A.C.O.S. BULLETIN

No. 21

October 1979.

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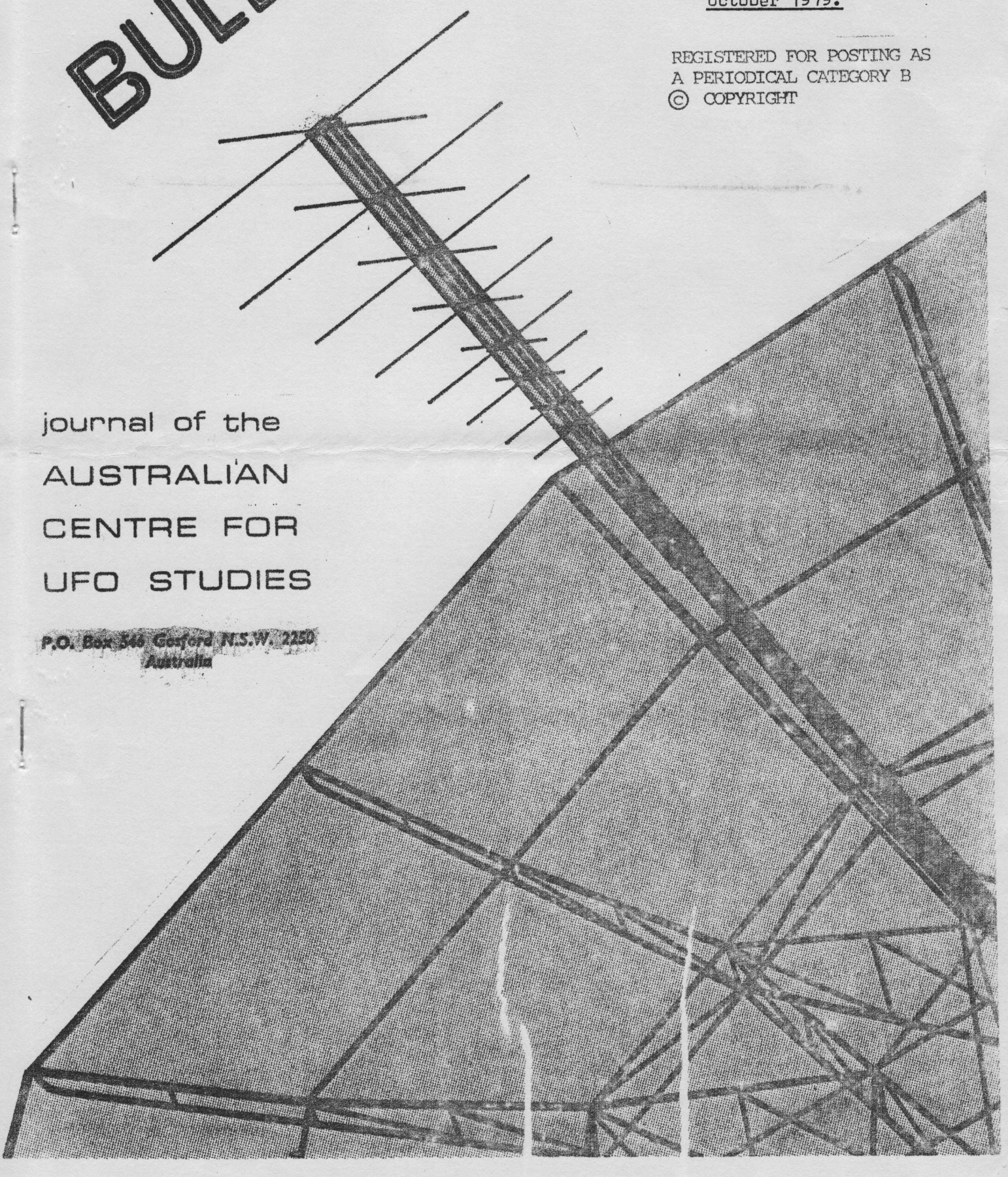

journal of the
AUSTRALIAN
CENTRE FOR
UFO STUDIES

P.O. Box 546 Gosford N.S.W. 2250
Australia

A.C.O.S. BULLETIN - NUMBER TWENTYONE - OCTOBER 1979.

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Editorial.

by H. Griesberg & D. Seargent.

Just three weeks ago saw delegates representing all scientific UFO organisations in australia, as well as several independent investigators/researchers and scientific & technical consultants, meet, for Australia's fourth annual UFO conference, "UFOCON 4". The conference was held at the Twin Towers Motor Inn, Artarmon, Sydney N.S.W., on October 13, 14, 15.

Just like the previous three conferences, this one was once again, highly successfull. A number of excellent papers were presented and several topics were discussed. One of these items was a proposed name change for ACOS. The name which was finally settled on was "AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR UFO STUDIES" (ACUFOS). We will be changing over to this new title early in the new year, giving us time to use existing stationary and slightly re-organise ourselves.

We were also very fortunate to have with us, Quentin Fogarty, the television journalist, who, with cameraman David Crockett was involved in the now world-famous New Zealand UFO film which was shot last December. Delegates were treated to a thorough report of the sequence of events which led to the film, and then saw the full film on the UFOs around the aircraft .

Proceedings of the conference will be available shortly. To summarise, a number of great ideas were put forward at the conference, and it is now up to the Australian groups & individuals to act on these ideas to further our investigations into the UFO phenomenon in Australia.

Extraterrestrial Isotope Ratios. by Dr. Don Herbison-Evans.

All of the 105 known chemical elements exist as any of several different isotopes. The various isotopes of a given element behave nearly identically chemically to each other, but have differing nuclear masses. These masses can be measured in a special instrument such as a Mass Spectrometer. The isotopes are usually referred to by a letter symbolising the element and a superscript symbolizing mass e.g. H^2 means hydrogen with a nuclear mass of 2 atomic units.

Many isotopes are radioactive, and can be detected this way, but over a long period of time these decay. The stable isotopes have some value for verifying, or otherwise, the extraterrestrial source of an object.

Of the 105 elements, 82 have at least one stable isotope, and 62 have more than one. The element with the largest number of stable elements is tin, with 10. A tiny fragment (0.001 gram) of an object analysed by a Mass Spectrometer can give the ratios of the amounts of the various isotopes of each of these 62 elements. The three common elements which compose the bulk of living matter are hydrogen, oxygen and carbon. These each, have several stable isotopes. Their terrestrial relative abundances are:

(1) (a) Hydrogen: the H^2/H^1 ratio is 160 parts per million (P.P.M.) in standard mean ocean water (SMOW). This abundance varies according to the source of the hydrogen. Thus in rain water, the H^2 abundance can be as low as 70 ppm, and hydrogen from bacterial fermentation can have as little as 30 ppm.

