Council Bluffs, IA. CE II JUL. 31, 1976

COUNCIL BLUFFS CE II

CASE	TYPE	DATE	TIME	DURATION	WITNESSES	PLACE
Pre-IUR	CE II	7/31/76	app. 11:45 PM	minutes	1, + others	Council Bluffs, IA

COUNCIL BLUFFS UPDATE: This sighting, first reported in the December issue of IUR involved the appearance of a UFO reported to hover over a gas station in Council Bluffs, Iowa at night, followed by a discovery the next day of extensive electrical damage to the equipment in the service station. The owner and employees claim rain and lightning damage, and no UFO. The National Weather Service (just across the river) and residents who lived nearby all claim that there was no rain or lightning that night. Naturally, the insurance investigation of the damages posed the fascinating prospect of a court case, with the company attempting to prove a UFO did the damage; hence, the existence of UFO's legally recognized, and all for financial motives! Unfortunately, it was not to be. The Farmer's Insurance Company informed us that they deemed the amount of money required to be too small to warrant an investigation; they have hundreds of claims like these, and they generally take the word of the policy holder regarding the cause of the damage. The agent seemed impressed with the amount of contradictory evidence amassed by IUR, and wished he had known it at the time; but it was not IUR's desire to deny the cooperative service station owner his remuneration.

We also checked with the Iowa Power and Light Co. about any line anomalies at that time; voltage excursions, outages, breakers tripping and the like. Checking their logs, they informed us that their records revealed nothing unusual, nor had anyone called to complain. They did point out that that particular area is supplied by the *one* substation that does not have comprehensive remote monitoring facilties in their civic system (just our luck)!

No additional compelling evidence is forthcoming at this time from equipment analysis or the main witness's testimony. None of the other alleged witnesses have come forward by name.

IUR, MAR. 1977

Council Bluffs, IA. CE II JUL. 31, 1976

GAS STATION DAMAGED BY UFO?

CASE	TYPE	DATE	TIME	DURATION	WITNESSES	PLACE
(pre-IUR)	CEII	7/31/76	app. 11:45PM	minutes	1, plus others	Council Bluffs, IA

Investigator Ralph DeGraw and asst. Pat Crowley had their work cut out for them on this physical trace case in Iowa because of the intrigue involved. DeGraw learned of this case from the local newspaper and interviewed the primary individuals involved 13 days after the event. According to her brother-in-law, the main witness, Debbie Focken, left her job at 11:30 PM, driving on I-80 and crossed the river into Council Bluffs. Seeing a bright stationary light near the 24th St. exit, she wondered if it was a helicopter patrol and pulled the car over to watch. What she reportedly saw was an oblong object with illuminated windows hovering about 100 feet over Eldon's Standard Service Station and lighting up the area. No tail or props could be seen, and no noise was heard . . . only the sound of traffic on I-80. Some other cars were seen by her to pull over and more people got out to watch. Still there when she left, she rushed home for her brother-in-law and took him back to the scene, but the object was no longer over the gas station. Those other cars were still present but the occupants did not wish to discuss the incident with them. Focken and her brother-in-law decided to keep the story to themselves as no one would believe them. He was involved in local politics, and didn't want to be accused of publicity-seeking.

It was later that he learned of the extensive electrical damage that had been done to the station, damage reported to have occurred at the same time of the UFO sighting! So Focken's brother-in-law decided the story was too important to withhold, and informed the local newspaper.

A CB radio, a burglar alarm and an adding machine were damaged beyond repair; a cash register was able to be repaired; a vending machine had malfunctioned only temporarily, spilling change on the ground. The two attendants on duty at the station that night didn't report a UFO to their insurance agent, however; they told him it started to rain hard at 9 PM, and lightning struck twice between 11:40 and 11:55 PM, resulting in the damage. Mr DeGraw's investigation lists the following individuals who assert that there was NO LIGHTNING, THUNDER AND/OR RAIN on the night of July 31st in Council Bluffs:

1) the National Weather Service across the river in Omaha
2) a Mr. Rob Sorenson who lives near the station and sat on his patio until midnight
3) an unnamed Ramada Inn employee who left work near the station at 11 PM
4) a man at an electronic "jamboree" that night in Council Bluffs
5) the gas station owner, *himself,* as related to the repair shop owner where he took his damaged equipment. The technician who examined the equipment said it *resembled* lightning damage, but the owner told IUR that the damage was internal, with an *un*damaged AC cord, which he asserted would have melted if lightning was the damaging agent; hence, IUR wonders if the gas station personnel don't really know what caused the damage.

