

# UFO INVESTIGATOR

NATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE ON  
**NICAP**  AERIAL PHENOMENA

## NEW DATA ON HEYERDAHL CASE Crew Has Three Sightings, Not One

In follow-up to the sighting report radioed from Thor Heyerdahl's papyrus boat, Ra II, in June ("Sighting Advisory," *UFO Investigator*, June 1970), NICAP has contacted the boat's navigator and radioman, N.L. Baker, and obtained details of both the original report and two other sightings made by crew members during Ra II's summer journey across the Atlantic.

The original report turns out to be the second of the three sightings. The first, which preceded the second by only a day, occurred in the early morning hours of June 10, 1970, when Heyerdahl was alone on deck, standing watch. He chanced to observe, for a period of a few seconds, a bright orange light over the water. Puzzled because there was no reason for a light to be there, he discounted the notion he was looking at a ship's light. From experience, he knew what a ship's light looked like.

The following night, at approximately the same time, two crewmen saw an "orange flame" moving slowly across the sky. Sharply defined and "tilted to the right," the flame continued in a straight path for several minutes, then appeared to change direction and descend. As soon as it disappeared behind the horizon, a bright flash was seen.

### Third Sighting Offers Most Detail

The third, and most curious, of the three incidents took place about three weeks later, on June 30, when Ra II was approximately 700 miles east of its destination, Barbados Island in the West Indies. At 1:30 a.m. (ship time), navigator Baker, the only American aboard, ended his watch and called down to Heyerdahl (asleep in the cabin) to waken him for the next watch. Waiting for Heyerdahl to dress and come on deck, Baker made a final check of the sky and sea. To his surprise, he noticed a bright silver light down on the horizon off the starboard bow. The light resembled a dome in shape and gave much the same appearance as the rising moon.

Baker shouted to Heyerdahl, who came on deck moments later (still dressing), followed by another member of the crew, Santiago Genoves, a Mexican anthropologist. As the three men watched, the light began to grow in size, as though pumped with air like a balloon. As it expanded, it retained its hemispherical shape but diminished in intensity.

In talking with NICAP, Baker emphasized that the light "was many times brighter than the moon" and kept its clear semi-circular configuration until late in the sighting. It cast a path of illumination across the water, like a moonbeam, and at one point silhouetted two small clouds that had drifted between it and the boat.

Continuing to distend, as Heyerdahl and the others watched, the light spread out along the horizon like a giant mushroom

cloud. Then, gradually, it began to lose its distinct configuration and became more of a diffuse bright area. After being in sight for approximately eight minutes, it finally surrendered all clarity and merged into the night sky.

### A Second Ship Reports Same Phenomenon

Unbeknown to the men on Ra II, another ocean going vessel had spotted the strange light of June 30 and was observing it with equal bemusement. The ship was the m.v. *Themis*, operated by the Royal Netherlands Steamship Company of New York. Sailing for Jamaica, the *Themis* was off the coast of Florida when the sighting occurred.

The first crewman to see the phenomenon was F. Vidal-Gonzalez, a lookout, who alerted Third Officer S. Stoel. Stoel watched the "bright white circle" for a few moments, then notified Radio Officer H. Stel and the ship's Captain, A. Jongeling.

Watching from the starboard wing of the ship's bridge, the four men saw the light expand and illuminate the sky around it. Unlike Heyerdahl, they could see it in its entirety, well above the horizon. It expanded in all directions and exhibited the same regularity of shape noted by Baker, before losing its luminosity and dissolving into the sky.

Both the Ra II and the *Themis* reported clear weather during the observation, with only a smattering of clouds. The stars were out, and Baker particularly remembers the clarity of the Milky Way. The moon was not due to rise for several hours.

None of the witnesses, despite each's familiarity with the open ocean, could identify what he saw or offer a likely hypothesis. NICAP is obtaining additional information from the witnesses, and will report on its investigation as soon as all data have been studied.

### Heyerdahl Sighting Recalls Another

The report from Heyerdahl is not the only recent sighting made by voyagers on the Atlantic. John Fairfax, who rowed across the Atlantic last year, recorded a sighting in his log for May 5, 1969, as follows:

"I saw two UFOs shortly after sunset. Since I don't believe or disbelieve such things, I will report without comment. They appeared at 1130 GMT as two very bright stars, about twice as bright as Venus. I was rowing at the time and almost directly facing them. They remained stationary for about five minutes, then moved erratically for a while, went east again, then lost altitude until they almost touched the horizon. One shot upward, then climbed fast toward the Ursa Major. I don't want anybody to think that I mistook them for stars. They were not satellites. I see satellites almost every night. They could not have been balloons either, because the shadow of the Earth would have prevented me from seeing them. They were a bluish color. Their show lasted about 20 minutes."

