



The Mantell Incident



*An Anatomy of an Investigation
A 60-year-old cover-up*

*By Francis Ridge
With Jean Waskiewicz & Dan Wilson*

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The Mantell Incident

Anatomy of a Re-Investigation

By Francis Ridge

with

Jean Waskiewicz and Dan Wilson

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Acknowledgments

In the 1960's, all I had with my NICAP rapid deployment investigation team was a crude home office with an old Underwood typewriter, a file cabinet (mostly empty), a small collection of UFO books, and access to the local library. I had three other field investigators and three technical advisers in my 7-man NICAP Subcommittee. My contact with a few outside researchers and NICAP headquarters in Washington, DC, was by the relatively slow U.S. mail and expensive long distance telephone.

Twenty-five to thirty years later, the scene changed drastically. Field investigators and researchers all over the globe had a computer that was online. The internet, with instantaneous email messaging, along with the ability to scan and attach important documents, and text from books and UFO reports from all over the world, created a system that rivaled the FBI. In December of 1997, I set up the NICAP web site to house archived data and later set up the NICAP A-Team to peer review that data. While my team compiled UFO data for over ten years from the earliest days to, by now, the 1990's, a tremendous amount of information and expertise was in place. But without Rebecca Wise and the Project Blue Book Archive, most of this would have been only historically important. The real breakthroughs came about when we brought the BB files into the picture. If we wanted to provide information to a media source, or another researcher, we either already had it or knew where to get it and had the people who knew the most about it.

None of this would have been possible without the help from the NICAP A-Team and others. Those who assisted in this re-investigation were: Jean Waskiewicz - researcher and NICAP site materials archivist; Dan Wilson, Project Blue Book researcher, member Nuclear Connection Project; Brad Sparks, independent researcher & analyst; Richard Hall - Primary NICAP Consultant & Former Acting Director of NICAP, former Chairman of the Fund for UFO Research; Mark Rodeghier - Scientific Director and President of the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies; John Schuessler - Associate for the Center for UFO Study, Director, Mutual UFO Network (2000-2006); Don Berliner - Chairman of the Fund for UFO Research; Tom Deuley - Co-Founder, Fund for UFO Research & Corporate Secretary, Mutual UFO Network; Steven Kaeser - Executive Board Member, Fund for UFO Research; Rob Swiatek, Secretary & Treasurer, Fund for UFO Research; Bruce Maccabee, former Chairman of the Fund for UFO Research, US Navy optical physicist and expert in analysis of UFO photographs; Rebecca Wise, Project Blue Book Archives; Jan Aldrich, Project-1947 consultant; Joel Carpenter, pilot, Consultant of early UFOs and "foo-fighters"; Don Ledger, pilot & television producer; Peter Davenport - Director, National UFO Reporting Center, Seattle, WA.; also Kevin Randle, Wendy Connors, Terry Mantell, Drew Speier (Channel 14, Evansville), Jerry Clark, Tom DeMary, Michael Swords, Mary Castner, Barry Greenwood, Rod Dyke, Loren Gross, and William Jones.

One of it's members is a workhorse, a magnificently skilled person by the name of Jean Waskiewicz. Jean is a retired Computer Systems Analyst and retired Michigan Mufon Webmaster. She is a member of Mufon International and served with Michigan MUFON for many years. UFO history is her passion and she loves the search for new data. She has been working feverishly on the NICAP effort since 2004. In 2006 her work on the Mantell case re-investigation for the NICAP team was absolutely essential. Her work in that regard illustrates that she will do whatever it takes to help decipher old documents and make them readable again. She is also a member of the Nuclear Connection Project Team.

Another extremely gifted and determined member of our A-Team is Dan Wilson. Dan lives in Painesville, Ohio. He began studying nuclear weapons, the entire nuclear weapons complex, nuclear weapons testing, and nuclear power production in 1988. He has read extensively on the UFO phenomena and has interviewed various witnesses from the Air Force, Navy, and the Atomic Energy Commission. He contributed very interesting information to the newly released book, UFOs and Nukes, by Robert Hastings. Since 1998 he has extracted vital documents from the Project Blue Book Archives for the NICAP site, and in 2006 he discovered documents proving a cover-up in the Mantell case. Since 2003 he has provided valuable researched information regarding UFOs and the nuclear connection and is now an official member of the Nuclear Connection Project.

Armed with these great colleagues, and some years preparation with document and database work, we couldn't have been more prepared. But what we found was a lot more than we had imagined. This time it involved a case almost everyone had written off.

The first part of this report is a blow-by-blow, day-by-day, chronicle of the investigation. It describes who found what, and when, and what others had to say about it. *The Mantell Incident: An Anatomy of an Investigation*, is more than a diary of what happened each day. It includes transcripts of discovered documents and "lost" press releases, as well as actual copies of important documents. The report includes analyses by numerous researchers of specific issues. The Report would not be complete without the analytical expertise of independent researcher, Brad Sparks, who wrote the very detailed analysis based on all the evidence collected. We welcome others to conduct their own analyses and/or rebuttals to this report.

Introduction

There are at least 1500 good reports in the Blue Book files where the witnesses actually lived to tell about their encounters with UFOs, many of which would make any sensible person sit up and take notice. And those reports come directly from the Air Force files. In April of 2006, at WFIE reporter Drew Speier's request, I reluctantly agreed to do an interview on the Mantell case, one that even many pro-UFO researchers had thrown out. WFIE wanted to do it because it was somewhat a "local" incident, and it was both sensational and controversial. I finally agreed to do it in the hope that WFIE would do something better in the near future with any of our many better UFO reports or something new that might develop. Since I wanted to do this interview right, for the record, I set out to show the media and the public the importance of what we DID have on the case.

First of all, there were at least seven reasons why I have always felt that the Mantell incident was important and that a cover-up was probably involved:

- 1) In 1960, I was a NICAP Subcommittee Chairman in SW Indiana. A scientific consultant to our team at Vincennes, Indiana, who had worked for Project SIGN, told me that the Mantell case was NOT explained and that the incident had shaken a lot of people up. I was "small potatoes" back then, a field investigator and head of a rapid response team for local and regional reports, with other things in my area of responsibility besides events 12-years in the past and in another state..
- 2) The Air Force-inspired, 1952 LIFE Magazine article by Robert Ginna, five years after the incident took place, stated that the case was unsolved.
- 3) In 1956 a former head of Project Blue Book (Capt. Ed Ruppelt) stated in his book, "The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects" (page 41): "According to the old timers at ATIC, this report (Chiles-Whitted case) shook them worse than the Mantell Incident. This (C-W) was the first time two reliable sources had been really close enough to anything resembling a UFO to get a good look and live to tell about it."
- 4) I had known about this but Dan Wilson, our NICAP team's archive researcher found documents confirming that in the 1948 Mantell case the State Police had gotten reports of an object described as "circular, about 250' to 300' in diameter," and moving westward at a "pretty good clip." In my opinion no one would describe a balloon of any kind in this way. In another document we found the object was described as "1/10th the size of the full moon". Yet another, "Tremendous" size was used to describe the object at Godman Field at 1:45 PM.
- 5) Besides the State Police reports there had been evidence of at least two other UFO sightings, one at Lockbourne AFB, another at Clinton County AFB,

both in Ohio. UFO sightings in the region! We found those documents, too.