(b) Oxygen: this has three stable isotopes. The abundances in SMOW of O^{17}/O^{16} and O^{18}/O^{16} are 0.039% and 0.203% respectively, giving a O^{18}/O^{17} ratio of 5.5. Other terrestrial sources can have the heavier isotopes reduced by as much as 1%.

(c) Carbon: the C^{12}/C^{13} ratio in Pee Dee Bellemnite (PDB), a carbonate rock, is 89. The value varies according the source of the carbon by up to +1% and down by -5%. The most extreme variations occur in natural gas.

Just as these abundances vary somewhat according to their terrestrial source, so they vary even more for extraterrestrial sources. Such information is available from:

(a) Moon rocks
(b) Meteorites
(c) Radioastronomical spectra
(d) Stellar Optical Spectra.

Analysis of the rocks brought back by the Apollo astronauts (5) gives us some direct information. The rocks are naturally from the surface of the moon, and thus have suffered from bombardment by the solar wind for some millions of years. This wind is composed mainly of H^1, so it affects the values somewhat. Thus, a H^2/H^1 ratio of 18-60 was observed in these rocks (of 160 in SMOW). The O^{18}/O^{16} differed from SMOW in the range +0.38 to 1.91%. The C^{13}/C^{12} ratio was found to be 1.1 to 1.[illegible]% higher than PDB.

Meteorites also provide a direct source of extraterrestrial material for analysis. There are two main types of meteorite: rocky and metallic. The traces of hydrogen in these give values of H^2/H^1 of 190 & 145 ppm respectively (of SMOW: 160). Traces of carbon in the two types of meteorites give values differing from PDB by -0.25% and +6% respectively.

Radio astronomy can detect the spectra of molecules in the dust clouds in space. The spectra of molecules containing different isotopes are distinct. The evaluation of abundances from these spectra has some uncertainty due to the unknown thickness of the clouds of interstellar material.

Measurements have been made of the O^{18}/O^{17} ratio (2) by examining the spectra of the hydroxyl radical (OH) at 1627.17 MHz ($O^{17}H^{1}$) and 1624.43 MHz ($O^{18}H^{1}$), giving a value of 4.2 (of 5.5 in SMOW). These isotopes have also been measured in the spectra of carbon monoxide (CO) giving an O^{18}/O^{17} ratio of 3.6 in the Orion Nebula, and 4.0 rho Oph. (3).

The heavier isotope of carbon C^{13} has been detected and measured in the radio spectrum of cyanoacetylene (HC_3N) in the galactic centre (4). This gives a ratio C^{12}/C^{13} of 36 (of 89 in PDB). Formaldehyde (H_2CO) in the galactic centre gives a value of 13.

The optical spectra of stars provide another source of information, and again the results have some uncertainty due to the uncertain absolute intensities of the electronic transitions in the atoms.
The only measurements that I know of to date are of the C^{12}/C^{13} ratio which has been listed for 53 stars (6). The values cluster around 20, but range from 3 to 50 (of 89 in PDB).

The range of values of just these three elements shows that verification that an object is extraterrestrial is possible by analysis in a mass spectrometer of a very small sample from the object.

Reference:

(1) Epstein S, Buchsbaun R., Lowenstom H.A. & Urey H.C., Bulletin of the Geological Society of America, Vol. 62 (1962) p 417.
(2) Gardner F.F. & Whiteoak J.B., Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society, Vol 176 (1976), Short Communications p 57.
(3) Encrenay P.J., Wannier P.G., Jefferts K.B., Penzias AA & Wilson R.W., Astrophysical Journal Vol 186 (1973) p. L77
(4) Gardner F.F. & Winnewisser G, Astrophysical Journal, Vol 197 (1975) p L73
(5) Epstein S., Taylor H.P., Science Vol 167 (1970) p 533
(6) Dearborn D.S.P. & Eggleton P.P., Quarterly Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society, vol 17 (1976) p 448.

Reported Observations from Aircraft over Australasia, 1977-1979.

by Keith Basterfield.

There have been at least six reported UFO observations from observers in aircraft over Australasia within the last two years. Two made major headlines around the world, namely the Valentich (1) (Victoria 21.10.78) and the New Zealand (2) (December 78) aircraft/radar/visual/film cases, and I will not review these here. Four other observations have been reported of unusual objects in the sky worthy of our attention. These reports are Goondiwindi (3) (QLD 77), Kunanurra (4) (NT 77), Port Augusta (5) (SA May 78) and Whyalla(6) (SA Dec 78). Investigations are still continuing into the last named.

GOONDIWINDI: The reporter was travelling as a passenger on a B.P.A. trilander flying between Cunnamulla and Brisbane in Queensland, when the incident occured at about 3 a.m. on 10th September 1977. Mr. H. was sitting next to the pilot of the trilander when approaching the Goondiwindi airport, both noticed what they first took to be another aircraft approaching on a similar but opposite course.

The pilot confirmed through air traffic control (Brisbane and Sydney) that no other traffic was known to be in the area as they made their final approach to land. As the aircraft and the unknown were on what appeared to be an eventual collision course, the trilander pilot took evasive action and Mr. H. on the starboard side saw the unknown approach the airport, pass low over the runway and move away to a position SW of the runway.

They landed, but while refuelling they observed that the object "hovered"

and "moved about erratically" to the SW. Meanwhile Mr. H. in discussing the object with waiting passengers found they had seen it pass soundlessly at low altitude over the runway.

Half an hour later the B.P.A. flight continued on to Brisbane. Sitting once again by the pilot, as they ascended, Mr. H. watched the unknown move toward the aircraft, then pace it at a similar rate of speed on the starboard side, before it turned away from the plane in a SE direction, disappearing into the distance. MR. H. said that at no time was any shape discernible, only two bright lights positioned above and below (at any angle) what seemed to be a "thick body". The "lights" were not the usual type fitted to aircraft, being described as changing colour from orange-white in a "psychadelic" manner. The incident was apparently not reported to any authority.

KUNANURRA: At 5.30 p.m. on the 9 Dec 77 a Mr. Lindsay McKenzie-Smith and his wife Helen were flying in a light aircraft at a position approximately 100 KM east of Kunanurra, Northern Territory (some 370 KM SSW of Darwin). The plane was piloted by Mr. McKenzie-Smith who had 750 hours flying experience.

On that day they had already made several flights within the NT since starting at about 9.30 a.m. that morning, and were on their way from Legune to Victoria River Downs (VRD). The terrain in the area is extremely rugged and isolated and both people were feeling tired after commencing this last leg at about 4.30 p.m.

The aircraft, a Cessna 206, was cruising at 1675 metres, just after passing over the Pinkerton Ranges (300-340 m high), when Helen McKenzie-Smith told her husband that another aircraft was coming towards them. Helen estimated that she first noted the "object" when it was about 5 KM distant, flying at a lower altitude below the visible horizon. It was easily picked up against the green-brown background. Both of them logically expected the "object" to be a plane but realized it wasn't as it approached.