First of a SeriesEditorial

## POST-MORTEM ON BLUE BOOK

## Will the Lid Stay on the Coffin?

On December 17, 1969, when the Air Force announced closure of Project Blue Book (UFO Investigator, May 1970), some observers had the funny feeling they were watching the rerun of an old movie. The feeling was fully justified, because almost 20 years earlier to the day, on December 27, 1949, the Air Force made exactly the same announcement -- the only difference being the Project was not referred to by its official code name, *Grudge*, which was classified at the time.

The 1949 announcement, of course, proved to be a case of crying wolf, since the Air Force did not abandon investigation of UFOs at all, as the Pentagon press release said it had, but instead merely reduced it in scope and shifted it from special project status to a routine intelligence function. Although such administrative sleight of hand met the political expedient of fooling all of the people most of the time, it was the beginning of the end for Air Force credibility insofar as UFOs are concerned.

Most of those who reacted with skepticism to the latest termination notice were, predictably, observers who lean toward the grand conspiracy hypothesis. They saw the announcement as just one more rabbit in the government's bag of tricks to cover up what is really being done to probe UFOs. Citing the long history of secrecy and obfuscation that has characterized federal involvement with the UFO problem, these observers insist that high-level interest continues in UFOs, all public pronouncements to the contrary only confirming the fact.

In assessing this hypothesis in light of the events of last December, it must be said that the hypothesis is not without its merits. Nonetheless, before too much weight is put on the demise of Blue Book, some consideration should be given to the differences as well as the parallels between the 1949 and 1969 Air Force actions.

The parallels, to be sure, are striking. The prestidigitation of 1949 was planned primarily as a public relations tactic to undercut the expected effects of Major Donald Keyhoe's now famous *True* magazine article on UFOs, scheduled for release in late December of that year. Keyhoe had been pressuring the Air Force to show him its then classified UFO files, but this had only succeeded in sensitizing already nervous AF officials to the public excitement Keyhoe, and other writers, were precipitating with their magazine stories. Then, as now, the Air Force regarded UFOs as explainable phenomena that were an unnecessary nuisance to the military. Members of the popular press who sought to portray them otherwise were viewed by the Air Force in much the same way a harried householder views a flock of birds roosting on his TV antenna.

By the same line of reasoning, the symposium on UFOs scheduled for December 26-27, 1969, at the annual conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (UFO Investigator, May 1970) was seen as only prolonging Air Force grief with its UFO assignment. The decision was therefore made to time the Blue Book announcement when it would have the greatest dampening effect on news of the symposium. That this maneuver worked as well as hoped is doubtful, but it does not appear to have backfired as its 1949 counterpart did. (Keyhoe's article generated widespread interest, despite the AF announcement.)

The technical reason for the 1949 cancellation was a recommendation made by Project Grudge in a report dated August 1949. Classified "Secret," the report was not mentioned in the December 1949 Air Force press release, but it concluded that the Project should be "reduced in scope" and the basis for this action explained to the public. The wording of the press release was taken in part directly from the report.

Similarly, the closure of Blue Book was based principally on the recommendation of the Condon Report, which concluded that "further extensive study cannot be justified." The December 1969 announcement quotes and paraphrases the report at some length. Curiously, there is no reference to the Grudge Report, although brief allusion is made to "past UFO studies."

NEXT: The present status of Air Force interest in UFOs.

There is considerable risk in assuming that patterns in the reporting of UFOs correspond to actual patterns in the behavior of the phenomenon. Reports are not the same as the events they describe, and any correlation between the two may only be accidental.

The popular tendency is to believe in UFOs only when sightings are widespread and publicity is high. This is an error in perspective. Even in active periods, most sightings are never reported. Nor is there any way to know whether UFOs tend to be present in places where they can be seen, or whether they tend to be sighted even when circumstances are right. Our knowledge of the phenomenon is simply too fragmentary to permit any conclusion as to what significance to attach to the ebb and flow in reports. The fluctuations may be far more a function of human psychology and the social climate than a function of the phenomenon.