6) Maj. Donald E. Keyhoe: "Many ranking officers who had laughed at the saucer scare stopped scoffing. One of these was General Sory Smith, now Deputy Director of Air Force Public Relations. Later in my investigation, General Smith told me: 'It was the Mantell case that got me. I knew Tommy Mantell very well - also Colonel Hix, the C.O. at Godman. I knew they were both intelligent men -not the kind to be imagining things.'"

7) The planes flown by Mantell and his wing men were F-51 Mustangs. In 1948, the designation P-51 (P for pursuit) was changed to F-51 (F for fighter) and the existing F designator for photographic reconnaissance aircraft was dropped because of a new designation scheme throughout the USAF. This 400-mph fighter could overtake a non-powered balloon..... in no time.

With that much already a given, I did the interview. The internet version of the show was viewed by many that weekend. That Monday morning, a well-meaning UFOlogist sent me and the Current Encounters email list a note, asking just what I had that made me think that Mantell was chasing anything other than a balloon. Before I could respond to that email, our team's number one analyst, Brad Sparks, responded. We really started digging that day and haven't stopped yet.

Getting ready for the "flak" and what looked like a second interview in July, for the best defense possible for the incident, my team did a complete case work-up. The report went from a 1/2" thick hard copy printout to a document compilation over 4" thick. I can't speak for everyone, but I don't know any person that wasn't surprised in some way by what we found.

The lighter-than-air balloon theory was blown away. Cover-ups and lies jumped right off the pages of the Air Forces' own documents. An accident report and newspaper clippings proved that even the wing men had lied. By July we were able to tell the public the truth about the balloon theory, and that Captain Thomas Mantell had not lost his life chasing a weather balloon. But the rest had to be held back, until now.

The end result is the report you are reading right now. For that, we have to thank the persistence of WFIE and reporter Drew Speier. And we couldn't have done it at all without the help of Brad Sparks (researcher, consultant, analyst), Rebecca Wise (Project Blue Book Archive), Dan Wilson (document archive researcher), and Jean Waskiewicz (NICAP Database, news clipping search, transcripts)..

Francis Ridge
NICAP Researcher & Archivist
<http://www.nicap.org/>

Part 1 - 1: The Mantell Case - Original Account

January 7, 1948



This is the original account of the famous Mantell Incident, as told by Captain Edward J. Ruppelt, in his book in 1956. (Ref.1). Nothing has been changed in this version so that the reader can quickly get through the main gist of the story which has been told many times by many people. If you are well-versed in that regard, you may skip this section and move on. - Francis Ridge

Edward J. Ruppelt:

On January 7 all of the late papers in the U.S. carried headlines similar to those in the Louisville Courier: "F-51 and Capt. Mantell Destroyed Chasing Flying Saucer." This was Volume I of "The Classics," the Mantell Incident.

At one-fifteen on that afternoon the control tower operators at Godman AFB, outside Louisville, Kentucky, received a telephone call from the Kentucky State Highway Patrol. The patrol wanted to know if Godman Tower knew anything about any unusual aircraft in the vicinity. Several people from Maysville, Kentucky, a small town 80 miles east of Louisville, had reported seeing a strange aircraft. Godman knew that they had nothing in the vicinity so they called Flight Service at Wright-Patterson AFB. In a few minutes Flight Service called back. Their air Traffic control board showed no flights in the area. About twenty minutes later the state police called again. This time people from the towns of Owensboro and Irvington, Kentucky, west of Louisville, were reporting a strange craft. The report from these two towns was a little more complete. The towns people had described the object to the state police as being "circular, about 250 to 300 feet in diameter," and moving westward at a "pretty good clip." Godman Tower checked Flight Service again. Nothing. All this time the tower operators had been looking for the reported object. They theorized that since the UFO had had to pass north of Godman to get from Maysville to Owensboro it might come back.

At one forty-five they saw it, or something like it. Later, in his official report, the assistant tower operator said that he had seen the object for several minutes before he called his chiefs attention to it. He said that he had been reluctant to "make a flying saucer report." As soon as the two men in the tower had assured themselves that the UFO they saw was not an airplane or a weather balloon, they called Flight Operations. They wanted the operations officer to see the UFO. Before long word of the sighting had gotten around to key personnel on the base, and several officers, besides the base operations officer and the base intelligence officer, were in the tower. All of them looked at the UFO through the tower's 6 x 50 binoculars and decided they couldn't identify it. About this time Colonel Hix, the base commander, arrived. He looked and he was baffled. At two-thirty, they reported, they were discussing what should be done when four F-51's came into view, approaching the base from the south.

The tower called the flight leader, Captain Mantell, and asked him to take a look at the object and try to identify it. One F-51 in the flight was running low on fuel, so he asked permission to go on to his base. Mantell took his two remaining wing men, made a turn, and started after the UFO. The people in Godman Tower were directing him as none of the pilots could see the object at this time. They gave Mantell an initial heading toward the south and the flight was last seen heading in the general direction of the UFO.

By the time the F-51's had climbed to 10,000 feet, the two wing men later reported, Mantell had pulled out ahead of them and they could just barely see him. At two forty-five Mantell called the tower and said, "I see something above and ahead of me and I'm still climbing." All the people in the tower heard Mantell say this and they heard one of the wing men call back and ask, "What the hell are we looking for?" The tower immediately called Mantell and asked him for a description of what he saw. Odd as it may seem, no one can remember exactly what he answered. Saucer historians have credited him with saying, "I've sighted the thing. It looks metallic and it's tremendous in size.... Now it's starting to climb." Then in a few seconds he is supposed to have called and said, "It's above me and I'm gaining on it. I'm going to 20,000 feet." Everyone in the tower agreed on this one last bit of the transmission, "I'm going to 20,000 feet," but didn't agree on the first part, about the UFO's being metallic and tremendous.

The two wing men were now at 15,000 feet and trying frantically to call Mantell. He had climbed far above them by this time and was out of sight. Since none of them had any oxygen they were worried about Mantell. Their calls were not answered. Mantell never talked to anyone again. The two wing men leveled off at 15,000 feet, made another fruitless effort to call Mantell, and started to come back down. As they passed Godman Tower on their way to their base, one of them said something to the effect that all he had seen was a reflection on his canopy.

When they landed at their base, Standiford Field, just north of Godman, one pilot had his F-51 refueled and serviced with oxygen, and took off to search the area again. He didn't see anything.

At three-fifty the tower lost sight of the UFO. A few minutes later they got word that Mantell had crashed and was dead.

Several hours later, at 7:20 P.M., airfield towers all over the Midwest sent in frantic reports of another UFO. In all about a dozen airfield towers reported the UFO as being low on the southwestern horizon and disappearing after about twenty minutes. The writers of saucer lore say this UFO was what Mantell was chasing when he died; the Air Force says this UFO was Venus.

The people on Project Sign worked fast on the Mantell Incident. Contemplating a flood of queries from the press as soon as they heard about the crash, they realized that they had to get a quick answer. Venus had been the target of a chase by an Air Force F-51 several weeks before and there were similarities between this sighting and the Mantell Incident. So almost before the rescue crews had reached the crash, the word "Venus" went out. This satisfied the editors, and so it stood for about a year; Mantell had unfortunately been killed trying to reach the planet Venus.

