

UFO INVESTIGATOR

NATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE ON
NICAP AERIAL PHENOMENA

NICAP ■ 1522 CONNECTICUT AVENUE ■ WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036 ■ A PRIVATE, NONPROFIT CORPORATION FOUNDED IN 1956

NICAP PROBES CRASHED OBJECT REPORT

Winter Cold Prevents Search of Lake

A strange metallic object that shone with an orange glow as it moved through the sky may now be resting at the bottom of a New England lake, hidden and unreachable until the ice over the lake thaws.

The object was observed independently by two school boys on the morning of January 7, 1971, over the small community of Dennis, Massachusetts, on Cape Cod. It traveled horizontally, then on an oblique path toward the ground, and disappeared behind some trees in the direction of a small body of water called Scargo Lake. One of the boys, unaware anyone else had seen the object, ran to a dock at the lake's edge and discovered a large hole in the ice covering the lake. Steam was rising from the hole, and the exposed water appeared agitated. Except for the hole, the lake and shore were normal, and the object was not in sight.

A 13-year-old girl, who lived in a house near the dock, saw the boy running through her yard and went after him when he yelled to her. She too saw the hole but was too frightened to notice the condition of the water. Minutes later, another boy arrived on the scene, having also observed the first boy running to the lake. He saw the steam also, which by then was diminishing.

The other witness to the object, a 13-year-old boy, was a little less than a mile from the lake when he first saw the object but made no attempt to follow it after it went down. Like the first boy, he was on his way to school at the time of the sighting. His description of the object was very similar to that of the first boy, except the first boy thought he saw a small flame at the rear of the object whereas the second boy saw only the object.

NICAP learned of the incident the day after it happened and made a preliminary investigation two days later on



Skin diver enters water of Scargo Lake to search for strange object that reportedly ruptured lake's icy crust. Photo by John Kerr

January 11. By then, the incident had been reported to the newspaper, the police, and the Air Force, but no other witnesses had come forward, and no explanation had been offered for the sighting, save the possibility of a fuel tank dropping from an aircraft. The local air base, however, denied that any of its planes had dropped anything.

On January 12, a local skin diver went through the hole in Scargo Lake to look for the object. After approximately 15 minutes, during which he found nothing unusual, encroaching darkness and dropping temperatures forced him to abandon the search, and no further attempt has been made, due to winter weather.

One argument advanced to explain the hole (but not the sighting) was the presence of a spring at the bottom of the lake. NICAP's investigator rejected this theory on the ground there was neither time nor the necessary warmth for the ice to melt. Since none of the people who lived around the lake or used it for skating had observed the hole the day before the sighting, there was no apparent way the hole could have been made literally overnight in subfreezing weather (the temperature at the time of the sighting was 22 degrees). Also, the skin diver, who has dived and fished in the lake much of his life, said he had never seen an underwater spring produce a hole like the one in question when the lake was frozen.

Continued Next Month

HIDDEN WEST COAST CASES UNCOVERED

Radio Broadcast Draws Big Response

NICAP's Bay Area (San Francisco) Subcommittee, chaired by Paul Cerny of Sunnyvale, has tapped a small lode of unreported sightings from California, Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. The reports were submitted to the Subcommittee in response to a solicitation by Cerny, whose appearance last month on a three-hour radio program drew hundreds of letters from all over the West Coast. The total number of sightings gleaned from his appeal is 28, and Cerny is now in the process of getting additional details from the witnesses.

Not all the sightings are equally good in informational content or strangeness value. Some, in fact, are better described as reports of interesting phenomena rather than UFOs. But taken as a whole, they reaffirm the long recognized tendency of people to hold back on reporting an unusual experience, either out of fear of ridicule or ignorance of where to report.

Among the sightings uncovered is the one on September 8, 1970, reported in last month's "Sighting Advisory." The witness, a farmer and private pilot, was by himself when he first saw the object. After noting that it was apparently stationary, he went into his house and got binoculars, with which he was able to see more detail. He said the object "showed up very sharp and clear," like aluminum, except it was not shiny. He then went to his neighbor's house where he found both the neighbor's family and two of their friends, all of whom came out and watched the object.