In any event, it is imperative that we continue our research and not lose sight of our objectives. The mass media did not create UFOs, and the mass media cannot make UFOs disappear. NICAP has been a prime mover in keeping serious attention focused on the UFO problem, and in collecting the data necessary for its study. With release of the Condon Report and closure of Project Blue Book, the requirement is acute for these efforts to continue. Were there no responsible agency for witnesses to turn to, and no reliable source of public information, the issues at stake could die a premature and wholly unnecessary death. This would be especially unfortunate if it were caused by a failure in perspective on the part of those who have contributed the most to keeping the research alive.

When Blue Book closed, NICAP issued a press release stating in part: "The Air Force decision . . . is a welcome development. It opens the way for a fresh look at the UFO problem. UFOs can now be given the serious scientific attention they require, free from military considerations."

These were not idle words. The 1970s can be the beginning of an important new period for UFO research. Science no longer has the excuse that "the government is investigating the problem." The nature and origin of UFOs are still open questions, crying for examination by qualified researchers, and no amount of change in the incidence of sightings or the level of publicity can alter that fact.

# CASEBOOK

DATE: Early 1950s

LOCATION: Newport News, Virginia

An unusually good, but never reported, sighting by an East Coast engineer and his wife has been uncovered by NICAP. Obtained by chance through personal sources, the report dates back to the early 1950s, when the modern period of sightings was still in its childhood. The witnesses are no longer sure of the exact date, having made no record at the time and been exceedingly reluctant to discuss the incident during intervening years. Few of their close relatives, and fewer of their best friends, know the couple had this experience.

The husband is a mechanical engineer with extensive background in the design and construction of large ships. At the time of the sighting, he was employed by the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company of Virginia, one of the largest shipyards in the world. Both he and his wife are college-educated, and still live in the mid-Atlantic states. Both were in their 30s when the sighting occurred.

To the best of their recollection, the object was seen in the summer of 1950 or '51. The Korean War had started, and the husband was working overtime during the evenings to help meet the escalated demands for military hardware. On the day in question, the two witnesses had finished an early supper and were returning to the shipyard in their car to drop the husband off for the 6 p.m. overtime shift. His wife was driving.

Both recall the weather as clear, without clouds. The sun was low in the west but still well above the horizon. The couple drove up to one of the shipyard's main entrances and turned left onto a side street. Pulling up to the curb and stopping to let her husband out, the woman looked out her window and noticed something in the sky, apparently hovering over the yard. It looked to her like "the top of a mushroom" -- geometric in shape, smooth surfaced, and somewhat flattened across the bottom.

Knowing her husband's bent for mechanical things and his familiarity with aircraft as well as ships, she called the object to his attention and asked him what it was. Unable to see it clearly from his seat, he got out of the car and looked back over the automobile in the direction his wife indicated. The object was in perfect view.

He described the UFO as a rimless pie-plate, inverted, with a crisp metallic appearance. Extending downward from what seemed to be an orifice in the center of the object's underside was a vertical shaft of vapor, white in color. The engineer estimated the object to be roughly 2000 feet above the shipyard, with the vapor trail projecting some 100 to 300 feet down. The object was completely stationary, with no localized motion and no sound.

While his wife watched from the car (with her window down), the man decided to move to another position in hopes that a different viewing angle might shed some light -- figuratively if not literally -- on the identity of the object. He walked to the corner of the main street, stopped momentarily to observe the UFO, then crossed the street and stopped again to look up from one of the shipyard's entrance ramps. A tree interfered with his view in that spot, so he moved farther up the ramp until he cleared the tree.

At approximately this point, the husband remembers seeing another man walking within shouting distance up the street. Calling to him, the husband tried