The gas station owner told IUR that he talked to several customers who claimed to have seen the UFO mentioned in the papers, but didn't want to say anything, or people "would think they were crazy". A Council Bluff family also reported seeing the same object about that time and place. We have learned however, that they have been over-zealous in the past about "UFO sightings"; so IUR must regrettably reject their testimony.

Mr. DeGraw checked the FAA Radar Approach Control at Omaha, but the supervisor recorded no image suggestive of a UFO. Remember, the actual manner of disappearance in this case was unwitnessed, and it was only 100 feet up. No additional reports were made to the Council Bluffs police.

More investigation has to be performed here. Necessary delays have been created; we are still waiting for the first-hand testimony of the main witness, the results of the insurance investigation (an insurance policy that includes UFO damage ?) and the power records of the Iowa Power & Light Co.

Watch for further details in IUR.

IUR. DEC. 1976

CASE DATE July 31, 1976 PLACE Council Bluffs, Iowa DATE

NICAP

FILE NO.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

CATEGORY _____ NO. OF OBJECTS _____

APPARENT SIZE (NL, DD, RV- 1) star 2) distant plane 3) full moon 4) quarter at arm's length 5) finger at arm's length 6) CE - size in feet)

_____

COLOR (S) _____ OPACITY _____

SHAPE (S) (what common household object shaped like) _____

TEXTURE (S) _____ SOUND (S) _____

HEAT _____ ODOR (S) _____

OUTLINE (sharp, vague) _____ LUMINOSITY (refl., self) _____

SURROUNDING HAZE? _____ APPENDAGES (domes, fins, aerials, landing gear) _____ LIGHT BEAMS (color, extent, #) _____

FEATURES (seams, windows, insignias, steady or pulsating lights, doorways)

_____

OCCUPANTS SEEN (if "yes", go to CE III form) _____

ELECTROMAGNETIC INTERFERENCE (building power, car electrical systems, compass, radio, TV; if "yes", go to CE II form) _____

PHYSICAL EFFECTS? (rings, imprints in ground, vegetation scorched or broken, stains, residues, "angel's hair", broken tree branches) _____

PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS (illness, discomfort) _____

TRAIL (color, nature, vapor?, width, length, persistence) _____

MOTION:

MANNER OF APPEARANCE (in distance?, materialize?, like plane?) _____

POINT OF APPEARANCE ("NNW", "horizon") _____

BREAK INTO PARTS? _____ ROTATE? _____

CHANGE SHAPE? _____ AFFECT CLOUDS? _____

EST. ANGULAR SIZED (from "tree" to "moon" in x sec. - MIN) _____

ANGLE OF DISAPPEARANCE ("west", "horizon") _____

MODE OF DISAPPEARANCE ("in distance", "like plane") _____

TOTAL DURATION OF SIGHTING _____

SEQUENCE OF (list directions, actions, durations, for each abrupt change in behaviour: hovering, zero-top, 1/4, 1/2, 3/4, overhead)

_____ DURATION _____

_____ DURATION _____

_____ DURATION _____

_____ DURATION _____

_____ DURATION _____

0104

REPORTING WITNESS' NAME Debbie Focken (712) 366-0657

ADDRESS 4038 Ramelle Drive Council Bluffs, Io.

_____ AGE _____ OCCUPATION _____

EDUCATION _____

APPROX. ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME (to multiples of $5000.) _____

NAMES OF WITNESSES FROM YOUNGER (get names, addresses, phone numbers)

(16)
Raymond + Robert Stanfill (names confidential) - w/girlfriends 3 mi. from Standard Station "plane w/no wings" headed SW from W 10:55 PM July 31st (Eurith Stanfill notorious constant UFO reporter!) for 15 min. while walking to house. "partly cloudy" warm - no rain "hovering - stationary - white - "plate" size at arms length - manner of disapp. unwitnessed (walked into home) - no sound - solid - recorded Aug. 14th

