"UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS":
A Most Remarkable UFO Documentary Film

BY ROBERT BARROW (Winter 1977/78, Argosy)

Most science fiction movies which have dealt with the UFO topic have done so in anything but a sober fashion. But, if, you happen to watch the late-late show on TV, you might be lucky enough to catch the pioneer of serious UFO documentaries -- a film entitled, appropriately enough, "Unidentified Flying Objects." You'll be in for a real treat.

Every few weeks, somewhere in the United States or overseas, a TV station airs an old 1956 motion picture on its late-late show or afternoon movie feature. TV Guide lists its title as "U. F. O.,” though the more wordy program logs might print the elaborate title of the United Artists release, "Unidentified Flying Objects."

Filmed primarily in black and white (except for two short, authentic UFO movies, shown in their original color), this Clarence Green-Russell Rouse production enjoyed only less than moderate success during its initial release to international movie houses 21 years ago.

However, a recent research session on the film's background, which led me to contact people in 17 cities among 12 states, convinced me that "U. F. O." is truly a documentary, dealing fairly and, for the most part, accurately with the UFO subject is it was treated by the U.S. Government during the late 1940's and early fifties.

And "U.F.O." is a remarkable piece of work for its time. Whereas the other major studios have only recently considered the UFO)
theme for serious motion picture productions, the 1956 United Artists documentary was a far-sighted film. Most of the science-fiction movies which inundated the fifties, you may recall, dealt with the UFO topic in anything but a sober mariner!

What was "U.F.O." about? On the surface, it seemed to make a good case for the existence of UFOs. In a deeper sense, the movie explores a very important historical aspect of the official U.S. investigation of the aerial phenomenon.

Unfortunately, United Artists' U.S.A. pressbook did not describe the film's storyline in detail, but a rare copy of the London, England "U.F.O." pressbook that I stumbled upon does. Following, then, is United Artists' English synopsis of the motion Picture---which I have paraphrased and added to in some spots in order to include other related material about this true motion picture account.

This writer, who openly confesses his respect for "U.F.O.," urges that the reader be on the lookout for the movie. I hope, too, that you enjoy viewing a few of the rare promotional photos herein that accompanied the film during its theater days.

SYNOPSIS

(1956 Press release by United Artists Corp., notes in italics added by Robert Barrow)
When Albert M. Chop (played by Tom Towers, a veteran newsman) reported to work on the Public Information Office desk of Air Materiel Command at Wright Patterson Air Base early in 1950, he airily dismissed press queries about Unidentified Flying Objects with, "This whole saucer business is pure, unadulterated bunk." He believed this despite all reports of sightings and the death of Captain Mantell, in 1948, while chasing a
flying saucer.

Promoted to Chief of the Press Section at A.M.C., he soon began to have doubts. Startled to find that a famous scientist, Dr. Reiskaywitz, had an open mind on flying saucers, it was unsettling for Chop to learn from the Public Information Officer that Project Sign had not been closed down but merely renamed Project Grudge. Most disturbing of all was the Colonel’s reluctance to express any opinion on flying saucers.

When Chop was transferred to the Press Section in the Pentagon, by the special request of Col. Richard Searles, he felt sure he was finished with flying saucers. Instead, he was assigned directly to the investigation. Project Grudge was expanded and renamed Project Bluebook by U.S. Air Force Intelligence and Captain Edward J. Ruppelt was made chief of it (Ruppelt played himself in the movie, adding to its historical value and authenticity). (NICAP note: Robert Barrow advised us that he did not make this statement and that Ruppelt did NOT appear in the film, although others did)

Soon afterwards, Chop (the real Albert Chop approved every line of the script dealing with himself) learned from Major Dewey Fournet of Current Intelligence Branch, that the Air Force actually had motion pictures of U.F.O’s. Fournet showed him the Montana film, explaining that, after thorough analysis, the objects remained unidentified (the real Dewey J. Fournet, like Chop, also approved every line in the script regarding his official activities, though Fournet’s role was played by an actor).

Chop also learned that more film had been shot in Utah by Navy Photographer Newhouse (Delbert Newhouse himself was interviewed in the movie), and that Ruppelt and his staff were analyzing it. Later, after
studying thousands of reports and analyses of sightings, Chop joined the top Pentagon brass for a viewing of the secret Utah film (Nicholas Mariana, having photographed two UFOs in Montana, also appeared in the documentary). The reports stated, "Not balloons, not aircraft, not birds, not faked," The Official conclusion was "Unknowns." The Utah film was never shown to the press, nor was its existence revealed (until much later).

On July 20, 1952, the Unknowns moved in for the first time over Washington, D.C.- Chop, who had slept through it all, was mobbed by queries from editors all over the country.

One week later, the night of July 26, Chop was called to C.A.A. Headquarters. Radar was again picking up Unknowns over the Nation's Capital. For six hours, Chop and Major Foumet were eye witnesses to the radar contact while UFOs hovered over Washington. Jet interceptors were sent up, and visual contact was made in addition to the radar sightings. This incident also was kept secret from the press and public. Even the White House was misinformed.

The press demanded explanations. They knew that interceptors had been sent up, and now they wanted the facts. The Chief of Staff ordered a press conference the next day (film clips from the conference are included in the movie). Chop and Ruppelt were present when General Samford stated there were "credible observers of relatively incredible things."

From that night on, Chop was convinced there was no longer any controversy as to whether or not there were U.F.O's moving in the atmosphere. They were an undeniable fact. The only questions left now were, "What are they?" and "Where do they come
“from?” He was also convinced that there was intelligence behind the objects and that their source was, space.

(A final note: In the years following his own official UFO activities and the production of “U.F.O.,” the real Mr. Albert M. Chop has considered other UFO theories besides the extraterrestrial idea, though he still, to this very day, remains certain that the phenomenon is real and demands a full investigation.)
At home, Chop gets a fateful telephone call from a government official—UFOs are over Washington, D.C. for the second time in a week.