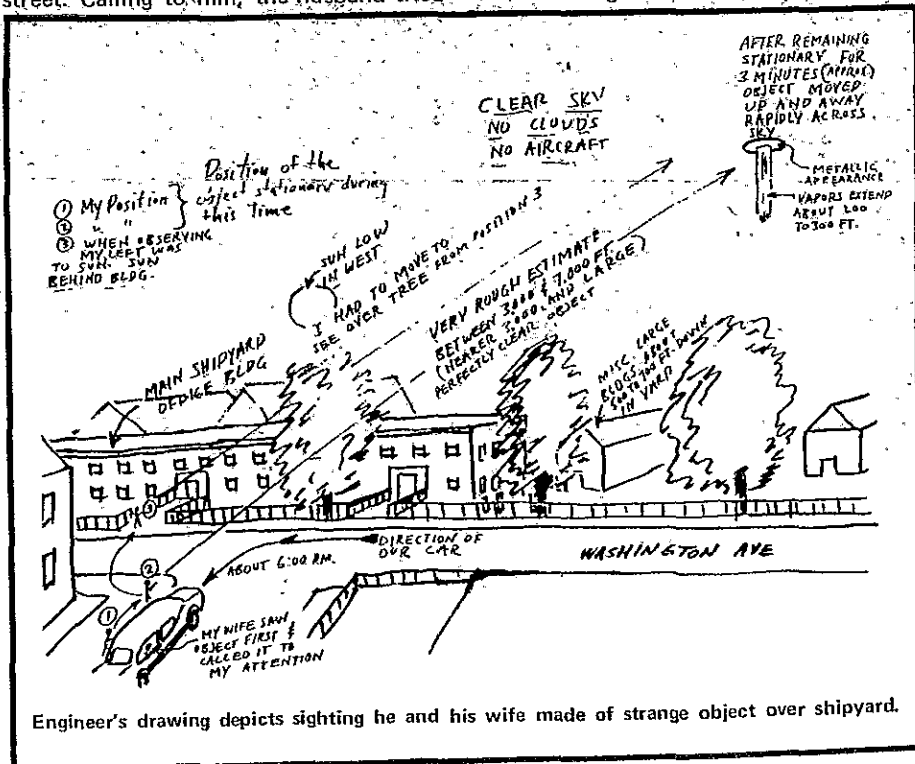
to get the man's attention without leaving the ramp (and thus having to divert his eyes from the object). The man, however -- apparently not hearing -- turned and disappeared into a doorway.

Another minute or so passed as the object continued to hover. Then, suddenly, it began to move upward, in noiseless, stable flight. Within what seemed like only seconds, it increased speed and accelerated out of sight in a southeastern direction (toward the Atlantic Ocean).

Later recalling the incident, the husband expressed amazement at the manner in which the UFO departed. "The rate of climb," he said, "was faster than any aircraft I know. And I lived near Langley Air Force Base for 18 years, including World War II."

Both husband and wife commented on the clarity of the object during the entire course of the sighting. The sun was always to their backs as they watched, and except for the brief moment when the tree blocked the husband's view, their individual vantage points were unobstructed. The only point on which their testimony does not agree is that of the vapor trail, which the wife does not recall seeing.

NICAP will attempt to determine the date of this sighting, in order that further investigation can be made into the possibility of other witnesses or other sightings at that approximate time and place. Checks will also be made -- if the date can be pinpointed -- of whether any known activity in the area could have some bearing on the case.



Engineer's drawing depicts sighting he and his wife made of strange object over shipyard.



MEMOS  
FOR  
MEMBERS

PLEASE RENEW PROMPTLY.

When your membership is due to expire, please remember: if you delay in renewing, or let your membership expire before renewing, or fail to renew, you make it difficult for us to budget our funds and maintain the continuity of our programs. This in turn means increased administrative costs and less money for the real work of NICAP. By renewing promptly when you receive your first notice, you help us make maximum use of our money. You also avoid the risk of missing issues of the newsletter.

#### CORRECTION

In the article on the Klass-Allen bet ("News Commentary," UFO Investigator, June 1970), the last name of Mr. Allen was mistakenly given as Gordon. The correct name is William G. Allen. Our apologies to Mr. Allen and to our readers.

YES, BACK ISSUES ARE AVAILABLE.

To the members who have asked — yes, copies of the UFO Investigator are available. We don't have all issues, but the gaps don't begin until August-September 1965 (Vol. III, No. 4). When you order, specify which issues you want and whether there are alternate issues we can substitute if we don't have your first choices. Be sure to include payment (in U.S. currency). The price is \$.50 for one issue, or three for \$1.00 (postpaid). Remember that we abandoned the Volume/Number system when we revamped the newsletter earlier this year. The new issues carry only a date. The first one published was May 1970.

COLOR PLEASES ALMOST EVERYBODY.