The object passed below them and behind the plane at an estimated 1370 m (making it about 300 m below them). In order to observe the object further the pilot banked the aircraft approximately 90 degrees, but upon turning, the object had apparently disappeared from sight. The plane then continued on its former course and within 5 minutes of the observation attempted to report its position as is normal practice at this stage of the flight. (They also planned to ask if there were any traffic in the area).

Mr. McKenzie-Smith tried several times but could not transmit on VHF or HF for the following 20-30 minutes. He eventually raised Darwin (VHF) before approaching and landing at VRD.

The object appears to have come no less than 300 m from the aircraft, and Lindsay says that "the object gave no depth perception, its size and height were hard to estimate" as he only saw it for some 30-40 seconds. It was an oval or lenticular shape, appearing metallic and at an estimated 300 m seemed to be 9 m long, by 2.75 to 3 m wide and probably 1 m thick. It had well defined edges and a dull or non-reflecting surface, similar to anodising (white-grey). Both viewers thought it peculiar that there was no shadow on it - the sun was setting behind them and should have reflected on the leading edge of the object but didn't. The object flew sideways just like an airplane wing.

The incident was not officially reported but came to the notice of UFO Research (FNQ) who interviewed the observers.

PORT AUGUSTA: Our third case presents us with somewhat of a mystery. A light aircraft pilot who was flying from Mount Gambier to Adelaide, overheard a radio conversation concerning a UFO, whilst enroute. It was the evening of the 3rd May 1978 (although the exact time is not known) when his radio came to life and he heard an aircraft near Port Augusta calling the Adelaide airport to report a visual sighting of a bright light, which had it seems also been picked up on the plane's radar. The entire story wasn't known as our informant was landing at the time.

Investigations were initiated by UFO Research (SA) and a check made of the two airlines flying in the area plus the local St. John Air Ambulance Service based near Port Augusta, also the Department of Transport and the Royal Australian Air Force were contacted.

There were two planes in the area at the time, neither of which reportedly had observed any unusual phenomena. A search of the Airport flight service records revealed a police report of two red flares being sighted 8 nautical miles S of Whyalla at 8.58 p.m. but nothing else. An advert placed in several local papers failed to solicit any response for visual observations. The RAAF declined to answer our query for any details they might have. Overall we were left with not being able to do much more than record a possible event.

WHYALLA: This case came to the ears of UFO Research (FNQ) who forwarded it to UFO Research (SA) for investigations, which have not yet been finalised. A man was piloting a light aircraft from Adelaide to Whyalla, South Australia on 30 December 1978 at about 11 p.m. flying at 2800 m, speed 220 knots. Over Alford he noticed what to him appeared to be another aircraft flying parallel at an estimated 24 KM distance. He checked with Adelaide but was advised that there was no traffic in the area. Looking back to the object he realised that there were no navigation lights on it, it was merely an elongated white light with a blue tinge around the edge. It stayed with him until he turned left in the Whyalla circuit area, and it stopped moving until the plane came on to the downwind leg of the circuit. At this stage it closed in on the plane very quickly, so the pilot landed as fast as he could. The object turned away and disappeared.

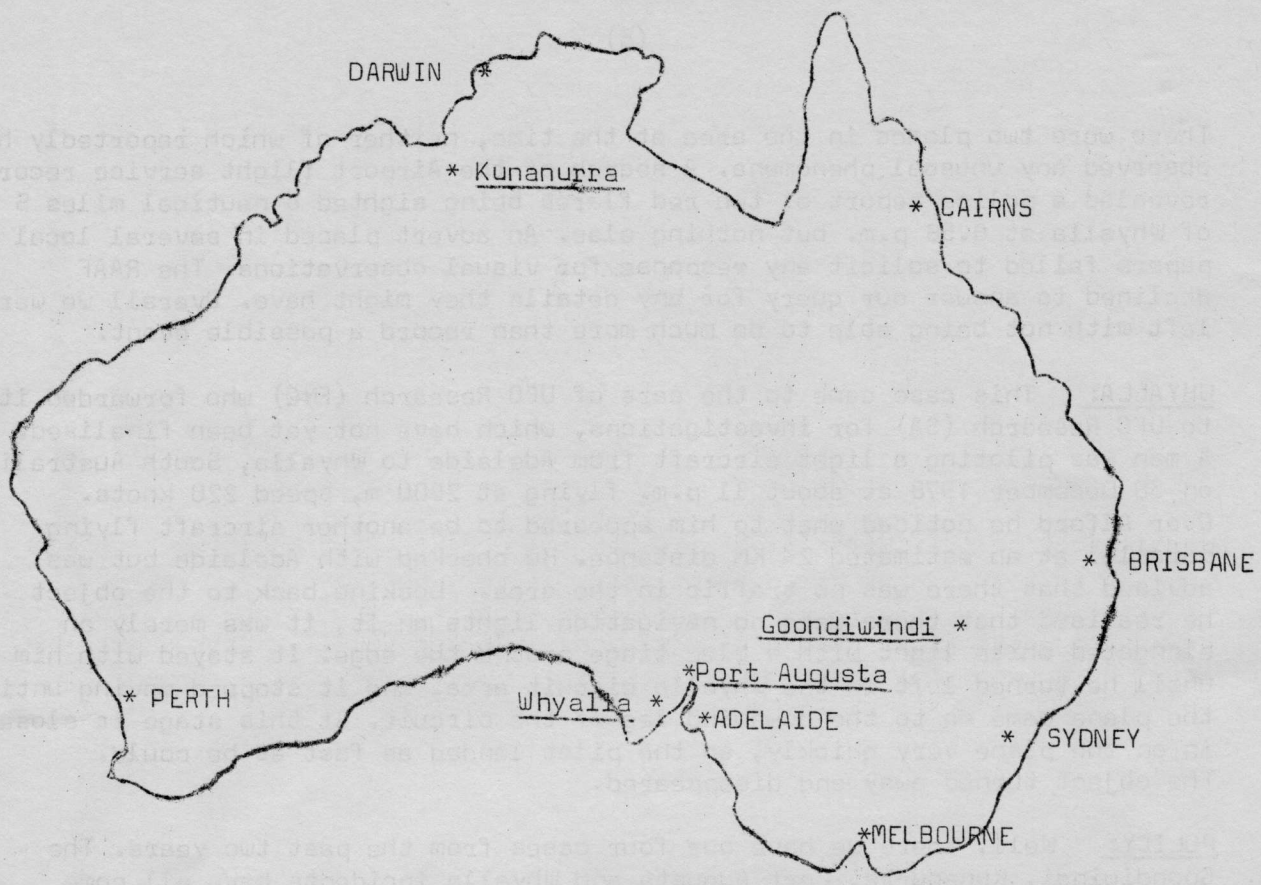
POLICY: Well, there we have our four cases from the past two years. The Goondiwindi, Kunanurra, Port Augusta and Whyalla incidents have all come to our knowledge privately. None have appeared in the media and only Whyalla can be substantiated from official records. The Department of Transport is the government department responsible for the oversighting of all aspects of civilian air movements and safety. Its policy is clear. Enquiries are usually referred to the RAAF(7). The RAAF's policy is that there is no such thing as a genuine UFO (8), thus getting official confirmation of a UFO/aircraft incident remains difficult.