Status Report

Project ACCESS:

Getting the Alphabet from the Soup

This is the second part of a status report on Project ACCESS, NICAP's Automated Clearinghouse for Collection and Exchange of Sighting Statistics. The project is being conducted by the Special Study Group on Data Processing Applications (SSGPA), a NICAP advisory body organized in 1969.

The decision to limit ACCESS to data on "sightings" is more complicated and far-reaching than might at first be apparent. The UFO subject does not have time-tested traditions to give it form and definition. Dogma and apocrypha are virtually nonexistent, because criteria are lacking for what is inherently an aspect of the problem and what are related and unrelated data. In the absence of such criteria, the subject can only be delimited arbitrarily, according to the impulses and opinions of the person rendering the definition. This in turn leads to the present state of confusion where almost anything can, and is, alleged to be connected with the subject.

To the specialist who would develop an information-management system for data on UFOs, such anarchy presents an exceedingly difficult problem in data reduction. The system must be flexible enough to accommodate all data regarded as significant, or potentially significant, to the purpose of the system. But what shall the purpose of the system be? Is there a viable concept on which a computer file can be constructed, that allows for maximum coverage of the information spectrum while providing the functional coherence and unity any system must have?

NICAP's study group viewed this as a basic question in the philosophy of system design. The potpourri of literature on UFOs, together with the many private files of unpublished material, spans a wealth and variety of information that gives no hint of having a common denominator. Yet somewhere in this mass of heterogeneous data there may be subtle clues to the true nature of the UFO phenomenon. For this reason, the study group recognized the need to exercise caution in trying to fit the data to any preconceived organizational framework that excluded certain kinds of information while accepting others.

But the group was also aware of the uncritical, and often capricious, way in which most of the information available on UFOs has been collected and recorded. This was seen as giving rise to ultraliberal interpretations of what constitutes meaningful and relevant information. Many claims and theories purport to link UFOs with other events and phenomena, but these allegations are not equally credible or equally supported with data. The study group felt that a logical trap exists in assuming that anything labeled as UFO-related must in fact be considered a pertinent part of the problem.

Hence it was decided that ACCESS could not, on either theoretical or pragmatic grounds, be designed to include all extant data on UFOs. Instead, a more modest concept was required, which focused on central aspects of the problem and provided a basis for differentiating between primary and peripheral data.

The concept selected -- sighting -- was a natural, and perhaps necessary, extension of this requirement. Other concepts were considered, like "evidence" and "experience," but these were felt to be too broad or vague to be workable. "Sighting" seemed to represent the mainstream of available information

and to satisfy the expected demand on ACCESS for raw empirical data that do not have the disability of being arranged or altered in accordance with any hypothesis or theory.

But what is a sighting? Having fixed on the concept, the study group had to define it. That might seem a simple task, but the group found otherwise.

Typically, of course, a sighting is a human observation of a UFO; there may be other elements involved, such as photographs or physical effects, but in basic terms the perceptual event is the sighting.

Such a definition is not entirely unsuited to the purposes of ACCESS, but it overlooks some important distinctions. Any definition predicated on sensory contact with the phenomenon is going to suggest certain kinds of events that are clearly excluded from consideration. As mentioned earlier, the death of Snippy the horse does not constitute a UFO sighting, no matter how loosely the term is defined, even though the incident was conjectured to be associated with a UFO. By the same token, when a farmer discovers a strange depression or burned area in his field, he has not made a UFO sighting, regardless of what may have happened at another time or place. Certain photographic images also clearly disqualify, principally those of the "accidental" type that are discovered *post facto* in an otherwise normal picture. Almost all of these can be explained as film defects or chemical anomalies.

But other kinds of events present real problems for a definition of sighting tied to human perception. Ignored, for example, are instances where automatic equipment such as radar detects unknown airborne objects that are not observed visually. Obviously, not all unexplained targets on radar scopes are UFOs, but certain returns are of interest, even when the limitations and foibles of radar are recognized. The question arises, however, whether these returns constitute sightings. Other kinds of equipment, such as satellite-tracking cameras and astronomical instruments, which have been known to record interesting phenomena, also introduce the question of whether a sighting with no known human witness should be considered appropriate for inclusion in ACCESS.

