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(c) 1981 by Chris Rutkowski
Typing by Charlotte Katz
Printing by Guy Westcott

Bargain Basement for Second Storey

Recently, I acquired an assortment of case files from Project Second Storey, courtesy of DND in Ottawa. Second Storey, of course, was the Canadian Government's answer to Projects Sign and Grudge (and eventually Blue Book) in the USA. Under the Project, officials received reports from both the public and the ranks of the RCAF, and handled letters of inquiry concerning "those flying saucers".

The files, however, are not quite intact, as some poor soul was assigned the thankless task of actually cutting out with scissors all the names and addresses of the individuals involved and mentioned in the reports. This is unfortunate, as many cases seem worthy of additional follow-up beyond the RCAF "Interrogation". Also, DND has an ingenious photocopier which cleverly makes about half of the pages totally illegible, rendering them essentially useless.

Despite this, it was possible to glean 84 cases from the files for study, most of them from the early 1950's. The majority of reports are from officers and enlisted men with the RCAF, though a good deal are in the form of letters from citizens. Many are on "Unidentified Flying Object Sighting" reports used by an "interrogator". Usually, his opinion was: "reliable witness", although occasionally the "observer was found to be totally unreliable." Therein lies a major problem with the Project. The questionnaire was not filled in by the witness, but by the interrogator, who probably by his title constrained the witness somewhat in his testimony. The questionnaire left little room for subjective statements, and in fact, was designed as such according to a statement elsewhere in the files:

"An attempt was made to eliminate, as much as possible, the subjective element from the sightings. The majority of sightings reported have over-stressed irrelevant personal opinions rather than the straight-forward objective facts."

This is quite evident also from the annotations, throughout the files, where somebody has haughtily commented, "Hearsay!", over some of the lines in reports.

Few of the reports are notable, and the collection is useful only as a whole, showing the activity within the DND. It is obvious, however, that there are notable absences in the file of cases which are known to have occurred during that period. For example, missing are any references to the Goose Bay, Laborador, incident whereby a UFO was seen by pilots over the area. Missing also are photographs which were sent in according to the letters received.

Despite this, a few pages are highly interesting. One case which occurred not in Canada, but near Simiutak, Greenland, involved a red object which collided with a weather balloon. On June 25, 1953, a red, "rotating" object was watched through a theodolite as it collided with a weather balloon, disintegrating the balloon at 18,000 feet. The object, "three times" the size of the balloon, "hovered in circular motion for 15 seconds, then rapidly departed into [the] wind." There were no investigation reports accompanying this, so there is no way of telling of the evaluation made at the time.

A great many cases appear to have been bolides, and it is easy to see why the file was closed on that basis. After all, there was a four-page form to be filled out for each witness, and when four or five witnesses saw a bolide, well, that's a lot of paper work.

Included also are reviews and summaries of reports by the Rand Corporation, the Robertson Panel and an astronomer by the name of Hyneck (sic). In all cases, despite the persistently annoying percentage of unidentifieds, the evaluation was that all of the UFO's were hoaxes or misidentifications.

One amusing series of documents concerns a German man living in Montreal, who approached the RCAF with his story that he had worked in an underground flying saucer factory in Germany during the war. He was willing to show them the location in Germany, and offered them tidbits of information on their construction. Needless to say, after a rather intense series of interrogation, the man was pronounced a complete fraud, and was thought to have tried to con the Canadian government to give him a free ride to Bavaria.

As for the sightings, thirty-three were from Ontario, twelve from Quebec, nine each from Alberta and Nova Scotia, five each from Manitoba and BC, four from Saskatchewan, two each from PEI and the Yukon, and one each from NWT, Greenland and North Dakota. A surprising number were reported from Ottawa, a few "hovering" over Parliament Hill. The majority are nocturnal lights, and investigation of the only reported Close Encounter revealed that the witness was a "publicity-seeker" and was severely inebriated when the interrogator came to call. Well, nobody's perfect.

