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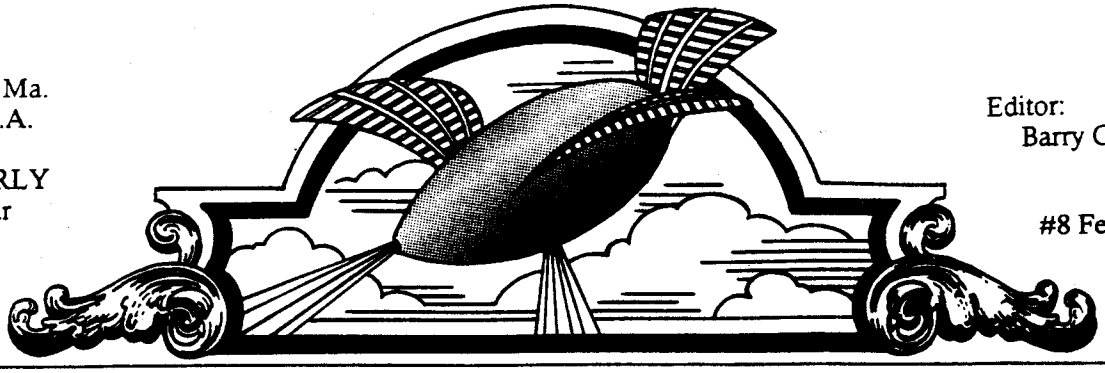

Editor:
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U.F.O. HISTORICAL REVUE

QUESTIONS ON A 1953 CAPE COD MYSTERY

Sometimes sensational UFO stories can linger behind the scenes for years, never becoming quite well known, but never going away either. Some of those become local legends, accepted at face value with little question.

In 1975, a story surfaced from a gentleman named Clarence Dargie, claiming intimate knowledge of a strange experience near Otis Air Force Base, Massachusetts in 1953. A radio station, KTRH in Houston, Texas, interviewed Dargie, getting these details:

> "I was stationed at an Air Force Base on Cape Cod (Massachusetts) in 1953, about June of 1953. We had one special F-94C type aircraft. It was a two-seat, fighter-interceptor with a pilot in the front and a radar operator in the rear cockpit, both being covered by one canopy. This aircraft was spotted out in an alert area, so whenever we had a UFO contact, that aircraft would be immediately launched, with standby crews 24 hours a day. There was some sort of classified electronic gear aboard. Even I don't know what it was, because any reference to the gear (in the resulting investigation) would appear as 'the secret so-and-so.'
>
> This particular night we had a UFO contact. This was just about at dark. The craft took off. The pilot's name was Suggs, Captain Suggs. The radar observer was a Lieutenant Robert Markhoff. According to Captain Suggs' sworn statement (incidentally, Suggs survived), they took off on the East-West runway, heading directly West toward Buzzard's Bay, which is some 12 miles away. The pilot said he pulled it off the runway – this was on full after-burner –and began his climb-out. At 1500 feet, he had cleared the runway and was over the base rifle range. The aircraft went completely, utterly dead! Unlike an automobile, which has only one central power source, if your battery fails in an automobile, then you have nothing.....your engine quits, the lights go out, the radio, and all these other things. But an aircraft has a redundancy built into it, in that the different systems each have their own power source; and the possibility of all these power sources failing at the same time is astronomical. The odds are -- I don't think you can even calculate them.
>
> However, at 1500 feet – he finds himself in this situation. His aircraft is

completely dead. His engine has flamed out, navigation lights, instruments, radar. It took him a couple of seconds to realize what had happened. Immediately he cut the nose down to keep the aircraft from stalling, because there was no possibility of accomplishing an air start. A hard bail-out? The bail-out sequence in this aircraft is that when the commander gives the order to bail-out, the radar observer operates the handle, which blows the canopy off of the aircraft;
then the radar observer himself ejects. The pilot then, on hearing this second explosion, is clear to eject. That's to keep them both from going out at the same time and colliding as they leave the aircraft. However, Captain Suggs said he did not have the time to wait for the second explosion, because now the aircraft is in about a 75 degree down angle toward the ground at 185 knots.
At about 600 feet, he went out of the aircraft and was about two to three seconds from impact. He ejected from the aircraft. His chute opened and acted like an air brake....it slowed him down, and in one swing he was on the ground.
To make a long story short, the aircraft itself....somewhere between the time when he separated from the aircraft and the next two or three seconds.....that aircraft literally vanished! It has never been found to this day."