There are two main airlines within Australia and their attitude seems to be that individual pilots are free to talk about such observations they make, unlike the RAAF. Private pilots are under no apparent restrictions but it would seem they make no official report because of the attitude of the Department of Transport and RAAF. In summary, some interesting air encounters have occurred over the past two years, but a complete investigation is extremely difficult due to official policies.(9)

Notes and References:

(1) See "The Missing Cessna and the UFO" W. Chalker, FSR Vol 24 no 5 pp 3-5 and "Pilot disappears after reporting UFO" MUFON Journal no 129, Aug 78 pp3-5
(2) See "New Zealand radar-visual and film cases" K. Basterfield MUFON Journal no 132, Nov/Dec 78 pp 3-5 and B. MacCabee's excellent analysis in the May and June 79 issues of the MUFON Journal.
(3). Report details courtesy UFO Research (FNQ) P.O. Box 1585 Cairns Qld 4870
(4) As for 3.
(5) Investigations by G. Bolton, S. Bolton, J. Burford and this author.
(6) Initial report via UFO Research (FNQ), investigation by UFO Research (SA).
(7) Letter from Department of Transport to UFO Research (SA).
(8) Letter from RAAF to ACOS 1975.
(9) Previously reported encounters with no conventional explanations are:= 1953 Near Sydney (V), 1954 Melbourne (V), 4.1.54 Melbourne (V), 28.5.65 off Bouganville Reef (V,P), Jul/Aug 68 near Cairns (V,P)

V=Visual, P=Photographic.



Location of Australasian UFO/Aircraft Incidents 1977-1979.

An Australian Flight 19? by John Prytz.

In the light of the now famous Valentich-Bass Strait-UFO mystery of October 1978, the following newspaper article extracts are of more than passing interest.

"The Fliers We Wanted to Forget" (by) Rex Gardner.

"Six Thunderbolt fighter planes left an aircraft carrier off the Victorian coast in 1942. They were never seen again. The Thunderbolts are among dozens of planes that crashed in Victoria and off the coast during the war. Yet until now, their fate, by accident and design, has been largely ignored.

Their graves are a long way from any cemetery. Their tombs are capsules of crumpled metal and leather, and their only visitors are inquisitive wild animals or fish.

These forgotten dead are just statistics in some dusty file deep in the archives of the RAAF.

They are the airmen who disappeared during flights across Victoria in World War 2.

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RAAF records show that 45 planes crashed over Victoria during the war. Twenty-two are still officially listed as missing without trace.

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Of the 22 planes still missing, 17 ploughed into Bass Strait without trace. Four more are somewhere in Port Phillip Bay and one is missing around Lake Goringle. Because it was wartime and service tragedies - especially at home - were common, little was heard. And the RAAF, like the Army and Navy, didn't advertise their losses.

Headlines like 'Aircraft and Crew Presumed Lost', 'Fatal Crash of Plane Unexplained', 'No Trace of Airmen' and 'Missing RAAF Mystery - Appeal to Bushmen in East Gippsland' were standard, followed by a few short paragraphs. Today, any such tragedy would be splashed across newspapers and the airwaves.

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The unofficial list of plane wrecks includes:
Six USAF Thunderbolt fighters which left an aircraft carrier off the Victorian coast in 1942 and were never seen again.

****

The official RAAF list of planes still missing is:
Eight Beauforts - one off King Island, two off Bairnsdale, three off Lakes Entrance, one between Bairnsdale and Flinders Island and one in a lake.
Three Hudsons - one between Bairnsdale and Flinders Island, one in the East Sale area and one off Paynesville.
Two Mitchells off Torquay and Anglesea.
Three Ansons - two off Malacoota and one off Queenscliffe.
Two Oxfords off Seaspray and Point Cook.
Two Wirraways in Port Phillip Bay and off Wilson's Promontory.
A US B57 off Airey's Inlet.
A Spitfire in Port Phillip Bay."

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Source: THE (MELBOURNE) SUN-PICTORIAL, 22 September 1979 - p.27-28.

Rex Gardner in no way, implied or actually, connects these wartime cases with the Valentich-Bass Strait-UFO mystery in particular, nor an Australian "Bermuda Triangle" or any other "far out" explanation except that of routine aircraft failures. Enemy contact can't explain any or all of these losses over home territory. Many wartime wrecks have already been located and more may be found in the future which will de-mystify the cases listed as "missing without trace".

However, based on what Rex Gardner wrote, one has to wonder, in light of recent events, if there is a deeper mystery in why "Eastern Victoria - particularly Gippsland - is literally a graveyard for planes, pilots and their crew".

Psychological Influences on UFO "Abductee" Testimonies.

by Mark Moravec.

In recent years, cases of alleged "abduction" by UFO entities have received greater attention from ufologists. The question of how reliable and valid is the data obtained from witnesses under hypnotic regression is still to be answered. In multiple-witness cases, psychological influences operating in the social situation may lower the reliability of eyewitness testimony.

Blake (1978) has drawn attention to the processes of "folie a deux" (a shared "madness", where a person's ability to distinguish between reality and fantasy is distorted by the influence of another's delusions) and conformity (yielding to group pressures). In a multiple-witness situation, a dominant person is likely to influence the testimony of other witnesses. And as Lawson (1977) has observed: "Multiple-witness abduction cases have usually been dominated by one of the witnesses: one is more observant, often seems less negative in his or her emotional response to the event, and is inclined to be more cooperative and even more articulate with investigators." (p7).