To the press, the nonchalant, offhand manner with which the sighting was written off by the Air Force public relations officer showed great confidence in the conclusion, Venus, but behind the barbed-wire fence that encircled ATIC the nonchalant attitude didn't exist among the intelligence analysts. One man had already left for Louisville and the rest were doing some tall speculating. The story about the tower-to-air talk, "It looks metallic and it's tremendous in size," spread fast. Rumor had it that the tower had carried on a running conversation with the pilots and that there was more information than was so far known. Rumor also had it that this conversation had been recorded. Unfortunately neither of these rumors was true.

Over a period of several weeks the file on the Mantell Incident grew in size until it was the most thoroughly investigated sighting of that time, at least the

file was the thickest.

About a year later the Air Force released its official report on the incident. To use a trite term, it was a masterpiece in the art of "weasel wording." It said that the UFO might have been Venus or it could have been a balloon. Maybe two balloons. It probably was Venus except that this is doubtful because Venus was too dim to be seen in the afternoon. This jolted writers who had been following the UFO story. Only a few weeks before, The Saturday Evening Post had published a two-part story entitled "What You Can Believe About Flying Saucers." The story had official sanction and had quoted the Venus theory as a positive solution. To clear up the situation, several writers were allowed to interview a major in the Pentagon, who was the Air Force's Pentagon "expert" on UFO's. The major was asked directly about the conclusion of the Mantell Incident, and he flatly stated that it was Venus. The writers pointed out the official Air Force analysis. The major's answer was, "They checked again and it was Venus." He didn't know who "they" were, where they had checked, or what they had checked, but it was Venus. The writers then asked, "If there was a later report they had made why wasn't it used as a conclusion?" "Was it available?" The answer to the last question was "No," and the lid snapped back down. This interview gave the definite impression that the Air Force was unsuccessfully trying to cover up some very important information, using Venus as a front. Nothing excites a newspaper or magazine writer more than to think he has stumbled onto a big story and that someone is trying to cover it up. Many writers thought this after the interview with the major, and many still think it. You can't really blame them either.

In early 1952 I got a telephone call on ATIC's direct line to the Pentagon. It was a colonel in the Director of Intelligence's office. The Office of Public Information had been getting a number of queries about all of the confusion over the Mantell Incident. What was the answer?

I dug out the file. In 1949 all of the original material on the incident had been microfilmed, but something had been spilled on the film. Many sections were so badly faded they were illegible. As I had to do with many of the older sightings that were now history, I collected what I could from the file, filling in the blanks by talking to people who had been at ATIC during the early UFO era. Many of these people were still around, "Red" Honnacker, George Towles, Al Deyarmond, Nick Post, and many others. Most of them were civilians, the military had been transferred out by this time.

Some of the press clippings in the file mentioned the Pentagon major and his concrete proof of Venus. I couldn't find this concrete proof in the file so I asked around about the major. The major, I found, was an officer in the Pentagon who had at one time written a short intelligence summary about UFO's. He had never been stationed at ATIC, nor was he especially well versed on the UFO problem. When the word of the press conference regarding the Mantell Incident came down, a UFO expert was needed. The major, because of his short intelligence summary on UFO's, became the "expert." He had evidently conjured up "they" and "their later report" to support his Venus answer because the writers at the press conference had him in a corner. I looked farther.

Fortunately the man who had done the most extensive work on the incident, Dr. J. Allen Hynek, head of the Ohio State University Astronomy Department, could be contacted. I called Dr. Hynek and arranged to meet him the next day.

Dr. Hynek was one of the most impressive scientists I met while working on the UFO project, and I met a good many. He didn't do two things that some of them did: give you the answer before he knew the question; or immediately begin to expound on his accomplishments in the field of science. I arrived at Ohio State just before lunch, and Dr. Hynek invited me to eat with him at the faculty club. He wanted to refer to some notes he had on the Mantell Incident and they were in his office, so we discussed UFO's in general during lunch.

Back in his office he started to review the Mantell Incident. He had been responsible for the weasel-worded report that the Air Force released in late 1949, and he apologized for it. Had he known that it was going to cause so much confusion, he said, he would have been more specific. He thought the incident was a dead issue. The reason that Venus had been such a strong suspect was that it was in almost the same spot in the sky as the UFO. Dr. Hynek referred to

his notes and told me that at 3:00 P.M., Venus had been south southwest of Godman and 33 degrees above the southern horizon. At 3:00 P.M. the people in the tower estimated the UFO to be southwest of Godman and at an elevation of about 45 degrees. Allowing for human error in estimating directions and angles, this was close. I agreed. There was one big flaw in the theory, however. Venus wasn't bright enough to be seen. He had computed the brilliance of the planet, and on the day in question it was only six times as bright as the surrounding sky. Then he explained what this meant. Six times may sound like a lot, but it isn't. When you start looking for a pinpoint of light only six times as bright as the surrounding sky, it's almost impossible to find it, even on a clear day.

Dr. Hynek said that he didn't think that the UFO was Venus.

I later found out that although it was a relatively clear day there was considerable haze.

I asked him about some of the other possibilities. He repeated the balloon, canopy-reflection, and sundog theories but he refused to comment on them since, as he said, he was an astrophysicist and would care to comment only on the astrophysical aspects of the sightings.

I drove back to Dayton convinced that the UFO wasn't Venus. Dr. Hynek had said Venus would have been a pinpoint of light. The people in the tower had been positive of their descriptions, their statements brought that out. They couldn't agree on a description, they called the UFO "a parachute, an ice cream cone tipped with red," "round and white," "huge and silver or metallic," "a small white object," "one fourth the size of the full moon," but all the descriptions plainly indicated a large object. None of the descriptions could even vaguely be called a pinpoint of light.

This aspect of a definite shape seemed to eliminate the sundog theory too. Sundogs, or perihelia, as they are technically known, are caused by ice particles reflecting a diffused light. This would not give a sharp outline. I also recalled two instances where Air Force pilots had chased sundogs. In both instances when the aircraft began to climb, the sundog disappeared. This was because the angle of reflection changed as the airplane climbed several thousand feet. These sundog-caused UFO's also had fuzzy edges.

I had always heard a lot of wild speculation about the condition of Mantell's crashed F-51, so I wired for a copy of the accident report. It arrived several days after my visit with Dr. Hynek. The report said that the F-51 had lost a wing due to excessive speed in a dive after Mantell had "blacked out" due to the lack of oxygen. Mantell's body had not burned, not disintegrated, and was not full of holes; the wreck was not radioactive, nor was it magnetized.

One very important and pertinent question remained. Why did Mantell, an experienced pilot, try to go to 20,000 feet when he didn't even have an oxygen mask? If he had run out of oxygen, it would have been different. Every pilot and crewman has it pounded into him, "Do not, under any circumstances, go above 15,000 feet without oxygen." In high-altitude indoctrination during World War II, I made several trips up to 30,000 feet in a pressure chamber. To demonstrate anoxia we would leave our oxygen masks off until we became dizzy. A few of the more hardy souls could get to 15,000 feet, but nobody ever got over 17,000. Possibly Mantell thought he could climb up to 20,000 in a hurry and get back down before he got anoxia and blacked out, but this would be a foolish chance. This point was covered in the sighting report. A long-time friend of Mantell's went on record as saying that he'd flown with him several years and knew him personally. He couldn't conceive of Mantell's even thinking about disregarding his lack of oxygen. Mantell was one of the most cautious pilots he knew. "The only thing I can think," he commented, "was that he was after something that he believed to be more important than his life or his family."