Quite a tale! It circulated in UFO literature during the mid-1970s, making it into the Cape Cod Times in 1981 (see figure 1). The disappearance was summarized by the Times as a mysterious UFO event. What was peculiar here was that the Cape Cod Times was the area daily newspaper for the region around Otis AFB. Dargie later said in his radio interview that the public was told that the aircraft had vanished at sea. If the disappearance had been made public, then why didn't the Cape Cod Times simply recover the story from their morgue and report it instead of quoting a thin summary of Dargie's story? A reporter, adding important detail to a remarkable incident could then have verified the disappearance date.

There must have been something somewhere about this, if true. I thought I would take a look myself by retrieving microfilm for the Cape Cod Times at the Boston Public Library since the Times seems not to have done so. Nothing out of the ordinary was found until June 25th, 1953 (see figure 2).

This turned out to be a rather different story than that which Dargie told! What is notable was that this was the FIRST F-94C crash at Otis, of the only F-94C that Otis had, according to Dargie. There were no other crash or disappearance reports for the rest of the month and into July. Where are Suggs and Markhoff in the June 25th account? That jet did not disappear and both occupants survived.

One can clearly see problems reconciling Dargie's story with reality. However, witnesses have memory lapses, especially after long periods of time. Was there a disappearance at another time?

There was. On August 11, 1952, the Cape Cod Times reported the disappearance of an unspecified type of jet interceptor a day earlier with the loss of one occupant from Otis. The pilot was Captain

Otis sighting on file

HYANNIS — In the past 30 years, more than a dozen UFO sightings have been reported on the Cape, but probably the most renowned involved an Otis Air Force pilot and radar operator.

It was June 1953 and the crew of an F-94C, a twin-engine turbo jet interceptor no longer in commission in the military, attempted to identify unknown objects near the base in Bourne.

A retired Air Force master sergeant, who was chief investigator of the sighting waited 20 years before telling of the incident.

And it may be at least that long before the government releases its files on the incident. The National Security Agency is withholding 131 secret documents about UFO sightings.

The master sergeant testified: "According to the pilot's sworn testimony, his engine quit functioning and his entire electrical system failed at 1,500 feet. The pilot ordered his radar operator to bail out and then jettisoned the canopy and bailed out himself."

Neither the plane nor the radar officer were ever found — only the pilot and the canopy.

CAPE COD TIMES

11-05-81

Figure 1

Hobart Gay. A witness, Herve Houde, reported that at 4 AM he was standing near railroad tracks close to Trunk River Beach when he heard an odd airplane noise (Cape Cod Times, 8-12-52). He glanced around and saw a streak of light descend straight into the water beyond the Nobska Lighthouse. There was a noise, then silence. Houde thought that another jet seemed to accompany the first aircraft.

Debris and an oil slick were found a couple of days later (Cape Cod Times, 8-13-52), strongly suggesting a crash and not a disappearance. (see sample coverage in figure 3).

There is a remote possibility that Dargie was misrecollecting the two different stories as one, and perhaps even adding a third story of a UFO chase from another time. The two accidents do not appear to have any connection to UFO chases. His pilot and radar man do not appear in either accident as well.

Evidence for Dargie's story is very shaky. Some might wonder whether or not his story is literally true and the Air Force covered up the details, releasing nothing on it. During his interview, Dargie said this: "I was administrative assistant to the operations officer, and we were the ones that interviewed the witnesses, got all the aircraft records, the flight records, everything that could possibly come to bear, and put them all together in the final report, which was, oh, about 1 ½ to 2 inches thick."