A large number of dominant-subordinate relationships are possible according to specific group situations, personality characteristics and status. For example:

	Dominant	subordinate
age:	adult	young person
family position:	parent	son/daughter
occupational status:	employer	employee
	policeman	general public
	high-ranking uniformed authority	lower-ranking uniformed authority

In terms of specific cases of alleged abduction, we find:

New Hampshire, 1961 (see Fuller 1974)

Betty Hill
open minded about UFOs
less emotional and more stoic
more willing to talk about experience
10 days after UFO sighting, had dreams of abduction

Barney Hill
disbelieved in UFOs (before hypnosis)
more emotional and less stoic
less willing to talk about experience

Pascagoula, Miss., 1973 (see Blum and Blum, 1974)

Charles Hickson
age 42
shipyard foreman
more willing to talk about experience
recalled "examination" inside UFO

Calvin Parker
age 19
shipyard worker
less willing to talk about experience
lost consciousness when entities emerged from "craft"

Beit Bridge, Zimbabwe Rhodesia, 1974 (see Van Vlierden, 1977)

Peter
recalled contact by entities
deep trance subject and previously an "astral traveller"

Frances
lost consciousness (went to sleep)

From the above data, it appears that Betty Hill and Charles Hickson can be considered dominant in terms of personality or status in their respective cases. (In the case of Peter and Francis, the dominant-subordinate relationship, if any, is unclear). The point is, that in multiple-witness abduction cases, the psychological relationship between the witnesses has to be considered when evaluating the reliability of the data gained, especially from the subordinate witness(es). It is quite probable that the dominant witness has influenced the testimony of other witnesses.

But we still have to account for the origin of the abduction claim by the presumed dominant witness. Lawson (1977) suggests that "...the imaginations of individual witnesses may be the source of much if not all the data we have about alleged abductions...". He found that hypnotised abductees, both "real" and "imaginary", included alleged "examination" details corresponding to hospital examinations which were part of the person's past medical history. This suggests that biographical data stored in the person's memory may be recalled and added to a fantasy related while under hypnosis. The witness may fantasise an abduction story merely to please the hypnotist asking questions.

Returning to the multi-witness abduction cases outlined earlier, it is a striking detail that one witness dominates in so far as he/she recalls more details of the abduction/contact, and is more willing to discuss the experience, consciously or unconsciously. Thus Charles Hickson recalled his "medical examination" and contact by UFO entities whereas Calvin Parker lost consciousness as soon as the entities emerged from the "craft". Peter and Frances both witnessed strange lights in the sky, the altered landscape and their loss of control over their car; but it was only Peter who recalled contact with the UFO entities since

Frances lost consciousness. Unlike Barney, Betty Hill had nightmares of abduction by UFO entities, some 10 days after their UFO sighting. Could Betty, Charles, and Peter have transferred their own abduction fantasies to their respective partners?

It could be argued that the transfer of fantasised details could be prevented by conducting independent hypnotic regressions of each witness. Betty and Barney Hill were regressed independently but not before Betty had communicated details of her abduction dreams to Barney; dreams which contained details similar to what the couple were later to recall when hypnotised by Dr Benjamin Simon. Even if we have a case in which there is no hint of abduction (from dreams or other sources) known by any of the witnesses prior to independent hypnotic regressions, there is still one more possibility which would allow us to retain the fantasy hypothesis of abductions. This is the possibility of a parapsychological transfer of information from one witness to another. If in fact the "dominant" witness could telepathically transfer details of his abduction fantasy to other witnesses, then the claim of "independent" confirmation is invalidated. (Some parapsychologists have suggested that psi processes may occur more readily in a hypnotic state but research has thus far failed to support this idea, according to Rhine, 1969, p.250).

In conclusion, we have to be very cautious in accepting the testimonies of alleged "abductees". In multiple-witness cases, the "dominant" witness may influence the testimony of others. Irrespective of whether or not a witness has initially experienced an objective UFO manifestation, the possibility remains that his subsequent account of "abduction", as presented under hypnosis, is subjective fantasy.

References:

Blake, J.A. The social dynamics of UFO multiple witness reports: a cautionary note. The MUFON UFO Journal, no. 126, May 1978, pp. 10-13.

Blum, R. and J. Beyond Earth: Man's Contact with UFOs. NY: Bantam, 1974.

Lawson, A.H. What can we learn from hypnosis of imaginary "abductees"? The MUFON UFO Journal, nos. 120-121, Nov-Dec 1977, pp. 7-9.

Rhine, L.E. ESP in Life and Lab. NY: Collier, (1967), 1969.

Van Vlierden, C. Escorted by UFOs from Umvuma to Beit Bridge. In Bowen.C. (Ed.) Encounter Cases from Flying Saucer Review, NY: Signet, 1977. Also in Flying Saucer Review, vol. 21 no. 2, Mar-Apr 1975.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR UFO/PARANORMAL CASES.

A copy of this questionnaire is available to any group or investigator who is interested in investigating "psiufological" reports. The questionnaire has 80 items covering general background information, mental communications, poltergeists, apparitions, psychological and physiological reactions, and witness background. It is designed for use by the investigator in the interview situation. Since we are often dealing with personal details, especially in this type of report, the investigator should use his tact and discretion in asking some of the more personal questions (see questions 71, 78 and 79). Hopefully, the questionnaire will ensure that all vital questions are asked and will aid in the organisation of both the interview(s) and subsequent report write-up.

Contact: Mark L. Moravec, 26 Minnamurra Place Pymble NSW 2073.

NOTICE:

When you write to TUFOIC, please address your correspondence as follows: TUFOIC, BOX 1310N, GPO HOBART TASMANIA 7001, and NOT GPO Box 1310N, Hobart as too many letters are sent to NORTH HOBART and the GPO have requested TUFOIC to ask everyone to address correspondence in this way.

Comets and Superstitions. by David Seargent.

Comets have always inspired fear in every culture, and even today this feeling is not entirely dead. It is not hard to imagine how the sudden appearance of a new object in the sky (especially one as odd-looking as the average comet) could have inspired fear in the hearts of those who believed that the skies determined destiny. Likewise, the sword - shaped appearance of many comets must have aroused subconscious thoughts of war or even divine judgement in the minds of many people. This may even have triggered off some wars, in particular "touchy" situations (a sword-shaped object in the sky being taken as a sign to attack the enemy etc.) and, in any case, war and other disasters happen with sufficient frequence to enable some comet to be blamed for something.

However it is occasionally suggested that there may be some vague basis for the superstition. This is not an unreasonable suggestion as most superstitions and "old wives tales" are being found to contain a kernal of truth.
A suggestion made by C.M. Cade rests on the confusion, in earlier times, between comets and nova. Cade suggested that the X-Ray dose from a supernova exploding within our galaxy may be sufficient to cause widespread illness.
In support of his contention, he points to the co-incidence between the supernovae of 1572 and 1604 and the great plagues preceding them. Radiation (emitted before the great increase in visible light of these stars) may have weakened many people, making them more susceptible to infection. Another possibility concerns the rather complicated interaction between the Earth and sunspots. We have considerable evidence that both the earth and comets are very sensitive to changes on the sun, and this sensitivity shows itself in a number of ways. There is evidence, for instance, that comets tend to be intrinsically brighter and have stronger tails when the sun is active and there is now considerable evidence to suggest that, not merely the earth's weather, but also the likelihood of earthquakes and similar events are affected by sunspot numbers. Apparently the alteration of the earth's magnetic field during times of high solar activity places extra stress on geological fault lines, often with disasterous effects.