My next step was to try to find out what Mantell's wing men had seen or thought but this was a blind alley. All of this evidence was in the ruined portion of the microfilm, even their names were missing. The only reference I could find to them was a vague passage indicating they hadn't seen anything.

I concentrated on the canopy-reflection theory. It is widely believed that many flying saucers appear to pilots who are actually chasing a reflection on their canopy. I checked over all the reports we had on file. I couldn't find one that had been written off for this reason. I dug back into my own flying experience and talked to a dozen pilots. All of us had momentarily been startled by reflection on the aircraft's canopy or wing, but in a second or two it had been obvious that it was a reflection. Mantell chased the object for at least fifteen to twenty minutes, and it is inconceivable that he wouldn't realize in that length of time that he was chasing a reflection.

About the only theory left to check was that the object might have been one of the big, 100-foot-diameter, "skyhook" balloons. I rechecked the descriptions of the UFO made by the people in the tower. The first man to sight the object called it a parachute; others said ice cream cone, round, etc. All of these descriptions fit a balloon. Buried deep in the file were two more references to balloons that I had previously missed. Not long after the object had disappeared from view at Godman AFB, a man from Madisonville, Kentucky, called Flight Service in Dayton. He had seen an object traveling southeast. He had looked at it through a telescope and it was a balloon. At four forty-five an astronomer living north of Nashville, Tennessee, called in. He had also seen a UFO, looked at it through a telescope, and it was a balloon.

In the thousands of words of testimony and evidence taken on the Mantell Incident this was the only reference to balloons. I had purposely not paid too much attention to this possibility because I was sure that it had been thoroughly checked back in 1948. Now I wasn't sure.

I talked with one of the people who had been in on the Mantell investigation. The possibility of a balloon's causing the sighting had been mentioned but hadn't been followed up for two reasons. Number one was that everybody at ATIC was convinced that the object Mantell was after was a spaceship and that this was the only course they had pursued. When the sighting grew older and no spaceship proof could be found, everybody jumped on the Venus band wagon, as this theory had "already been established." It was an easy way out. The second reason was that a quick check had been made on weather balloons and none were in the area. The big skyhook balloon project was highly classified at that time, and since they were all convinced that the object was of interplanetary origin (a minority wanted to give the Russians credit), they didn't want to bother to buck the red tape of security to get data on skyhook flights.

The group who supervise the contracts for all the skyhook research flights for the Air Force are located at Wright Field, so I called them. They had no records on flights in 1948 but they did think that the big balloons were being launched from Clinton County AFB in southern Ohio at that time. They offered to get the records of the winds on January 7 and see what flight path a balloon launched in southwestern Ohio would have taken. In a few days they had the data for me.

Unfortunately the times of the first sightings, from the towns outside Louisville, were not exact but it was possible to partially reconstruct the sequence of events. The winds were such that a skyhook balloon launched from Clinton County AFB could be seen from the town east of Godman AFB, the town from which the first UFO was reported to the Kentucky State Police. It is not unusual to be able to see a large balloon for 50 to 60 miles. The balloon could have traveled west for a while, climbing as it moved with the strong east winds that were blowing that day and picking up speed as the winds got stronger at altitude. In twenty minutes it could have been in a position where it could be seen from Owensboro and Irvington, Kentucky, the two towns west of Godman. The second reports to the state police had come from these two towns. Still climbing, the balloon would have reached a level where a strong wind was blowing in a southerly direction. The jet-stream winds were not being plotted in 1948 but the weather chart shows strong indications of a southerly bend in the jet stream for this day. Jet stream or not, the balloon would have moved rapidly south, still climbing. At a point somewhere south or southwest of Godman it would have climbed through the southerly-moving winds to a calm belt at about 60,000 feet. At this level it would slowly drift south or southeast. A skyhook balloon can be seen at 60,000.

When first seen by the people in Godman Tower, the UFO was south of the air base. It was relatively close and looked "like a parachute," which a balloon does. During the two hours that it was in sight, the observers reported that it seemed to hover, yet each observer estimated the time he looked at the object through the binoculars and time-wise the descriptions ran "huge," "small," "one fourth the size of a full moon," "one tenth the size of a full moon." Whatever the UFO was, it was slowly moving away. As the balloon continued to drift in a southerly direction it would have picked up stronger winds, and could have easily been seen by the astronomers in Madisonville, Kentucky, and north of Nashville an hour after it disappeared from view at Godman.

Somewhere in the archives of the Air Force or the Navy there are records that will show whether or not a balloon was launched from Clinton County AFB, Ohio, on January 7, 1948. I never could find these records. People who were working with the early skyhook projects "remember" operating out of Clinton County AFB in 1947 but refuse to be pinned down to a January 7 flight. Maybe, they said.

The Mantell Incident is the same old UFO jigsaw puzzle. By assuming the shape of one piece, a balloon launched from southwestern Ohio, the whole picture neatly falls together. It shows a huge balloon that Captain Thomas Mantell died trying to reach. He didn't know that he was chasing a balloon because he had never heard of a huge, 100-foot-diameter skyhook balloon, let alone seen one. Leave out the one piece of the jigsaw puzzle and the picture is a UFO, "metallic and tremendous in size."

It could have been a balloon. This is the answer I phoned back to the Pentagon.

Ref. 1: "The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects", Captain Edward J. Ruppelt, 1956, (pages 31-39)

Part 1 - 2: Captain Thomas Francis Mantell, Jr.



Capt. Thomas F. Mantell Jr., was born in Franklin, Kentucky, 30 June 1922. He was a graduate of Male High School, in Louisville. On 16 June 1942, he joined the Army Air Corps, graduating Flight School on 30 June 1943.

During World War II, Mantell was assigned to the 440th Troop Carrier Group, 96th Troop Carrier Squadron, 9th Air Force. He was awarded Distinguished Flying Cross, and Air Medal w/3 GLCs for heroism. Following the war he returned to Louisville, joining the newly organized Kentucky Air National Guard, as Flight Leader, "C" Flight, 165th Fighter Squadron, Kentucky Air National Guard on 16 February 1947.:



Mantell (center) with buddies at Army Air Corps Flight School, 1942.



Mantell (front row, second from the right) with pilots of the 165th Fighter Squadron, Kentucky Air National Guard. (Credit: Wendy Connors)

On Saturday, 29 September 2001, the Simpson County Historical Society unveiled a historical marker in honor of Thomas F. Mantell, Jr. The marker is located at the Franklin, Kentucky exit off Interstate 65, next to the office building of Simpson County Tourism.

Part 1 - 3: The P-51D Mustang



NORTH AMERICAN P-51D MUSTANG

The Mustang was among the best and most well-known fighters used by the U.S. Army Air Forces during [World War II](#). Possessing excellent range and maneuverability, the P-51 operated primarily as a long-range escort fighter and also as a ground attack fighter-bomber. The Mustang served in nearly every combat zone during WWII, and later fought in the Korean War.

Origins

In 1940 the British approached North American Aviation to license-build Curtiss P-40 fighters for the Royal Air Force. North American offered to design a better fighter, which flew as the NA-73X in October 1940. Production of the aircraft -- named Mustang I by the British -- began the following year.