All told, the collection of documents gives a small peek at the files from government records of their UFO investigation efforts. While they give no great revelations, they show that

Second Storey was quite active and assumed a great deal of information while working in conjunction with NORAD and the USAF. The obvious question, then, is, "Where's the rest of it?" The papers are grouped mainly in the years 1952-5. It may be debatable that relevant data exists elsewhere. Files obtained by individuals by Arthur Bray and Mr. X show that there is an enormous wealth of information there to be examined. Is there still a cover-up?

The following is a work of fiction by Conrad Fort:

The Last Entry in Asim Isaacov's Diary

As a science editor for Newsmouth Magazine, I've taught myself to be objective and open-minded on the subject of UFO's. This, despite the fact that I receive literally hundreds of calls a month, from people talking about how they have been contacted by aliens about to take over the Earth, or some other silly thing like that. Then there's the UFO "experts" themselves. Most are incredibly paranoid for some reason, claiming that the "Men-in-Black" were harassing and trying to silence them. Some of the worst ones were those who claimed to have found out the "truth" about UFO's, and were being stalked by figures cloaked in black, and followed by black cadillacs whenever they drove around town.

Needless to say, I didn't believe any of it, until Jack Hodgekiss came to me, late at night in my office, where I was working on an article about Mt. St. Helens. He walked in, sat down and nervously asked if I could spare a few minutes to talk with him. Well, it was my fourth draft, anyway, so I said yes, and he breathed a sigh of relief. From under his coat, he produced a large manila envelope, which he placed on my desk.

"In there," he said squeakily, "are enough documents to show exactly what UFO's are!"

I didn't even raise an eyebrow.

"Really," I answered, playing the gag along with him. "You mean, about how the government is testing its own new secret weapon, based on what it learned from that crashed saucer in New Mexico?"

Astonished, he cried, "You knew?"

"Of course I knew, I'm a science editor, you know." This was getting amusing.

"Well," he began again, "then the papers in there are probably redundant to your knowledge. But you can have them anyway, if you want."

I leaned back in my chair. "Certainly. The more evidence, the better."

"Thank you for seeing me, regardless," he said while standing up. "You know, most other editors would think I was some kind of a nut."

"Well, I'm not just another science editor," I offered, wondering how I would be able to live with myself after saying it.

"Quite so," he blurbed. "Goodnight." And he left.

On a spur of inspired creativity, I quickly jotted off a new paragraph for my next column, telling precisely what had just occurred. I thought it would bring a few chuckles.

As it turned out, it did. But as I write this in my personal diary, I recall how, a few days after my column was published, I heard that Jack Hodgekiss had been killed when his car went out of control on an expressway. Now, if I were one who became paranoid, I'd probably think that he had been silenced by the "Men-in-black" and that I would be next. After all, I had gotten his "secret" papers on the "truth" of the UFO matter.

Actually, I threw his envelope in the wastebasket as soon as he left, so I haven't the foggiest idea of what his "proof" was. But of course, no one would know that.

It's amazing how this can play on your imagination. After I wrote that line, the phone rang, and when I picked it up, all I could hear were some funny beeping noises, some clicks and some static. I walked to the window, and, sure enough, somebody's black cadillac is parked just across the street. It's probably exactly such a series of coincidences which make UFO buffs so paranoid.

As I wrote that, I heard the door open and close downstairs. I went down, but it was still locked from the inside. As I was walking back upstairs, I passed the living room, and thought I saw someone standing just inside the doorway in the darkness. I turned on the light, but there was nobody there. Quite curious.

I think I'll throw this into my next column. It shows precisely how such nonsense as "Men-in-Black" stories can make you start believing it all. Even now, as I write this, I have the strangest feeling that there's somebody in this room with me. Of course, there really isn't. If I didn't know better, I'd think that the "Men-in-Black" were after me. Such a notion ranks as one of the most ridicu