Furthermore, even people seem effected by sunspots - deterioration in mental health, increase in heart attacks, higher rates of accidents and murders, even greater willingness to embrace radical political creeds, have all been correlated with sunspot maximum. This sounds crazy, but if it is remembered that much of our brain activity is electrical, the whole situation begins to look more logical than astrological.

Remembering both the solar effects on comets, the meteorological and geological effects on the earth and the physiological and psychological effects on Earth's inhabitants, we may speculate that the times of bright, active comets tend also to be times of intense solar activity, with all its dire effects. Man would be unlikely to blame the sun for these adverse effects - the "logical" object to blame would surely be the fuzzy comet.

Unfortunately, the situation is not as straight forward as this. Times of sunspot maximum are also times of cloudiness and, therefore, DECREASED frequency of comet DISCOVERIES. Dr. F. Link (B.A.A. Journal 1968 April Vol.78 No. 3 p 195) argues convincingly for the charting of cloudy periods in past ages by graphing the frequency of comet discoveries. He found that periods of low REPORTED comet frequency tended to co-incide with periods of high auroral activity and, therefore, intense sunspot activity. Assuming a constant stream of comets, the explanation must lie in poor observing conditions (increased incidence of cloud and rain) during these times.
The following points should, however, be noted:-
1.) If comets are more frequently observed during (dry) sunspot minima "familiarity may breed contempt" at these quite times. Alternately, comets may come to be associated with drought.
2.) As auroral activity is recorded as increasing during times of sunspot maxima (despite the cloud) the comets being missed at such times must be less conspicuous than the aurora. Thus, those comets which are observed during the years of high solar activity will tend to be the brighter, rarer and more "frightening" objects. This tendency toward brighter comets may be re-enforced

by the enhanced solar activity itself.
3.) Classes of transitory astronomical phenomena were often confused. Thus (in the popular mind) auroral displays themselves may have been mistaken for comets (as, for instance the "comet" of 1528, so called by Ambroise Pare, but now believed to have been an auroral display). This latter class of objects would, therefore, be blamed for any events during or following a great auroral display.

UFO Probe in the Kremlin? by V. I. Sanarov.

An interesting phenomenon was observed in 1977 in the Kremlin of Moscow. At about 8.30 a.m. on August 5th, a fiery spherical object suddenly appeared about 200 m above the Great Kremlin Palace. Its estimated diameter was about one meter. A few seconds after it first appeared, the fiery ball moved and shortly thereafter divided into three smaller balls. One of these then descended onto the Ivanovskaya Square, the other two to the Tainitski Garden. Their destiny is unknown. The particular sphere which descended onto the square, was approximately 5 cm in diameter and yellow, proceeded towards the Arkhangelski Cathedral. At that time, there was a heavy fall of rain. Moving about one meter above the ground, the sphere floated through the open doors of the cathedral, between the keeper and a watchman. The two were no more than one meter apart. The sphere moved silently into the cathedral towards the altar and exploded against the iconostasis. No damage was caused apart from a slightly burnt wooden volute of the iconostasis carving.

Questioning the witnesses, taking theodolite measurements, and conducting an investigation into the incident, enabled Dr. Mikhail T. Dmitriev, a soviet chemist and expert in ball lightning, reported the case in the soviet science magazine Vokrug Sveta (Around the World, June 1979).

The mysterious ball, which may well have been ball lightning, however produced effects which are typical of UFOs. There was a strong odour of ozone in the cathedral, and the light intensity of the sphere was estimated at 5-10 times the brilliance of sunlight. Its estimated energy would be enough to have destroyed the entire cathedral. Nevertheless, no heat from the sphere was felt by anyone who stood to even within half a meter of it. The witnesses were only dazzled by its brilliance, and for the following 2-3 days showed signs of hypertensive crisis: strong indisposition, violent headaches, sharply depraved vision etc.

Ball lightning interpretation of this phenomenon is at variance with the fact that the architectural complex of the Kremlin is provided with the most perfect lightning protection systems, and yet, this sphere acted as if there were no such systems present.

One further fact on this case. About 400 years ago, a similar fiery ball flew into the same cathedral, approached the altar and exploded against the iconostatis.
A thorough investigation into this case is presently still in progress.

Mysterious Disappearances - Or Are They? by David Reneke.

Throughout the history of the UFO phenomenon there have been so many claims, from so many 'credible' people, concerning the mysterious disappearances of certain individuals over the years. These claims have been widely reported in a number of 'reputable' UFO books and magazines by equally 'reputable' authors. The inference, in nearly all cases, seems to point to the fact that UFOs are the responsible culprits, and their occupants made to appear hostile! The unfortunate thing to consider here however, is that most (if not all) of these stories turn out to have absolutely no basis of truth when the 'facts' are investigated. A casual perusal of these books and magazines turns up a surprising amount of contradiction, coupled with an amazing lack of consistency;

in other words, the stories do not agree from book to book and author to author.

A classic example of this type of innacurate reporting can be found in the case of the hapless Oliver Lerch. Many authors have 'documented' it, but apparently, no-one has bothered to check on it.In one instance, a well known writer even claimed that "the facts" were available for all to see. It would seem that these 'facts' have suffered the same fate as many others in the UFO literature, namely that they are no longer available, original source no longer traceable or something similar, ad nauseum. Either that, or the 'facts' were never there in the first place. I prefer to think that the latter is closer to the truth.

So, we begin to investigate a few of these reputable cases, objectively being the underlying principle throughout the search. What we find should convince even the most ardent 'believer' in such stories that perhaps a little investigation on their part should be undertaken before taking the account at face value... indeed, if the account differs from one source to the next, or there are no references available to cross check the material, then I seriously suggest the article be relegated to the waste paper basket or filed away in a nice little corner of the bookshelf under the heading "science fiction".

According to an article in SAGA magazine, John Keel claimed that Oliver Lerch disappeared on Christmas Eve, 1889. He supposedly lived on the outskirts of South Bend, Indiana USA at that time with his family; Keel gives his age as 11 years. During the ensuing celebrations, Oliver's father asked him to go to the well for water. Shortly after doing so, the other people in the house heard Oliver's frantic shouts for help, screaming "Help, they've got me". Instantly, the people ran outside but Oliver was not there - his footprints were though, they were plainly visible in the newly fallen snow, stopping just short of the well. Some of those present claimed they could still hear poor Oliver calling for help, the sound of his voice apparently coming from above their heads, as if from the sky itself.