Mustangs for the USAAF

In the summer of 1941, the USAAF received two Mustang I's under the designation XP-51. Although flight tests of the new fighter showed promise, the

USAAF did not immediately order the Mustang. After the personal intervention of Gen. Hap Arnold, however, the USAAF retained 55 Mustangs from a British order. Most of these became F-6A photo-reconnaissance aircraft, which equipped the first USAAF Mustang units, the 154th and 111th Observation Squadrons in North Africa in the spring of 1943.

In March 1942 the USAAF accepted the first production P-51A fighters. Although excellent at lower levels, the P-51A's Allison engines severely limited performance at high altitude. The USAAF employed P-51As in the China-Burma-India theater, where most combat took place at low altitude.

In April 1942 the USAAF ordered an attack version equipped with dive brakes and bomb racks, the [A-36 Apache](#). A-36s entered combat in June 1943 and served in North Africa, Italy and India.

A Winning Combination

In the fall of 1942, Mustangs in the United States and Great Britain were experimentally fitted with British Merlin engines. One in the United States flew a remarkable 441 mph at 29,800 feet -- about 100 mph faster than the P-51A at that altitude. Mass production of the Merlin-powered P-51B and P-51C soon followed (nearly identical, North American produced the "B" in Inglewood, Calif., and the "C" in Dallas, Texas).

In December 1943 the first P-51B/C Mustangs entered combat in Europe with the 354th Fighter Group "Pioneers." By the time of the first U.S. heavy bomber strike against Berlin in March 1944, the USAAF fielded about 175 P-51B/C Mustangs. Along with [P-38 Lightnings](#), these P-51s provided sorely needed long-range, high-altitude escort for the U.S. bombing campaign against Germany.

"Bubble-top" Mustang

The P-51D incorporated several improvements, and it became the most numerous variant with nearly 8,000 being built. The most obvious change was a new "bubble-top" canopy that greatly improved the pilot's vision. The P-51D also received the new K-14 gun-sight, an increase from four to six .50-cal machine guns, and a simplified ammunition feed system that considerably reduced gun jams.

The P-51D arrived in quantity in Europe in the spring of 1944, becoming the USAAF's primary long range escort fighter. The versatile Mustang also served as a fighter-bomber and reconnaissance aircraft. Few Luftwaffe aircraft could match the P-51D -- by the end of the war, Mustangs had destroyed 4,950 enemy aircraft in the air, more than any other USAAF fighter in Europe.

P-51Ds arrived in the Pacific and CBI theaters by the end of 1944. In the spring of 1945, Iwo Jima-based P-51Ds started flying long-range B-29 escort and low-level fighter-bomber missions against ground targets in Japan.

Continuing Development

North American eventually developed a considerably lightened Mustang, which became the P-51H. With a remarkable top speed of 487 mph, it was 50 mph faster than the P-51D. Although it was in production before the war ended, the P-51H did not reach frontline units in time to see combat.

With the last of 555 P-51Hs completed in 1946, the production run of the Mustang ended with over 15,000 of all types built.

Korean War

Although Mustangs continued in service with the newly-formed U.S. Air Force and many other nations after the war, more advanced jet fighters relegated them to secondary status. Many of the USAF's Mustangs (redesignated the F-51) were surplused or transferred to the Reserve and the Air National Guard (ANG).

At the start of the [Korean War](#), however, the Mustang once again proved its usefulness. After the initial invasion, USAF units were forced to fly from bases in Japan, and F-51Ds could hit targets in Korea that short-ranged F-80 jet fighters could not. Mustangs continued flying with USAF, South Korean Air Force (ROKAF), South African Air Force (SAAF) and Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) fighter-bomber units on close support and interdiction missions in Korea until they were largely replaced by F-86F jet fighter-bombers in 1953.

Epilogue

F-51s flew in the Reserve and ANG until they were finally phased out in 1957. Obtained from the West Virginia ANG in 1957, the aircraft on display was the last Mustang assigned to a USAF tactical unit. It is painted as the P-51D flown by Col. C.L. Sluder, commander of the 325th Fighter Group in Italy in 1944. The name of this aircraft, *Shimmy IV*, is derived from the names of his daughter, Sharon, and his wife, Zimmy.

TECHNICAL NOTES:

Armament: Six .50-cal. machine guns and 10 5-in. rockets or 2,000 lbs. of bombs

Engine: Packard-built Rolls-Royce Merlin [V-1650](#) of 1,695 hp

Maximum speed: 437 mph

Cruising speed: 275 mph

Range: 1,000 miles

Ceiling: 41,900 ft.

Span: 37 ft.

Length: 32 ft. 3 in.

Height: 13 ft. 8 in.

Weight: 12,100 lbs. maximum

Serial number: 44-74936

Part 1 - 4: 2005 - Prior to Re-Investigation

At the close of the year, 2005, the Mantell case directory had files containing what others had written about the case, plus several Project Blue Book documents. The printed-out file was about an inch thick. By the time we conducted the re-investigation in 2006, the file was over four times that size.

The following 21 Air Force documents were in that original file at the NICAP site, thanks to the efforts of UFO researcher, Dan Wilson. The key documents regarding this case were in the first of the four groups below, transcribed by our own, Jean Waskiewicz.

1) On November 9, 2005, our A-Team UFO researcher, Dan Wilson, found these three "RESTRICTED" documents, dated, January 7, 1948. Listed as a report of unusual incidents that took place in several locations. Sightings were reported, (1) In Kentucky; (2) In Ohio at Lockbourne AFB tower and Clinton County Tower who advised that a great ball of light was traveling southwest across the sky; (3) In Missouri, at St. Louis Tower advising that a great ball of light was passing directly over the field - Scott AFB Tower also verified this; and (4) "A call was received from Air Defense Command advising us to alert Coffeyville, Kansas, Ft. Smith, Arkansas, and Kansas City Missouri, and that they had plotted the object as moving WSW at 250 miles per hour." These

three documents confirm the original story as reported by Captain Edward Ruppelt, in his 1956 book. Newly found newspaper reports also tell us that someone had called an ambulance (Fire Dept) and they had arrived before the police. Apparently this is how Mantell's body was removed from the plane before State Police got there, and before the accident investigators arrived. But there were more surprises ahead.

The document numbers below that have the (*) correspond to the actual versions that can be found at the end of this chapter. ALL of the documents LISTED can be found on the NICAP website. The transcripts of those selected documents are provided immediately BELOW the relevant doc numbers.

[USAF-SIGN1-371 \(*\)](#)

[USAF-SIGN1-372 \(*\)](#)

[USAF-SIGN1-373 \(*\)](#)

At approximately 1400E, 7 January 1948, Kentucky State Police reported to Ft Knox Military Police they had sighted an unusual aircraft or object flying through air, circular in appearance approximately 250 - 300 feet in diameter, moving westward at "a pretty good clip." This in turn was reported to the Commanding Officer, Godman Field, Ft Knox, Kentucky, who called Godman Tower and asked them to have Flight Service check with Flight Test at Wright Field to see if they had any experimental aircraft in that area.

Captain Hooper at Flight Test Operations stated, "We have no experimental aircraft in that area, however we do have a B-29 and an A-26 on photo missions in that area." This information was relayed to Godman Tower by dispatcher on duty and a verification on report was asked for.

Godman Tower later called back and stated first report was by radio to Ft Knox Military Police and followed by telephone call to same from State Police.

Information on P-51's and further reports are reported as follows by Captain Arthur T. Jehli, Supervisor of the 1600E - 2400E shift.