- ☐ spoke to Ramada Inn employee near station; came out at 11PM that night, but noticed nothing
- ☐ Texaco station across the street on duty July 31st, but couldn't remember if raining that night (or UFO)
- ☐ Council Bluffs Airport has weather records diary
- ☐ Mr. Rob Soreason - on patio night of 31st 'til midnight - NO LIGHTNING
- ☐ Roger Davids - sister-in-law said she left job (K-Mart) at 11:30 PM when Debbie Focken crossed river into Council Bluffs - saw light (stationary) "helicopter patrol?" - light got brighter as got nearer - turned off exit (24th st) stopped, got out to look - somewhat oblong - heli. w/o tail or props - lighting up area - frightened - no noise, only the noise of cars travelling on I-80 -- scared when she confronted me "was still there when I left" - went back 2 cars pulled over on right hand side of road ~~on~~ just beyond exit going on to interstate and going over ramp over the top of interstate 2 more cars -- went to Eldon's standard, looked couldn't find it - rolled down window, cars wouldn't talk back -- she didn't want to call police "think I'm nuts" - didn't want to call Offitt AFB because going into AF, didn't want to hurt her position - I'm involved in local politics, didn't want to be accused of publicity-seeking -- when I heard about gas station put 2+2 together -- saw police cars at Eldon's the next day
- ☐ C+C (cont.) - only internal parts damaged to CB radio - if lightning the damaging agent, would have melted AC cord! Could not have hurt the rest of the equipment! Technician says - characteristic of lightning strike (Ross)
- ☐ Scott Simon - closing up at 11:15 PM - counting money - locked the door - lightning lit the place up - 20¢ of change fell out of vending machine (didn't see 1st flash seen by Mark Hotes outside) - lightning must have struck between 11:40-11:55 Jim Stone in Colorado, Dan Stone home - 1st started raining at 9 PM ("real hard") (Hesitant to talk at 1st)

investigation conducted by Ralph DeGraw and Pat Crawley
7:50 PM - Aug. 13 in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

☐ went to Eldon's Service (call him at home) - stated was not at station that night - got his information from 2 boys on duty - a lightning strike damaged the CB radio, adding machine and burglar alarm - alarm has been repaired, adding machine not repaired (smoked when plugged in) - radio at C+C (High Performance "beyond repair, cheaper to replace" - had insurance coverage Also gave permission to send equipment to Center if necessa
☐ Interviewed Mark Hoats - "started raining 9PM, July 31st. At ~11:50 PM, lightning struck; lit up entire drive and coins began dropping out of vending machines -- later interview w/ Scott Simons confirmed this (other att. on duty) -- Hoats said that lightning struck drive, then struck station 2nd - no evidence of lightning strike to lawn -- Simons said didn't witness 1st strike -- news acc. (Aug. 9) in Nonpareil wrongly stated Jim Stone there that night - in Colorado, instead.
☐ Leona Skarnulis - Nonpareil - reporter of incident - helpful
☐ Nat. Wx Service - Omaha -- Alex Beauvois "Rain in general Council Bluffs area" on night of July 29th + morning of July 30th; night of 30th, morning of 31st - thunderstorms, lightning, midnight; night of 31st = NO lightning, thunder, precipitation" confirms report of other Council Bluffs citizens that there was no rain night of 31st, or lightning - incl. UFO witnesses near station and others who had nothing to do with incident -- Skarnulis also spoke to Rudell at Wx Service - "no lightning"
☐ called RAPCON (Radar Approach Control) - FAA inst. at Omaha spoke to Jean Kjellberg - supervisor - "no reports of UFO's that night for Council Bluffs" or any other night that he can recall around that time - radar man for 20 yrs., saw no radar images that would lead him to believe in UFO's. "Call Offitt AFB UFO #, 294-3240" - did so, told to call 294-4050. - no answer
☐ called Council Bluffs police dept. - no calls on UFO's July 31st
☐ spoke to C+C High Performance - Dwight Hirsh + technician - "lightning" dam. CB equipment - 2800 Twin City Shop. Cen. 366-2468 10 - 0867 11 "no electrical storm that evening" - Eldon Bird told me!!! No bad wx for our jamboree July 31 - no rain on 30th *
☐ Eldon Bird (on phone) couldn't remember exact date damage occurred
☐ Roger Davids given form for sister to fill out
☐ unnamed station attendant noticed electrical stink in station next morning - Scott Simon reluctant to talk at 1st; stated he was there that night - other attendant asked ① if tapes legal in court and ② do insurance investigators use them? (over)

(1) Debbie Focken will submit form later - basic training Lackland AFB San Antonio TX
(712) 366-0657 Roger Davids
512-671-1110 ~~2655~~