That then, is Keel's version - but there are others. In the well known book, WHAT WE REALLY KNOW ABOUT FLYING SAUCERS, Otto Binder quotes Frank Edwards as the source of another rendition of the Lerch disappearance. This account is, in essence, basically the same but Binder insists that Lerch went missing on CHRISTMAS DAY, 1889.
Morris K. Jessup, in THE CASE FOR THE UFO, claimed that Lerch disappeared on CHRISTMAS EVE (like Keel), 1890. He says that Oliver was 20 years old and his father, Tom Lerch, sent him out that evening for water from their well while their guests were in the house celebrating the festive season. Again, as in the previous accounts, Oliver was heard to shout for help, but in Jessup's version he called out "IT's got me", instead of "They've got me". The house guests again all running outside to his aid, finding only his foot-prints in the fresh snow leading up to, but stopping abruptly short of the well. They reported hearing Oliver's cries from above, as if he were suspended invisibly from the sky. Jessup says that he got his information from the September 1950 edition of FATE magazine, and claims the "facts are clearly written for all to see in the Police records of South Bemd, " the town where Oliver was supposed to live.

An American investigator, Kevin D. Randle, undertook to check this information personally and to his surprise turned up nothing that could substantiate Jessup's claims. There are no Police records available for 1890. Francis K. Czyzewshi, a staff member for the South Bend Tribune, spent hours in the library searching all the old newspapers for some confirmation on the Lerch case at Randle's request. None was found. Other researchers at the library then made their own independent search of the news files for the given year but they too drew a blank. Jessup's claim, it seems, was unfounded.

Brad Steiger in STRANGERS FROM THE SKIES, had the longest and most detailed account of the Lerch case. He maintains though that Oliver was the 11 year old son of OWEN THOMAS, and the family lived in RHYADER, WALES. Oliver was supposed to have disappeared on CHRISTMAS EVE 1909, just after 11 p.m.

Again, Oliver was asked to fetch some water by his father and similarly, cries for help were heard by the house guests. Oliver was reported to have yelled, "They've got me", the same words described by Keel but different to those described by Jessup. Steiger went on at length to point out that since Oliver yelled, "they've" it implies that there must have been more than 'one'; whatever 'they' were.

According to the information supplied in four books on the UFO subject Oliver Lerch/Thomas, aged either 11 or 10, went missing from either South Bend, Indiana or Rhayader, Wales. It was either Christmas Eve 1889, Christmas Day 1889, Christmas Eve 1890 or Christmas Eve 1909!!
He apparently travelled either 50 feet, 75 feet, or 225 feet from the house before "they" abducted him.

The only way to clear up the discrepancies, thought Randle, was to consult the South Bend Police department in an effort to ascertain if their files carried any mention of the Lerch family, and in particular, Oliver himself. The records clerk said that there was nothing whatsoever in their files that could help throw any light on the case. She knew this because she received several similar requests each year from private individuals all hoping to uncover something "new". Acall was then made to the SOUTH BEND TRIBUNE again, this time to the assistant librarian, Elaine Stevens. She did uncover something relevant during a search of the press clippings files - it was a clipping dated sometime after 1950 (due to it quoting the FATE article) and mentioned that newsmen in the town had tried unsuccessfully to track down the story.
Jessup had apparently used the same article that the newsmen had used so this accounts for both versions carrying the same details.
No-one has been able to trace the account of Oliver Lerch back further than 1946 when it was apparently used in a radio broadcast, this means then that the story actually became born in 1946; at least, this is what all the evidence at hand points to.
During a lull in the news sector, sometime in 1957, newsmen once more attempted to ellicit information that would throw new light onto the Lerch case.
During the course of these new investigations, they located one Sherman Lerch, a man who lived in South Bend - he was questioned about Oliver but could offer nothing of value, he hadn't even heard of an Oliver in his family and, as he was born in 1889, he felt sure that he would know of the incident, had it in fact happened. He said his family had arrived in South Bend in 1922 and nowhere in the family history was there any mention of a disappearance.
He added that he heard something about a family disagreement around the turn of the century but knew little about it, even so, there was still no mention of someone named Oliver.
It seemed that this was the end of the line; no facts, no documentation, no follow up possible, no nothing. It was now plainly evident to all, that the incident did not happen at all. Inconsistencies continued to be found, and if the 1889 date can be considered accurate then the actual facts surrounding the case are wrong. It seems that the weather conditions for December, 1889 were quite warm and there was no mention of snow. The temperatures ranged from the high 50s to low 60s. These figures came straight from the records of the weather bureau who, thankfully, kept their files in order. As a further blow to the authenticity of the story, Coral Lorenzen of APRO found, after a check herself, that the town in Wales quoted by Steiger did not exist!
This, and other pertinent questions, were put to the authors mentioned in this article by the editor of QUEST-UFO, an independent magazine who themselves conducted a full investigation into the incident in 1977. Of thos approached, only Steiger bothered to respond. He said that he DID attempt to authenticate his account of the Lerch disappearance but came to a dead end at South Bend. He got his information about Rhayader, Wales, from a rather dubious source, an english ufologist who apparently keeps changing his address while continuing to churn out UFO stories in book form. Steiger agreed that the case was of little value and added that nothing 'concrete' was available to even varify that the incident ever took place, he documented what he had believing, at the time, that his information was accurate.
Steiger then dropped a bombshell!..... he said that the original story may

have come from the town of Quincy, Illinois during the late 18th century, but added that in this case, as with the others, no documentation existed. It was probably hearsay. According to accounts written by one Ambrose Bierce, Charles Ashmore walked to the well on his property on the evening of November 9th,1878. When he did not return, his family went looking for him. Only his footprints could be seen, Ashmore had disappeared. About 4 days later, after all hope was lost of ever seeing him again, his mother claimed she heard his plaintive cries at the very spot in which he had gone missing, others called in to investigate also said they could hear him calling for help. This continued for most of the afternoon and faded away within a few months, nothing further being heard or seen of the luckless Ashmore.

Apparently no-one else had come across this information for even today, new articles are being written, all using the same inaccurate data. The latest article appeared in a magazine devoted to UFOs and most of the paranormal subjects, BEYOND REALITY, March/April 1977 edition. They, like Jessup and the newsmen who used the same reference, Fate magazine, maintain that Oliver Lerch, aged 22, disappeared from his father's property on DECEMBER 24TH, 1890, after going out to fetch water from the well. He left the festivities at 10:00 pm that evening and within five short minutes was heard to cry out in fear, "HELP! HELP! IT'S GOT ME". Once more, as in the other accounts, his voice was coming from above, but in this article he is reported to have ceased these cries after another five minutes. They also add that his voice was located approximately 100 feet above the onlookers, trying in vain to find poor Oliver. The article points out, quite definately, that Oliver's footprints stopped suddenly at a distance of 225 feet from the house. Apparently, according to BEYOND REALITY, two buckets were used by Lerch but only one had been found. The other had disappeared. The Lerch disappearance, or alleged disappearance, has an amazing similarity to yet another "famous" case, the David Lang incident, also reported by Ambrose Bierce.