"When the 1600E - 2400E shift reported for duty we were advised that a "disc", or balloon, or some strange object was seen hovering in the vicinity of Godman Field. This object was seen by the Commanding Officer and Operations Officer of Godman Field who advised that they would attempt to send aircraft to ascertain the size and shape of the object.

"At this time there was a flight of 4 P51's enroute from Marietta, Georgia to Standiford Field, Louisville, Kentucky. The lead ship was NG 3869, pilot Mantell. The Commanding Officer, Godman Field contacted this pilot and requested that he investigate the object overhead.

"One of the ships of the formation, NG 336 pilot Hendricks, landed at Standiford Field. The 3 other aircraft started to climb toward the object.

"At 22,000 feet pilot Hammond, NG 737, advised Clements, NG 800, that he had no oxygen equipment. Both pilots then returned to Standiford Field; pilot Mantell, NG 3869, continued climbing.

"Pilot Clements, NG 800, refueled and went back up to 32,000 feet but did not see either the strange object or the aircraft NG 3869 again, and so returned to Standiford Field.

"At 1750E, Standiford Field advised that NG 3869, pilot Mantell, crashed 5 miles SW Franklin, Kentucky at approximately 1645C.

"We then sent an arrival of 1500C for the 3 aircraft, NG 336, NG 737, and NG 800, also notified Maxwell Flight Service Center that NG 3869 had crashed.

“Maxwell Flight Service Center made a long distance call to Franklin, Kentucky and spoke to police officer Joe Walker, who took charge at the scene of the accident.

"Officer Walker stated that when he arrived the pilots body had been removed from the aircraft. Upon questioning eyewitnesses, Officer Walker learned that the aircraft had exploded in the air before it hit the ground, but, that the aircraft did not burn upon contact with the ground.

"The wrecking was scattered over an area of about one mile, and at that time the tail section, one wing, and the propeller had not been located.

“Lt Tyler, Operations Officer at Standiford Field, departed Standiford Field for Bolling (Bowling) Green, Kentucky in N 8101 to investigate the accident - Also at our suggestion an investigation party and Military Police were dispatched from Godman Field to the scene.

“So much for the accident - now hold on to your hat!

“Godman Tower again contacted us to report that there was a large light in the sky in the approximate position of the object seen earlier. Then Lockbourne Tower and Clinton County Tower advised a great ball of light was traveling southwest across the sky.

“We then contacted Olmsted Flight Service Center and gave them all the information available to deliver to the Air Defense Command at Mitchel Field, Hempstead, New York.

"Later we received a call from St. Louis Tower advising that a great ball of light was passing directly over the field - Scott Tower also verified this.

“We then received a call from Air Defense Command through Olmsted Flight Service Center advising us to alert Coffeyville, Kansas, Ft Smith, Arkansas, and Kansas City, Missouri, and that they had plotted the object as moving WSW at 250 miles per hour.

“We then received information from Maxwell Flight Service Center that a Dr. Seyfert, an astronomer at Vanderbilt University, had spotted an object SSE of Nashville, Tennessee that he identified as a pear shaped balloon with cables and a basket attached, moving first SSE, then W, at a speed of 10 miles per hour at 25,000 feet. This was observed between 1630C and 1645C.

"Olmsted Flight Service Center then advised us to instruct Godman Field to forward a complete report of the whole incident to Air Defense Command at Mitchel Field, Hempstead, New York as soon as possible.

“The Military Police at the scene of the accident called back and advised Godman Field that someone at Madisonville, Kentucky had observed, thru a Finch telescope an object described as cone shaped, 100 feet from top to bottom, 45 feet across, and 4 miles high proceeding SW at 10 miles per hour.

“All this time the weather observer at Godman Field was spotting the object with a Theodolite and keeping a record of times, elevations and azimuths.

“St Louis ATC advised of an article printed in the "["Edwardsville Intelligencer"](#)", Edwardsville, Illinois, describing an object, over the town at 0720C, of aluminum appearance without apparent wings or control surfaces which was moving southwest. This object remained visible for about 30 minutes. This article went on to describe the amazement and wondering of the editor regarding this object - and you can bet that he

was no more confused than I am at this moment.”

2) "Mantell Incident", January 7, 1948, Illinois, Kentucky, and Ohio. Two-page document checklist on observations of objects from 0720 hours to 1925 hours.

[USAF-SIGN8-240](#)

[USAF-SIGN8.241 \(*\)](#)

Although we had these documents in 2005, better, more detailed information was found in other documents.

3) This series of twelve documents dated January 7, 1948 mentions the witnesses: (1) T/Sgt Quinton A. Blackwell, Chief Operator in control tower at Godman Field; (2) PFC Stanley Oliver, on duty in control tower Godman Field; (3) USAF Capt. J. F. Duesler Jr., in control tower Godman Field; (4) USAF Capt. Cary W. Carter, at Godman Field; (5) Col. Guy G. Hix, at Godman Field; and the lead pilot himself, (6) Capt. Thomas F. Mantell, flight leader in NG 869 F-51 aircraft. The docs listed are mentioned for-the-record only at this point.

[USAF-SIGN8-226](#)

[USAF-SIGN8-227 \(*\)](#)

[USAF-SIGN8-230](#)

[USAF-SIGN8-231](#)

[USAF-SIGN8-232](#)

[USAF-SIGN8-233](#)

[USAF-SIGN8-234](#)

[USAF-SIGN8-235](#)

[USAF-SIGN8-236](#)

[USAF-SIGN8-237](#)

[USAF-SIGN8-238](#)

[USAF-SIGN8-239 \(*\)](#)

4) On November 10th, 2005, Dan Wilson submitted this four-page AF Form 14, Report of Major accident, Jan. 7, 1948, near Franklin, Ky, Capt. Thomas F. Mantell 0-806873, Fatal. The accident summary says that Mantell went up to 25,000 feet and possibly as high as 30,000 feet, and that he passed out for lack of oxygen. According to other reports, Mantell's last words was that he was at 15,000 feet and would go to 20,000 feet and if no closer would abandon chase. USAF-SIGN1-310 held a vital clue, but a better version of those documents was uncovered by Wilson on June 1st of 2006. Fact: Mantell had oxygen! From the very beginning we had the evidence right under our noses, and later, analyst Brad Sparks amply pointed this out and was able to use other evidence to prove it.

[USAF-SIGN1-309](#)

[USAF-SIGN1-310 \(*\)](#)

[USAF-SIGN1-311](#)

[USAF-SIGN1-312](#)

Part 2 - 1: March 2006 - The Re-Investigation Begins

In March of 2006 I had several messages on my answering machine. Maybe it's my age, or maybe it's all the years I've been chasing UFOs, I don't know. I'm more reluctant about doing over-the-phone interviews or spending a lot of time with reporters these days. I get much more accomplished with research and archival work and don't need distractions. The man calling left his number and I finally got around to returning his call. His name was Drew Speier, and he was a reporter from Evansville, Indiana's TV Channel 14, WFIE. He never mentioned it, but I soon found out that it was ratings time and they were planning on doing a story on a somewhat local UFO event. The Mantell incident was more regional than local, of course, but it had a sensational twist to it, something the media loves, and apparently the viewers too. I told him that I was familiar with the case for two reasons: First, every serious UFO enthusiast knew about the case. It's a dramatic and well-known part of UFO history. Secondly, it was a case that was part of my database because it WAS regional. The Mantell case directory, which was on the NICAP web site, didn't have much listed other than the fact that Ed Ruppelt had written about it in his book in 1956, and Kevin Randle had written a massive 5-part, forty-page report. For over 58 years the case had been written about in about every book and mentioned on numerous TV shows, and had finally been written off as a mistaken balloon, with the pilot killed in either a freak accident or misgauging his ability to fly at certain altitudes without oxygen. In effect, everybody had written it off. I had serious reservations about that, however, some of those personal, but I had to assume I was not always right and my peers are the ones I answer to with the NICAP archiving.