(1) Eldon Bird - Eldon's Standard Service Station -
- ☐ call back in 2 wks, for eqpt. when insurance company is through w/ it. 322-3877
- ☐ "Eqpt. was OK during the day when I ~~was~~ there (Friday, July 30)
- ☐ Insured w/ Dick Green - Farmer's Insurance - "please don't call - I don't want him to think lightning didn't cause the damage, and NOT PAY FOR IT!" 323-9849 (322-7956: H)
- ☐ Damaged beyond repair = CB, Burglar Alarm, Adding Machine - Repaired: Cash Register - vending Machine OK now
- ☐ talked to sev. people who told me they saw it

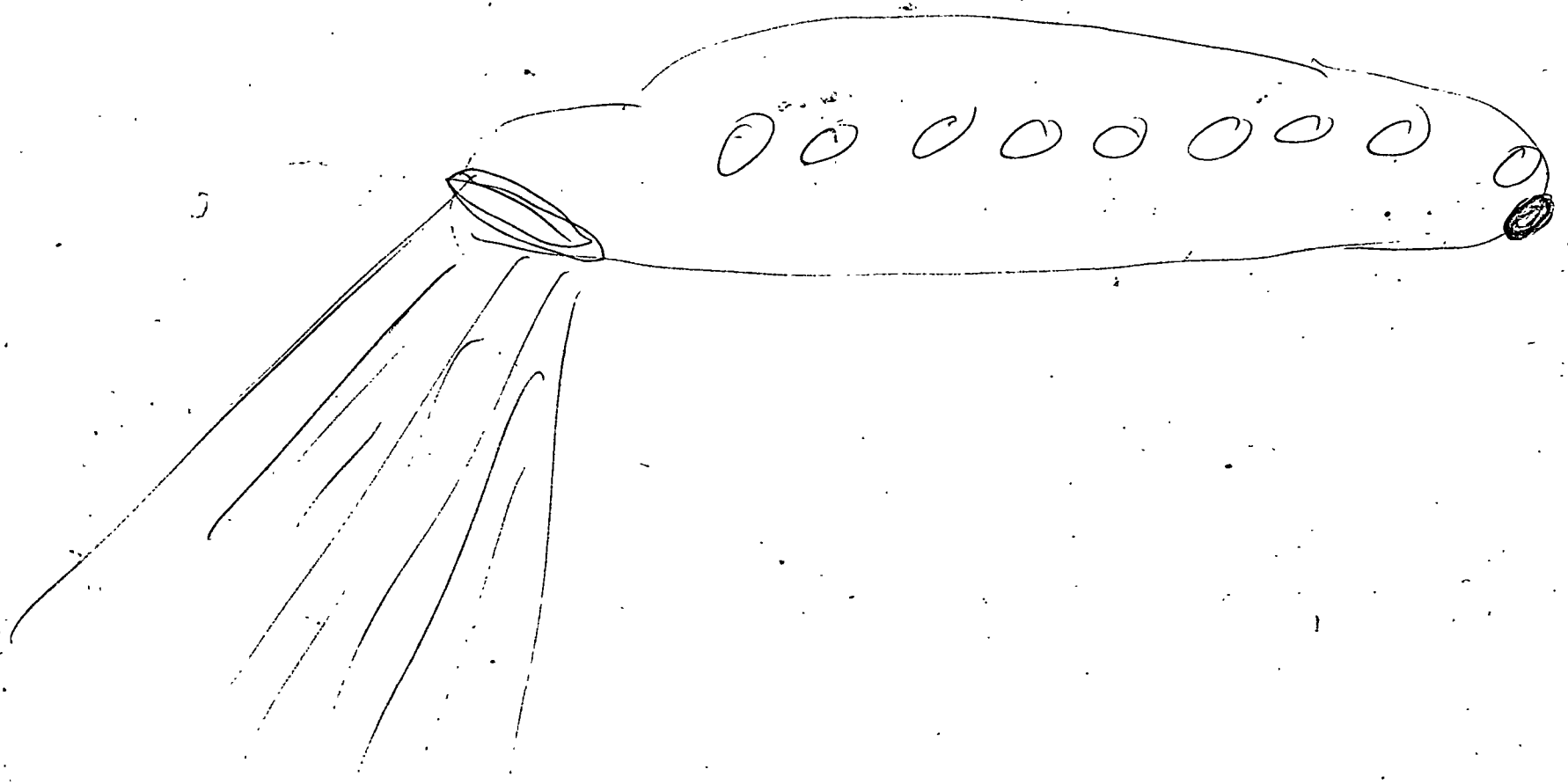
(7) Council Bluffs Airport discards wx records 10 days later

(21) Lloyd Hornback - Iowa Power + Light (712) 366-2487 ext 151
Mr. Watts

AUG 14, 1976

By R A Davids

Roger A Davids



(2)

'Thing' blew up CB antenna

The Whirligig

ROGER DAVIDS, 4038 Ramelle Drive, debated with himself for about a week before finally calling The Nonpareil to report a UFO sighting.