Conversely, there is the problem of sightings that involve human observers but no UFOs. In one sense, this could be regarded as a contradiction in terms and rejected on that basis alone. Technically speaking, any case where something other than a UFO was seen -- e.g. angel hair, holes in the ground, or a dead horse -- falls in this category. But from another point of view, there may be grounds for including certain of these events in the system.

Take, for example, the question of "occupant" sightings, where allegedly humanoid organisms are seen but not in association with any object that could be called a UFO. Do these observations constitute a category of events that are related to, and logically within, the scope of ACCESS? Or, if we reject the Snippy case because no UFO was seen, do we also have to reject a case where some other living thing was seen but no UFO?

Answers to questions like these are still being worked out by the study group, but it is already clear that compromises are going to be necessary in any functional definition of the sighting concept. Not only are there abstract problems of meaning, there are also practical problems of expressing that meaning in terms of data that are available and useable. It is pointless to devise a sophisticated theoretical definition that cannot be applied in the operation of the system. For example, anomalous images on photographic plates from all-sky cameras, even if such images technically qualify as sightings, would be of little value to ACCESS because of the difficulty in obtaining and examining the plates.

NICAP STUDIES UNDERWATER UFO CASE

Time and Location Remain Uncertain

This continues the discussion begun last month of NICAP's investigation of a report of a UFO that allegedly traveled both underwater and in the atmosphere. The sighting is supposed to have occurred in the South China Sea while the witnesses were on a U.S. Navy ship en route to Vietnam.

As already indicated, there is some question as to the time of the sighting. According to the primary witness, the incident occurred during the watch of Lieutenant P.* "a few hours" after the ship had left Okinawa. This appears to be partially confirmed by the deck log for the day in question -- March 15, 1968 -- which shows that the ship departed Okinawa at 4 p.m. (local time) and Lt. P.J.P. stood watch as Officer of the Deck (OOD) between 8 p.m. and midnight that same evening. The log, however, shows no report of anything unusual during Lt. P.'s watch.

Another possible time period for the sighting develops from the witness's statement that the incident took place "in the early morning hours," which would suggest sometime *after* midnight of the 15th. Since the log shows that Lt. P. stood another four-hour watch from 4 to 8 a.m. on the 16th, it is possible the sighting was made at pre-dawn, some 12 or more hours after the ship had gotten underway. However, no unusual entry is recorded in the log for this period either.

In the absence of additional information, there would seem no way to choose between the two time frames, since either is a reasonable possibility, if not literally consistent with the testimony. On the other hand, there may be no discrepancy in the witness's statement if his references to time are assumed to be general rather than specific. It is possible, for example, that the sighting occurred within a short time of midnight, which would put it very late on the 15th or very early on the 16th. To the witness, trying two years later to remember the exact hour, this time might easily seem to have been "early in the morning," not long after the ship had put out to sea.

*Full names being withheld pending completion of investigation.



The scene of the sighting was this small warship, which was used off the coast of Vietnam to launch rocket attacks against the mainland. Primary witness was stationed at stern when UFO observed. U.S. Navy Photo.

This hypothesis is strengthened by another datum in the report. On the NICAP questionnaire, the witness states that the sighting occurred at "approximately 1 a.m." Okinawa time. In making this statement, he apparently did not realize (or at least failed to note on the form) that the ship had passed from one time zone to another after it left Okinawa. This is known from the log. Since the ship was traveling southwestward (with the Sun), it gained an hour when it made the transition, which means the time on the ship was *earlier* than the witness thought when he filled out the questionnaire. This puts the time of the sighting at midnight, when Lt. P. was finishing his watch.

The time might not be critical if other things were equal, but a number of elements in the report vary, depending on the time. Among these are the weather conditions, the location and status of the ship, the men on duty, the activities of the witnesses, and, of course, the date.