In 1881, David Lang, a farmer in Tennessee was reported to have just "disappeared" in full view of his family and friends. Subsequent searching by many eminent people of the town could not find any trace of Lang. In the article written by Frank Edwards on this case he says that for months afterwards Lang's frantic cries could be heard calling out for help. An article appearing in the American Mercury magazine carried a full account of the Lang disappearance with a theory from a european doctor named Hern who claimed that these people, Lang included, all fell victim to a mysterious force connected to the 4th dimension. It was, of course, merely a conjectured opinion, without any basis of fact whatsoever.

But, it doesn't end there. Still another account is found on the Lang disappearance, this one has much more detail and even gives a complete rundown, virtually minute by minute, of the events of the fateful day. All this in spite of the fact that no documentation exists. The article was printed in the March edition of BEYOND REALITY, in fact the same edition which contains the Lerch incident. It was published in 1977 as mentioned previously. The date however, does not correspond with Frank Edward's account as retold by Ambrose Bierce in the first place. Beyond Reality claim the date Lang disappeared was September 23, 1880, and even mention that the day was "a sunny Thursday afternoon". The article goes on to point out that in April 1881, "about seven months after the fateful day" Lang's children went to the spot where they last saw their father and found a "stunted circle of yellow grass, measuring 15 feet in diameter". The obvious connection to an 'abduction' by a UFO had been made.

Well, one article gives the date of Lang's disappearance as 1881, nothing closer, and the other places it firmly as September 23, 1880. Who is right?, is anything right?, did the incident take place at all??

In looking closely at the apparent original source, Ambrose Bierce, it would seem that he included the same information content in the Lang story as he did in the Charles Ashmore story, both virtually similar incidents with a few relevant changes to make the stories 'sound' different.

Steiger points out, in retrospect, that according to his information, journalists of the period (1880-1890-1900) often changed the names of people

and/or the locations of events in an effort to protect the witnesses and themselves from any adverse reaction from members of the public etc. Steiger mentions that perhaps there was a person who did disappear in very unusual circumstances and Bierce grabbed hold of the original data then built upon it to make it sound "more interesting", the final result being that all and sundry used this 'original' material as a firm basis for their own articles.

There is no reason to assume that the accounts of Oliver Lerch, David Lang, Charles Ashmore, or Oliver Thomas ever really happened. There is absolutely no reason for any writer, past or present, to have drawn a connection to these stories with UFOs. No unusual aerial sightings were made and the stories should end here, until, at least, some further 'hard' evidence is found to substantiate these baseless claims. One wonders how many other 'reputable' and 'famous' case histories dealing with the UFO subject alone would fare should they too undergo such a careful scrutiny; I think we would get quite a shock!

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UFO REPORTS FROM AROUND AUSTRALIA.

QB79014 10 January 1979 0120 Mount Surprise CE1 UFOR(FNQ)

A 71-year-old-man was asleep in his caravan, under a big open window, when at 1.20 am, he awoke and sat up in bed to see a small light approaching from SW. He got out of bed, lighting a cigarette and went outside to his jeep, when he saw, about 300 feet above him, a huge round yellow light. He estimated it to be at an angle of 60 degrees and only a few hundred yards away, no sound, just a soft glow. He smoked several cigarettes just watching the light, thinking it was so close, he could hit it with his rifle. During this time, his three dogs, usually following him around wherever he went, remained in the caravan and annex wide awake, but just lying there. He thought that this was very strange. The light then moved off towards the NW in a straight line, disappearing behind some hills on the horizon. AND as it did so, it seemed to assume a saucer shape, with the dome on top glowing the base being black.

WA79004 29 June 1979 2315 Stoneville W.A. CE1 UFOR(WA)

The 16 year old witness stated: "I was awoken by a noise which sounded like a plane. Planes pass over fairly frequently, but this noise was slightly different and I was alarmed as it grew very loud. I then saw a large object fly across my vision through the window. I was thinking it might be a RAAF plane, but it was brightly lit up and a large light in front like an enormous cockpit. The object seemed to be square, however this was hard to tell as there were so many lights of different colours, mainly blue, white and yellow. It was fairly low and at a slow speed, just above tree tops.It passed over and seemed to disappear. Eventually I went back to bed, when about 30 minutes later, I heard the same noise again, and going to the window, saw the same object again, rising up from behind some trees directly in front of my room. This time I was pretty certain it was not a plane. The light on its front was very bright and the full

width of the object. The object moved directly towards me and over the house, eventually disappearing from sight.

TA79126 April 1979 0020 Gormanston Saddle CE2 TUFOIC.

The witness, a taxi driver, was going to collect a passenger when he rounded a curve onto a straight stretch. He noticed, that on his right, above a heap of gravel, was a green light with a purple edge, estimated ¾ meter across. The light came straight at the witness's taxi, seemed to go directly over it. At this point, the interior of the vehicle was lit up as if daylight, and the taxi also lost power and would not accelerate, the motor just shook. The witness tried to call for help over his two-way radio, for about 1 minute as the taxi shook along, but the radio was completely dead. The light seemed to move back ahead of the car as the driver swung down the left hand corner, then everything went dark again and the car was alright once more. Arriving to pick up his passenger, the witness looked back, and saw a throbbing white light in the eastern sky, growing smaller and finally disappearing.

TA79134 May 1971 2200 Strahan TAS CE1 TUFOIC

A family of 4 were driving home to Queenstown from Strahan along a windy road, as they were startled by the appearance of a bus-sized disc of white and pinkish light. This light moved above their car and lit up the area like daytime. They pulled up, and although alarmed were releived to see the light mass move further up the road ahead of them. They drove on, with the light remaining ahead of them despite the winding and hilly nature of the road. The situation did not alter for the next 25 KMs, then, near Queenstown airport, the light just "disappeared".

WOULD YOU BELIEVE!

Here we are, almost at the end of 1979, and the following is a breakdown of report received by us this year. There seems to be an all-time low, not only in the number of sightings of UNIDENTIFIED objects, but also of objects which eventually turn out to be IDENTIFIED.

	Identified	N.L.	D.D.	CE1.	CE2.	CE3.
TUFOIC (TA)	99	4	-	2	2	1
UFOR-NSW (NA)	39	5	4	2	-	-
K.Blackman (ND)	-	1	-	1	-	-
UFOR-FNQ (QB)	7	6	-	3	3	-
UFOR-WA (WA)	1	-	1	3	-	-

At this stage UFO Research QLD are not included in this breakdown, owing to a despatch of reports being lost in transit. Replacements of these reports have been despatched by UFO Research (QLD).