He finally decided it was too important to just let it go by.

He said about 11 p.m. July 31, his sister-in-law Debbie Focken was driving home from work on Interstate 80 when she saw a bright light near the Twenty-fourth Street exit. As she approached, the light got brighter. The object appeared to be about 100 feet above Eldon's Standard Service Station.

She stopped at the exit and got out of her car to watch. Other cars stopped along the Interstate. The oblong object had windows and lights inside and looked much like the cabin of a passenger plane. It just hovered silently above the station.

She got frightened and went to the Davids' home where she is staying. She and Davids returned to the scene, but the object was gone.

Davids said he approached two cars parked near the Twenty-fourth Street exit, "but

The next morning Davids saw police cars at the station. He called owner Eldon Berg, who said lighting had struck the station and burned out all the wiring.

Only that Saturday night there was no lightning, a fact confirmed by Robert Rugle, lead forecaster at the National Weather Bureau in Omaha.

Station attendant Jim Stone, asked by The Nonpareil what he knew about a UFO, said, "All I know is the place got struck by lightning, and it wasn't raining. Or lightning. It blew up the CB antenna."

He also said a customer (apparently not Davids) "said he was driving along the Interstate, and cars were lined up where people had stopped to watch it."

The Nonpareil would like to hear from anyone else who saw the object.

—o—

(3)

UFO similar to one in 1962

The Whirligig

A PRIVATE UFO investigator has expressed considerable interest in the sighting reported in Monday's Whirligig.

The Nonpareil contacted Ralph DeGraw of Hazleton, a UFO researcher for 13 years and a member of the Iowa Mutual UFO Network.

DeGraw was asked if he had heard of anything similar to the July 31 sighting. The case involved a strange object above Eldon's Standard Service Station on Twenty-fourth Street near Interstate 80. The next day the station appeared to have been struck by lightning, only there had been no lightning.

"I have heard of something similar," DeGraw said. "This is what interests me. There are a lot of stories about UFOs, but the odd thing about this one is the lightning effect."

The previous case occurred in 1969, he said.

"A lady and her daughter were driving near Elkader when a UFO came down and crossed the road in front of their car. It stopped, then shot straight up into the sky. It left a lightning trail behind."

"Until now, I never heard of another case like this."

DeGraw would be especially interested in knowing if anyone saw the object leave the area.

—o—

Knocked out s

Strange sky object puz

Ralph DeGraw

By LEANNA SKARNULIS
Nonpareil Staff Writer

"I am puzzled."

That was the unbridled comment of UFO investigator Ralph DeGraw of Hazleton after a 1½ day of inquiry into an unusual sighting reported in Council Bluffs.

DeGraw came to town as a field investigator for the Center for UFO Studies in Evanston, Ill. He brought an assistant, Pat Crowley, 17, also of Hazleton. ★

After calls from The Nonpareil and a Council Bluffs resident, DeGraw reported to the Center the sighting of a strange object above Eldon's Standard Service Station, 2710 S. 24th St., about 11 p.m. July 31. The Center asked DeGraw to investigate.

If you tried to imagine what kind of person a UFO investigator is, you would probably never think of a Ralph DeGraw.

DeGraw's approach is cautious and scientific, although he is not a scientist. Four months out of the year he operates his own store. The remainder of his time is spent in UFO studies at his own expense.

DeGraw methodically interviewed people connected with the sighting, as well as checking out radar and weather information. He taped personal interviews, agreeing to keep names confidential if people so requested.

As he worked, he uttered no "Eureka!" cries of discovery nor claims that intelligent beings guided the object. He even refrained from using the word "craft" in referring to UFOs. "Craft" implies the object was built by someone or something.

The Council Bluffs sighting was first reported in The Nonpareil following a call from Roger Davids, 4038 Ramelle Drive. He said his sister-in-law saw an oblong object with windows, lighted inside like a passenger plane, hovering about 100 feet above the service atation.