On the assumption the sighting occurred during, or just after, the watch of Lt. P. on March 15, a rough calculation can be made of the ship's position when the UFO was observed. Since the normal operating speed of the vessel was approximately 13 miles per hour, the ship could not have been much more than 100 miles from Okinawa at midnight (assuming it departed at 4 p.m., as the log indicates, and maintained steady speed on a straight course). From this it is immediately apparent that the sighting could not have happened in the South China Sea, as reported, because the South China Sea is some 600 miles from Okinawa. This discrepancy may not be important since the ship was in open water in any event, but in conjunction with other inaccuracies, it does raise the question of the report's reliability on specific details.

The problem of date, time, and location would have been immediately resolved if the log in which the sighting was supposedly recorded (as a "helicopter") had turned up. Since the deck log makes no such reference, NICAP sought other ship documents that might supply the missing information. Since the witness said the entry in the log was made by the quartermaster, a hunt was conducted for the quartermaster notebooks, which usually include more detail than the deck log.

For reasons still not clear, these notebooks cannot be located in official files. The Federal Records Center where the ship's deck logs are now maintained has no record of the notebooks. Nor has a similar facility in San Francisco, which told NICAP it has other records from the ship but not the notebooks.

Puzzled that the books should be missing but informed by reliable sources that such records are often misplaced, NICAP decided to check the possibility the books were still on the ship. The ship had been decommissioned in Japan in the same month NICAP received the original report: May 1970. Normally, records are removed from a ship when it is taken out of service, but not always. Going back to Navy sources in Washington, NICAP learned the name and address of the officer who had been in command of the ship at the time of its decommissioning. This man, Lt. C.H., was contacted and asked if he knew what happened to the quartermaster notebooks. He said he did not, but he thought they might have remained aboard the vessel. NICAP immediately wrote the Naval facility in Japan where the ship had been sent, and learned that "the location or disposition of the Quartermaster Notebooks is unknown." Moreover, the ship is no longer in Navy possession, having been "sold for scrap" in November 1970.



MEMOS
FOR
MEMBERS

RELEASING MEMBERS' NAMES

Last August, in our "Q/A" column, we said we would like to use our computerized membership file to provide the names of NICAP members to other members. This is still our plan, but a lot of problems remain to be solved before we can offer such a service. One of the primary ones is getting from each member permission (or refusal) to release his name, pursuant to our long-standing policy of not publicizing membership data without prior authorization. This will be accomplished by means of a short questionnaire, which is presently being designed and which will be sent to the membership later this year. Once these questionnaires have been processed and the proper administrative procedures developed, we will be ready to answer requests for the names of NICAP members in your area. Until then, please do not write for such information, because we are unable to give it.

NICAP NUMBER IS PERMANENT

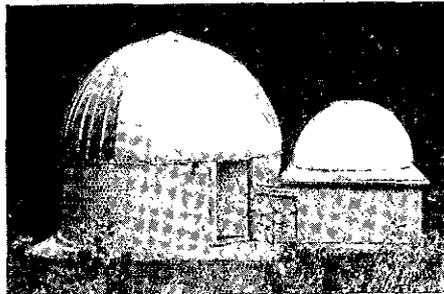
Your NICAP registration number (imprinted on both your membership card and address label) is uniquely yours; no one else has it. If you fail to renew, you remain in our computer file with your assigned number, pending the time you decide to rejoin. Many members who let their membership lapse do so only because of a temporary situation, such as a change in job or residence, or an unexpected financial problem. Their interest in UFOs remains, and they usually renew again once the situation has been resolved. If this happens to you, be sure to use your registration number when you finally renew, so that we know you are already on file with us under the new computer system. Thanks to the system, it is very easy to update a membership — far easier, in fact, than to make a new entry — so by using your number, you enable us to process your renewal with maximum efficiency. Keep in mind, though, that if you let your membership lapse, you will probably miss some issues of the newsletter, since we don't automatically make up back issues for people who wait an unusually long time to renew.