So he didn't merely hear about the tale, he was involved in the investigation! Surely a credible source. But as stated earlier, Dargie said that the public was told of the disappearance. (transcript, page 2: Interviewer: "The public was told that the aircraft had vanished at sea?" Dargie: "Yes."). Yet, later in the interview: Interviewer: "...and the fact that the plane just vanished like this was never mentioned to the public?" Dargie: "No, it never was." (!)

The Cape Cod Times showed no reluctance to report a crash in one case, and a disappearance in the other. But what they did report was nothing like what Dargie relates, despite the fact that he said the 1953 vanishing was reported publicly. The only aircraft that could have been Dargie's F-94C was accounted for in less-than-mysterious circumstances.

What might be learned from incidents like this is that every UFO story should be treated as if there were a troubling cloud hanging over them. A truth lies somewhere beneath the mass of details, not all of which may be correct. A mystery may be attractive at first flush, but what you embrace may be a mudman!

Cape Cod Standard Times
Hyannis, Ma
June 25 1953

...et Crashes; None Hurt

OTIS AIR FORCE BASE, June 25—A jet pilot and the airman accompanying him were uninjured when an F-94-C plane the former was piloting crashed on an Otis Air Force Base runway yesterday.

It was the first F-94-C crash at Otis, the Public Information Office said. The F-94-C is one of the latest types of all-weather interceptor planes.

Pilot was identified as 1st lieutenant Adolphus D. Lawson Jr. of the 497th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron. The airman was unidentified. Lieutenant Lawson resides at Howard Street and Onset Avenue, Onset. He is married.

The PIO said the jet plane crashed on landing after a cross-country flight, striking the runway and then went into the grass. Two of the firemen who helped quell the blaze enveloping the plane were slightly burned, the PIO said it was told, but returned to duty.

Figure 2

Cape Cod Standard Times
Hyannis Ma
Aug 14 1952

Search Continues For Missing Plane

NAUSHON ISLAND, Aug. 14—Fourth day of search for a jet plane and pilot believed to have crashed in waters between Naushon and Nonemessett Islands proved fruitless yesterday, Otis Air Base said today.

Although area of search was widened, no evidence of the plane or its pilot, Captain Hobart R. Gay Jr. was uncovered.

A Coast Guard plane and a diver were employed yesterday in the search effort. Earlier today, it was undecided whether to send out a search group. Fresh winds roughened waters in the area, a Falmouth source reported.

Figure 3

CENSORSHIP: THE KIRTLAND FIREBALL CATALOG

Government censorship has always been a curious thing. The intent is to keep outsiders from knowing certain facts. Sometimes it is done for practical purposes; i.e. to protect legitimate national security concerns. For example, the exact method and materials for making an atomic weapon should not be publicly available; people can be blown up! Sometimes censorship is performed for political purposes, i.e. to hide waste and ineptness by government officials. Such certain can't be justified for the greater good, but in our imperfect society it is done nevertheless. Sometimes the censorship backfires and reveals more than it was intended to hide.

Censorship has generally been counterproductive where the UFO topic has been concerned. The government's intent was to hide information and prevent the public from paying undo attention to UFO reports. However, the censorship was often unnecessarily and ineptly applied, leading to public suspicion that great secrets were being suppressed. Maybe there are or are not great secrets still to be discovered, but, either way, the government's handling of censorship on UFOs has contributed to a widespread belief in the existence of extraterrestrial beings visiting the Earth. The following is a little known example of this.

One of the many documents released through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 20 years ago was a sizeable collection of reported "green fireball" incidents. The reports were part of a 209-case catalog collected by the 17th District, Air Force Office of Special Investigations (OSI) at Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico. The cases run from January 1946 through May 1950, with the majority running from mid-1949 to the spring of 1950. The catalog describes the sightings in chart form, giving details of size, shape, color, speed, direction of travel; etc.

A characteristic of many of the reported incidents in the southwestern U.S. during this period was the odd green color of many of the streaking objects, thus giving rise to the term "green fireball."