A handful of our members has expressed disapproval of the colored paper we are using for the newsletter. Their objection is that it is hard to read. While we don't find this so, we admit our eyesight may differ from someone else's. However, we have received so many letters approving of our new format, we hesitate to go back to white paper. So to those few of you who prefer white, we hope you will bear with us. Perhaps we can shift later to a lighter color.

WHY USE A MIDDLEMAN?

Do you subscribe to the newsletter through a broker or subscription agency? If so, why not save us and yourself money? By subscribing directly, you help us avoid extra administrative problems, and you avoid middleman fees. Since you have to put a check in an envelope anyway, why not let it be to us? Just enclose your renewal form with the payment.

LOGO PINS ARE SELLING WELL.

Our members have responded favorably to the new NICAP logo lapel pin. Orders are coming in steadily, and the manufacturer assures us the pins will be ready for shipment in a few weeks. If you would like to order a pin but do not have an order form, send us a postcard. We will be happy to mail you as many forms as you need.

REPLY ENVELOPES ADDED

As promised, we are now including self-addressed return envelopes with renewal notices. Also, we have added to the notices our new address, as some of you suggested. We hope these changes will make it easier for members to renew.

## FEEDBACK / Readers Write

(Last year, the Explorers Trademark Ltd. of Annapolis, Maryland, kindly offered to help NICAP with complimentary advertising in its journal, The ETM Log. To help express our appreciation for this support, we have agreed to print the following letter from the Log's publisher.)

Dear Mr. Nixon:

In view of our past efforts to help bolster NICAP's operation, I thought you and your members might have some suggestions that would help us implement a growth program for our explorers' magazine, *The ETM Log*. My partner, Charles Rhynard, and I have been publishing *The Log* out of our own pockets for the last three years. This has been sufficient to get the magazine moving and ascertain its potential in the outdoor recreation market, but it has not been sufficient to get it off the ground and in the black. Being familiar with the magazine, you will agree, I think, that we have a unique publication which, from all indications, is going to enjoy some terrific growth in today's recreational market. Mountaineering, backpacking, caving, diving, canoeing, and kayaking, not to mention rockhounding, archeology, artifact hunting, natural history, and conservation are all enjoying more and more popularity each day. And *The ETM Log* is the only publication that covers these fields with the articles and practical information people are looking for.

To permeate this market and develop the magazine's inherent potential, Chuck and I have worked up a 30-month growth program in presentation form, which details the facts and figures required to put the plan into action. My hope is that you and your members would be in a position to recommend individuals who are aware of the role outdoor recreation is

playing in the economic growth of this country, and who would like to share in this growth through *The ETM Log*. Copies of the growth program are available from me at P.O. Box 1630, Annapolis, Md. 21404. I'll be more than happy to send a presentation package to principals who find the concept of the magazine interesting enough to merit further investigation.

With best wishes,

Alwyn T. Perrin,  
Publisher

Dear Editor:

Your picture of Mars in the May issue would indicate that the "featureless terrain" may have been caused by a collision of Mars with another planet. Such a glancing blow might have changed the position of the Earth in orbit, shifted the polar axis, and given rise to what Dr. Immanuel Velikovsky (author of *Earth in Upheaval* and *Worlds in Collision*) describes as the universal report that about 1500 B.C. in many parts of the Earth, the Sun did not rise in the East.

If we suppose this blow came from Mars, we have a clue to where UFOs may have originated. If Mars proves to have been "bouncing around" in 1500 B.C., or if Venus "took a close one" about that time from either Mars or Earth, we might find there was once a civilization superior to ours on either one of these planets, and that the so-called flying saucers did not fly here in the first place, but were brought here aboard the planet on which they were built. They probably had only a short hop to begin with, probably just prior to a near miss or an actual collision.

If this interests your readers, please let me know. I would welcome discussion by experts.

Yours truly,

Justin Miller  
Upper Marlboro, Md.

#### SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

NICAP's Board of Governors has asked Major Donald Keyhoe, NICAP Director Emeritus, to serve as technical secretary to the Committee. In this capacity, he will be called upon, when appropriate, for special counsel and assistance. At present, he is working on a new book at his home in Virginia.

#### ON TAP FOR COMING ISSUES:

Casebook:

*Atlantic Encounter Revisited; A Pilot Talks after 19 Years*

Man and Non-man:

*Suppose the Astronauts Found Proof of ETI? Exclusive Interview with NASA's Exobiology Chief*

Mars:

*More on Those Mysterious Moons — The Question of Artificiality Impends*

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