Drew & I had a few lengthy discussions about my work and UFOs in general, and we discussed the Mantell case and how it was not really a showcase sighting among serious researchers. But WFIE still wanted to do the show on Mantell. In April, at WFIE reporter Drew Speier's request, I reluctantly agreed to do a filmed interview on the Mantell case. I consented to do it in the hopes that WFIE would do something better in the near future with any of our many better UFO reports or something new that might develop. Since I wanted to do this interview right, for the record, I set out to show the media and the public the importance of what we DID have on the case. I had figured, too, that our conclusions were not going to provide the image the show was trying to project. This was going to be an IFO, an "Identified Flying Object".

When we investigate a case there is a list of things we do routinely and the final report includes them all:

SIGHTING ACCOUNT

Form 1, General Cases, should include witness notes or brief chronological composite or consolidation of the UFO sighting account. In the Mantell case we had the stories from various writers and researchers, but primarily the recollections of the man who was Project Blue Book's director a few years later, Captain Edward J. Ruppelt. His part of this report is from his book, "The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects" and can be skipped over if the reader desires, but I strongly recommend reading it. Briefly let me say that Ruppelt got a call in early 1952 on ATIC's (Air Technical Intelligence Center) direct line to the Pentagon. It was a colonel in the Director of Intelligence's office. The Office of Public Information had been getting a number of queries about all of the confusion over the Mantell Incident. So, he dug into the file. The case file documents had all been microfilmed but Ruppelt claimed that something had been spilled on the film and they were faded and were illegible. To get the story he said he had to talk to the people at ATIC who had been there during the early UFO era. (34) On the previous page Ruppelt made a comment about how the Air Force reacted to the incident right after it happened.

But this comment is different than the one he made in the original unedited manuscript.:

"The people on Project Sign worked fast on the Mantell Incident, [in fact they heard about it through Flight Service while it was all in progress.] Contemplating a flood of queries from the press, as soon as they heard about the crash, they realized that they had to get a quick answer. Venus had been the target of a chase by an Air Force F-51 several weeks before...."

The comment in brackets is Ruppelt's, not mine. And our investigation was able to confirm this!

SIGHTING INVESTIGATION

Activity Log. Simple chronological log by date, time and place denoting the tasks the FI carried out during the investigation. The first part of this book is the Sighting Investigation Activity log and fully explains and documents what was found and when and by whom.

INTERVIEW AND INTERROGATION

FI Notes. A description of the interview and interrogation. This should include where and how the interview took place (mail, telephone, or onsite). In the Mantell case the only people who could be interviewed were relatives of Captain Mantell and their recollections were tainted by years.

ADDITIONAL WITNESS CHECK

FI Notes. The circumstances surrounding how, when, and where additional witnesses were located and any subsequent interviews and interrogations including the FI's personal impressions of these witnesses and their home environment, interests, etc. In this case we had the witness reports from the original Air Force investigation.

The Project Blue Book Archive is a website which provides free online access to the National Archives Blue Book microfilm collection, and has so far posted documents of, to about mid-1954, which is still a fraction of the Blue Book microfilm. The site and work is conducted by Rebecca Wise, a very dedicated researcher and also a member of the NICAP A-Team. The Blue Book Archive provides a fully searchable interface to high-resolution document scans relating to the US government's investigation of the UFO phenomena. Also available are high-quality CD-ROMs of the microfilms, which can be purchased directly from the website.

Documents mentioned in this report are listed by number, and selected ones actually presented at the end of each chapter are marked with an asterisk (*). The less pertinent documents that CAN be examined are listed but not provided here due to lack of room in this already hefty report. These ARE provided on the NICAP website. In most cases the transcript (or part) is provided.

So here, for the record, is the official

SIGHTING INVESTIGATION ACTIVITY LOG:

March 8, 2006

Using the search engine for the Project Blue Book Archive, as we have for other cases the last few years, the keyword "Mantell" brought up four printed pages, 37 references, to BB documents, a good place to start. Immediately I found an interesting nine pages of documents on the Mantell Incident Report. Minus doc. 671, these documents describe the incident and the possible cause of a series of reports. The Air Force claimed Venus was the main culprit for the other reports that day, while the secret Skyhook balloon was what Mantell was supposed to have been chasing. My report and the documents cited are at:

http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell_668-677.pdf

MAXW-PBB3-668-677

March 10, 2006

On March 10th I sent an email to researcher Brad Sparks and advised that WFIE TV at Evansville, Indiana, wanted me to do an interview about Mantell for May release. I told him that I wanted to divert Drew Speier to a better case, but couldn't change his mind. But the Mantell incident had always bothered me. I didn't buy the explanation. Mantell should have been able to run into the damned thing at the speeds the P-51 can muster. The state police reported an object 250 feet wide, hardly the description of a distant skyhook. Buried in those many reports are some anomalous objects. Just a coincidence? And if the skyhook answer was so obvious, why did it take so long to come up with that conclusion? People in the AF were scratching their heads years later. Plus, there were some newly found documents we had on file.

Brad Sparks stated:

It would require intensive analysis of the confusing mass of sighting data to disentangle it all, much like the huge mess of the Washington National case, and I'm not sure it's really worth it." (Kevin Randle has had his challenge to debate Sparks on the Mantell case in writing up on UFO UpDates for maybe 2 + years by now and I don't think anyone has taken him up on it). Sparks: "I couldn't even have tried until BB Archive first made the Mantell file available this year or late last year". He added: "Mantell's last transmission about a tremendous metallic object doesn't have enough detail to screen it from an IFO, no angular size, no attempt to estimate size or distance or altitude, no detail of shape or structure if any. I find the F-51 plane crash very strange. It didn't crash nose down but pancaked flat on the ground, in fact that's a major reason there was enough remains intact even to recover the body (had it hit nose forward at high speed it would have shattered into many pieces). But that doesn't give us a description of a UFO. What are these "newly found documents, which appear to have been conveniently left out of the official Blue Book" ??

I advised Brad that the "newly found documents" were obtained by Wendy Connors and Mike Hall, and the web page showing these was at <http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell4.htm>

Wendy Ann Connors originally hails from Iowa. Following High School she joined the United States Air Force. Completing her basic training at Lackland AFB her first duty assignment was at Stewart AFB in New York. In 1968 she was transferred to Mactan Island AFB, Philippines and worked as a Communications Supervisor and NCOIC of Administration. Honorably discharged an E-5 in the summer of 1969, Wendy returned to Iowa and completed her degrees at the University of Iowa and in 1980, moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico. Her accomplishments are many. She brought the history of Project SIGN and its members to the field, as well as the involvement and genius of Alfred C. Loedding. She has also brought many unknown documents to the field as well. She is a founding member of the SIGN Historical Group and holds one of the largest audio and photographic archives in the world dealing with crypto-aeronautics. Today, her health deteriorating, she continues to research the modern history of the unidentified flying object phenomenon. She also operates and maintains the Faded Discs Archive.