Also, upon investigation of incidents by OSI, it was determined that some of the objects behaved in an anomalous manner. Speeds greater than aircraft but less than meteors were reported. A persistence of horizontal flight paths suggested that many objects soared rather than fell. But most interestingly, such a concentration of large, bright fireballs over one state (New Mexico) is difficult to explain as meteoric activity. Meteors tend to be a random phenomenon, scattered rocks or metal in space sporadically encountering the Earth. The exception to this would be the occurrence of meteor showers - - when the Earth passes through the dust paths left by comets in their orbits around or past the sun. Showers do not last more than a few hours intensely, or a few days for encountering the most scattered members of the comet path. And they certainly don't aim at individual U.S. states over several years time as the green fireballs seem to have done.

The OSI catalog was released in the late 1970s with minor, but telling, censorship. Two columns on the chart were entirely deleted: "Reliability of

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Summary of Sightings of Unusual Aerial Phenomena, 11th District (cont)

Date	Time	Number of Observers	Reliability of Observers	General Area of Occurrence	Apparent Direction of Flight	Apparent Altitude	Course Orientation to Vertical	Color	Train or Trail	Duration of Observation	Sound	Shape	Apparent Size	Speed Apparent	Manner of Disappearance	Remarks
17 Feb	1700	1	[redacted] 65	Grants, New Mexico	Southward		Vertical climb then level off Crowal report	White	Yes		None	Oval	Larger than meteor		Disappeared	[redacted] 65
17 Feb		Apx 100	[redacted] 65	Albuquerque, New Mexico	W to E			Brilliant white shimmering to match color		5 secs	None	Round shifting to ellipse	1 lunar diameter		Disappeared	[redacted] 65
27 Feb	1905	1	[redacted] 65	Los Alamos, New Mexico	W to E		Parallel to earth	Green-white		2 secs	None			Not as fast meteor	Disappeared abruptly	[redacted]
2 Mar	0010	1	[redacted] 65	Los Alamos, New Mexico	E to S	"Low in sky"	Horizontal	White		2 secs	None			Very fast	Disappeared behind trees	[redacted]
5 Mar	0159	1	[redacted] 65	Los Alamos, New Mexico	Straight down		Straight down	Bright green							Disappeared	[redacted]
6 Mar	2100	2	[redacted] 65	Camp Hood, Texas	From N 74° W N 81° W	From 6° 45' above horizon		Blue-white light	Yes		None	Oblong	2' by 1'	Not known		[redacted] 65

Sample page of the Kirtland fireb catalog

Observer" and "Evaluation." The reason? "B5", meaning that under the FOIA, insight into decision making processes could be withheld from public view. This was a way to protect freedom of expression by officials without fear of later being made accountable for decisions that may or may not have ever been implemented.

"Reliability of Observer" lists codes "VR", "R" and "Unk", meaning "very reliable", "reliable" and "unknown." The censorship appears rather pointless here because while the files that may have accompanied the catalog at one time identified the witnesses, the selected codes in no way cast a witness in a negative light. They were either great witnesses, good witnesses or little was known about the individual, according to OSI.

Stranger still was the evaluation censorship. The same exemption under FOIA is used as in the reliability column.

But the selection of conclusions is curious indeed.

LEGEND:
*Reliability of Observers: VR = Very Reliable R = Reliable Unk = Unknown Reliability
**Evaluation: (1) "Green Fireball Phenomena" (2) "Disk" or Variation (3) Probable Meteor

"1" is "Green Fireball Phenomena", "2" is "Disk or Variation" and "3" is "Probable Meteor." Distinguishing "1" from "3" is clear in suggesting that the green fireballs were not considered to be normal meteors. Moreover, "2" suggests a flying "Disk", essentially a flying saucer, or variation (whatever that means!) as an explanation, meaning that they weren't considered as an explanation for the fireballs either. Considering that explanation #2 must have been used for at least one of the cases listed (otherwise it wouldn't be an option at all), it is curious that during the era of Project Grudge - - a time when flying disks, or saucers, officially did not exist - - such was being used to explain unexplained phenomena by Air Force investigators.