WRITE YOUR EDITOR

If your local newspaper is not covering the UFO subject, a letter to the editor expressing your concern is a good idea, as we've suggested before. But it's also a good idea to write your editor when he does print a story on UFOs. Thank him for providing this coverage and urge him to do it again. You can even suggest that he consult the *UFO Investigator* to keep up-to-date on developments in the UFO field, since the wire services no longer supply this information. If he prints your letter, be sure to send us a copy.

NICAP REPS STUDY HEAVENS

Among NICAP's many representatives and advisers are a number of people with professional or avocational interest in astronomy. Since many NICAP members also have an active interest in this area, we thought you might like to see what some of these people are doing in their studies of the stars and sky. Of particular interest is the work of Raymond Fowler, Chairman of NICAP's Massachusetts Subcommittee and a project administrator for Sylvania Electronic Systems. Fowler has used most of his spare time during the past year to build in his backyard the structure pictured below: a combination planetarium and observatory. Designed both for his personal use and for educational presentations to small groups, the building contains an 8-inch telescope, a planetarium head that projects 650 stars, a slide projector, a tape recorder, and a sound system. Fowler estimates he has put about \$4000 so far into the project, including \$300 for the planetarium roof, which was really intended for a farm silo. To get the go-ahead for construction, Fowler had to obtain a special permit from the local zoning board.



On a different tack, NICAP chief photographic consultant W. F. McIntyre is interested in a more specialized area of astronomy: photographing unusual events. Shown above as he prepares for the spectacular solar eclipse of March 7, 1970, McIntyre is an executive with a major U.S. company that operates photographic laboratories and studios. To shoot the eclipse, he traveled to Sandbridge, Virginia, a tiny seaside town that lay directly in the path of totality. Aided by excellent weather and a good location for his equipment, he was able to take dozens of black-and-white, color, and infrared pictures during the dramatic convergence. Also on hand for observation in the same general area were NICAP astronomical adviser Walter Webb of Boston, and Chairman of NICAP's District Area (Washington, D.C.) Subcommittee, John Carlson, who teaches astronomy at the University of Maryland.

Q/A

- Q. If a person should encounter a UFO at very close range, would you advise him to attempt to touch it, either with his hand or with some instrument such as a stick?
D.Y./Spokane, Wash.
- A. Since it is a natural human tendency to regard anything unfamiliar with apprehension, it is unlikely the average person would want to get close enough to something as strange as a UFO to be able to touch it. In the majority of hard-core, close-encounter UFO cases, the witnesses react to the UFO with varying degrees of fear, confusion, and disbelief. Few maintain the aplomb necessary to calmly appraise the situation or determine whether some aggressive act on their part, such as touching, might serve some purpose. Often, there is not enough time to do anything, even if the witness regains his composure and decides he wants to take some action. Assuming, however, that you did confront a UFO at close range and managed to overcome your initial shock, it would, at very least, be imprudent to try to touch the object because there would be no way of knowing whether any risk was involved in doing so. The threat of death or personal injury could easily exist in unseen and unsuspected forms, such as nuclear radiation, electrical potential, heat, magnetic fields, vapor, or sudden chemical emissions. To casually assume that touching the UFO would be no different than touching an automobile or other common object would be naive at best, and perhaps the worst mistake of your life. On the other hand, there might be some justification for taking less drastic action, such as throwing a small stone at the object or shining a flashlight at it. Both acts would entail possible disclosure of your presence (assuming the object was manned or otherwise sensitive to external stimuli), but each would probably give you some feel for your distance from the object (a very important piece of information for the person investigating your sighting), and it might conceivably tell you something significant about the UFO. This is not to say you should definitely take such a step; any flat advice in this regard would be bad advice. But if no other witnesses were available and there were no means at your disposal for getting information useful to the researcher (such as a photograph), you would be far better advised to attempt something simple like shining a flashlight than to try to touch the object with your hand or a stick.
- Q. What is NICAP's opinion of the book *UFOs: Operation Trojan Horse*?
J.M./Highland Park, Ill.
- A. We can offer no opinion of this book at present, because none of NICAP's staff has had an opportunity to read it, and we have not assigned a reviewer to it.