents at Edwards, and there is nothing there. The only thing on UFO incidents that I found anywhere was speculation in the base newspaper about what might have been filmed by an X-15 camera during an a flight on April 25 (?), 1962 -- ice crystals or paint flakes perhaps?

David Rudiak

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