The evaluation deletions in the catalog, while literally justified under the "B5" exemption of the FOIA, did not help the government's case for dismissing the UFO phenomena as non-existent. The deletions were applied in the late 1970s, almost a decade after official investigations were closed down. Revealing those conclusions would certainly have raised uncomfortable questions about why the Air Force was explaining a peculiar aerial phenomena as either a "Green Fireball Phenomena" or a "Disk or Variation." The scientists studying the green fireballs for the government

didn't know what they were, and those studying the disks or variations didn't know what those were. But, based upon this catalog, there was obviously a distinction! That distinction was deemed necessary to veil long after the Air Force was done with UFOs.

The final entry in the Kirtland catalog was on May 1, 1950, a few months after the Air Force initiated "Project Twinkle." "Twinkle" was an effort to catch the green fireballs in the act, using instrumentation to detect any anomalies. The effort failed to detect anything useful and Twinkle was shut down in December 1951. In their final report, Twinkle investigators suggested that "earth may be passing through a region of space of high meteoric population," a suggestion I had offered as a possible explanation for the abundance of high-flying, streaking objects seen during the UFO wave of 1947 (see UHR, April 1999. Pg. 3).

There are more examples of government officials, more so than UFOlogists, fostering notions that UFOs were more mysterious than official statements would lead one to believe in certain instances. Whether or not it is evidence of extraterrestrials remains debatable. But any historical discussion of the UFO controversy must credit, or blame, the U.S. government for at least an assist to ET belief.

EXTRACT: HISTORY OF THE 57th FIGHTER-INTERCEPTOR WING, JANUARY 1 – MARCH 31, 1950 (Elmendorf AFB, Alaska)

On 26 January 1950 at 1600 hours Lieutenant Colonel Lester F. Mathison, AO 427 397, Commanding Officer of the 625th Aircraft and Warning Squadron, was proceeding from the operations "shack" to the squadron orderly room of the above unit and, as was his habit at that time of day (having an interest in astronomy) he glanced up to scan the sky for any unusual weather phenomenon. The presence of what appeared to be a very small, thin cirrus cloud attracted his attention. Directly above the cloud he noticed three reddish-orange objects, about the size and shape of a pencil eraser. The cloud appeared to be at an altitude of approximately 25,000 to 30,000 feet, with the three objects slightly above it. From his position, the objects were about 40 degrees above the horizon and 10 degrees west of north. The objects appeared to be moving in trail, in a slightly curved line, heading north, when they disappeared

singly behind or into the cloud. The clouds were not affected in any manner, so apparently the objects were above it. Immediately upon sighting the objects, Colonel Mathison called to a Sergeant Porter, who was standing nearby, to witness the sighting. Before Sergeant Porter's attention could be focused upon the objects they had disappeared as stated. Both parties watched the cloud intently for the next 10 minutes, but the objects did not reappear, and though the cloud was very thin the objects could not be seen through the cloud. The cloud formation in itself was unusual in that it was only a thin wisp covering a very small area. With this exception the sky was clear. No sound was heard from the objects nor was there any evidence of contrails.

The informer was familiar with jet aircraft and had watched them perform at high altitudes. He was aware that jet aircraft at high altitudes become thin specks in the sky and are very difficult to spot. Because of this, he was definite in his belief that the objects he observed were not jet aircraft. Having watched jet aircraft at 15,000 to 20,000 feet, and assuming their speed to be around 400-500 miles per hour, the observer estimated the speed of the unknown objects at 900-1000 miles per hour.

It was known that three F-80 aircraft were in the area at approximately 30,000 feet, practicing various types of formation flying, with speed of about 400 miles per hour. However, intelligence officers surmised that jet aircraft at that altitude would have been almost impossible to detect unless contrails were visible. From observer's description of size, it appeared to interrogating intelligence officer that the objects were not jet fighter aircraft. 118 /

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118 / Ltr, Hq 57th Ftr-Intcp Wg, file 57HIN 452 x 360, Subj, Unusual Flying Objects, to CG, AAC, dtd 2 Feb 50.

ADDENDUM TO .PDF VERSION OF UHR #8 – TEXT OF NEWS CLIPS

Cape Cod Times
11-05-81
Figure 1

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June 25 1953
Figure 2

Jet Crashes; None Hurt

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