Davids said he later learned the station's wiring had been burned out by an apparent lightning strike that night. Only there had been no lightning that starry night, a fact confirmed by the National Weather Service in Omaha.

tation's power?

zzles UFO investigator

Station attendant Jim Stone, out of town on the night in question, told The Nonpareil, "All I know is the place was struck by lightning. And it wasn't raining.

Mrs. E. R. Stanfill, 1622 S. 11th St., said her sons — Robert, 18, and Raymond, 16 — saw the object from Sunset Park. They told her it looked like a passenger plane without wings and had two stories of windows They watched it as it moved slowly, close to the ground.

Mrs. Stanfill said she didn't believe them until she read The Nonpareil account.

"They were supposed to be home at 10:30. I thought it was an excuse they made up for being late."

DeGraw was reluctant to connect the July 31st "lightning strike" with the UFO. Because the Weather Bureau reported rain and lightning the night of July 30, he pursued the possibility that Davids was wrong about when the lightning struck.

Then he made a curious discovery. Two station attendants, Mark Holtz and Dan Stone, said they were working the night of July 31 and that it rained from 9 p.m. till after midnight.

DeGraw said they told him they saw lightning hit the green area in front of the station. Then the lights went out briefly. But when they came back on, the cash register, burglar alarm, and citizen's band radio were not working properly.

DeGraw said everyone else he talked to said there was no rain or lightning that night. An investigator for 13 years, he said "I've never run into anything like this before where we couldn't keep the weather straight."

Among other persons DeGraw talked to was the technician who worked on the damaged CB radio. DeGraw said the man told him only lightning could have caused the damage.

DeGraw said he has permission from station owner Eldon Bird to send the burglar alarm, CB radio, and cash register to the Center for analysis.

DeGraw called the Center "a non-profit but well-funded" organization that has resources for thoroughly studying such phenomena. He said many scientists and researchers volunteer to help with UFO studies at the Center, which receives data from all over the world.

Mrs. Stanfill told The Nonpareil a warning should be issued to youngsters to stay away from mysterious objects because she has read of kidnappings and killings attributed to UFOs.

DeGraw said in the cases he knows of where death or injury coincide with UFO sightings, there has been no substantiation that the UFOs were responsible.

After completing interviews in Council Bluffs, DeGraw said, "I believe from talking to witnesses there have been numerous sightings of unknown objects."

Hazleton, Iowa
August 31, 1976

CENTER FOR UFO STUDIES
Attn.: Allan Hendry
924 Chicago Ave.
Evanston, Illinois 60202

Dear Allan,

Enclosed you will find a letter which I received from Mrs. Stanfill dated August 16th. As per our telephone conversation, I am sending it along for whatever it may be worth. You may copy it and return along with previously submitted reports.

Also enclosed you will find a newspaper story ~~#~~ which was published in the Non-pareil as a result of Mr. Crowley and my investigations in Council Bluffs. I have another original clipping so the Center may keep the enclosed clipping. Favorable mention is made of the Center For UFO Studies in the article for which I am quite pleased. A little carefull public-relations work by your field investigators should always be an asset to the Center.

You will notice at the head of column two, in the article, that the reporter had previous notions as to what the average UFO investigator would be like. It appears that she had always thought of a UFO investigator as being a "wild6eyed saucer buff with a science-fiction type approach". Apparently I did not live up to her expectations for which I have no regrets. I mention this only because this may be the general opinion of many other reporters and newspapers concerning UFO investigations, which has undoubtedly affected their recounting of UFO sightings and/or investigations in their news items. This takes you back to my previous statement about carefull statements and PR work.

Several mistakes made in the article are as follows:

1. Pat Crowley's address is Oelwein; not Hazleton.

2. Roger Davids did not think that lightning had struck the station.

3. Dan Stone is a mechanic at the station (his brother is Jim Stone) and was not there on the night in question. The other attendant was Scott Simons.

4. The lights did not go out immediately after the first reported lightning strike that supposedly hit the green area. The lights went out momentarily (and damage sustained) upon the second alleged lightning strike which occured after the first one.

5. It was not a cash register that was damaged; it was an adding machine.

Again, thankyou for permitting me to assist the Center in this case and I am anxiously awaiting further results of the Center's investigations into the above. Also, I am anxiously awaiting another assignment (and the field-investigator forms).

Feel free to contact me at anytime; night or day.

Sincerely Yours,

Ralph C. DeGraw

Ralph C. DeGraw
PRIVATE UFO INVESTIGATIONS
Rt. #1,
Hazleton, Iowa 50641