Her colleague in the Project Blue Book Research (including Project Sign) was Michael David Hall. Mike researched all aspects of the Project Blue Book days and published a book primarily dealing with the very early years of Air Force investigations into UFOs. That book, Origin of the UFO Phenomenon, documents many fascinating events long forgotten by today's sound bite generation. It is one of very few books that approaches the subject from a historical perspective. Hall holds a B.A. from Illinois College and an M.A. from Western Illinois University in American History.



The "mystery" photo

When Wendy found out I was doing research on the Mantell incident, we were discussing other things, but using her great sense of humor often, she sent me a "mystery photo". I didn't have a clue, but it turns out to be a photo of (L-R) Captain Thomas F. Mantell & Lt. A. W. Clements. This was a cropped version of a larger photo of the full crew that day (See Part 1-2).

The following are the transcripts, produced by Jean Waskiewicz, with the actual documents not found in the Blue Book files located at the end of this chapter.

[Connors Doc #1 \(*\)](#)

NEWS RELEASE
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
ALL WEATHER Flying Center
Clinton County Army Air Field
WILMINGTON, OHIO 8 January 1948

COPY

(ENCLOSURE 1)

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WILMINGTON, Ohio, Jan. 8-- A sky phenomena, described by observers at the Clinton County air Base as having the appearance of a flaming red cone trailing a gaseous green mist, appeared in the southwest skies of Wilmington last night between 7:20 and 7:55 P.M.

S/Sgt. Gale F. Walter and Cpl. James Hudson, control tower operators at the air field, first saw the phenomena at 7:20 P.M. and observed its maneuvers in the sky until 7:55 P.M. when it reported disappeared over the horizon. The sky phenomena hung suspended in the air at intervals and then gained and lost altitude at what appeared to be terrific bursts of speed. The intense brightness of the sky phenomena pierced through a heavy layer of clouds passing intermittently over the area and obscuring other celestial phenomena.

MSgt. Irvin H. Lewis, S/Sgt John P. Haag, Sgt. Harold E. Olvis and T/Sgt. Leroy Ziegler, four members of the alert crew, joined the control tower operators in observing the sky phenomena for approximately 35 minutes.

[Connors Doc #2 \(*\)](#)

DET 103rd AACCS
LOCKBOURNE A. B.
COLUMBUS, OHIO

13 JANUARY 1947

SUBJECT: Report on Unusual Circumstance

TO: CO 332nd FIGHTER WING LOCKBOURNE A B

At approximately 1940 hrs Jan. 7th the Control Tower operator advised he observed an extremely strange bright light in the south west. However by the time I reached the operation steps at the entrance the light faded out. About two minutes later the Tower advised that the phenomenon was visible again. This time I saw the object at about 15 degrees above the horizon to the west south west of Lockbourne. The object was extremely bright, more so than any star. I would say about as large as and as bright as one of the runway lights at full intensity as viewed from the Control Tower. It appeared to have a tapering tail about 6 diameters long and predominantly was of a ruddy red color changing to a amber-yellow at different intervals.

The position of the object in the sky and the fact that we were reporting. A high overcast at the time added to the mystery.

Up until approximately 1950 hrs the object appeared to be motionless, at this time, however, it descended to the horizon in an interval of about 3 or 4 seconds, hovering there for 3 or 4 seconds and the ascended to its original position in an interval of about 3 seconds. It then rapidly began to fade and lower in the sky and disappeared at 1955 hrs.

AF9944 xmttd a position report to me at 1953 hrs over Columbus at 5,000 ft on round robin flight out of Wright Field to Washington and return , and

reported a mysterious bright light to the west south west of his position, appearing like an oversized beacon.

Further information on reports from other stations observing the phenomenon can be obtained from flight services at Patterson.

//signed//

Frank M. Eisle

[Conners Doc #3 \(*\)](#)

DETACHMENT 733RD AF BASE UNIT

103rd AACS SQUADRON
LOCKBOURNE ARMY AIR BASE\
COLUMBUS 17, OHIO

14 JANUARY 1947

SUBJECT: Report of Unusual Circumstance

TO:

Commanding Officer, 332nd Fighter Wing, Lockbourne Army Air Base, Columbus 17, Ohio.

On Wednesday January 7th between the hours of 1915 and 1939, there appeared in the sky a bright glowing object which I could not identify. At first I assumed it to be a star but the sky being overcast, I knew definitely that it was not a star nor an aircraft because the only aircraft flying in the local area was landing at the time. It was not an aircraft flare nor a balloon because it appeared to be enormous in size. I then observed it through the binoculars. It appeared to be cone-shaped, blunt on top and tapering off toward the bottom. I could not distinguish the attitude in which the object appeared to be. It was glowed from a bright white to an amber color with a small streak trailing. It was at a distance between 5 and 7 miles from the control tower at an altitude of approximately 2000 to 3000 feet bobbing up and down and moving in a south-southwesterly direction at a speed exceeding 500 miles per hour. Also the wind at the time was blowing from east to west and if it had been a balloon or lighter-than-aircraft it would have drifted in the direction the wind was blowing. There was no sound or unusual noise. Its performance was very unusual and the light emitting from it seemed to fade out at times. Just before it disappeared beyond the horizon the light changed to a sort of red color. The same object was later sighted in the vicinity of Clinton County Air Field by operators on duty in the control tower.

I have been actually engaged in aviation as an Air Traffic Control Tower Operator and a Private Pilot for a period of 5 years and thus far in all my experience, I have never encountered an optical illusion or any physical defect that would disqualify my possessions of such ratings.

//signed//

ALEX A. BOUDREAUX
Air Traffic Controller

CAF-6

[Conners Doc #4a \(*\)](#)

DETACHMENT 733RD AF BASE UNIT
103RD AACE SQUADRON
LOCKBOURNE ARMY AIR BASE
COLUMBUS 17, OHIO

14 JANUARY 1948

SUBJECT: Report of Unusual Circumstance

TO:

Commanding Officer
332nd Fighter Wing
Lockbourne Army Air Base
Columbus 17, Ohio

On Wednesday January 7, 1948 at about 1925 Eastern time I observed in the sky an object which I could not identify. It appeared to hover in one position for quite some time, moving very little. It disappeared once for about one minute and I assumed it entered the overcast, which was at about 10,000 feet. After descending again below the overcast it circled one place for the duration of three 360 degree turns, then moved to another position to circle some more. Turns required approximately 30 to 40 seconds each, diameter estimated about two miles.

In moving from one place to another a tail was visible of approximately five times the length of the object. Not knowing how close or how far the object was from me at the time, I could not estimate the size very accurately, but it appeared as large or larger than one of our C 47 planes, and of a different shape. Either round or oval shaped. Just before leaving it came to very near the ground, staying down for about ten seconds, then climbed at a very fast rate back to its original altitude, 10,000 feet, leveling off and disappearing into the overcast heading 120 degrees. Its speed was greater than 500 mph in level flight. It was visible to me for a period of twenty minutes. No noise or sound could be detected. The color was amber light but not sufficiently bright to cover or obscure the outline of the configuration was approximately round. During up and down movement no maneuvering took place. Motions was same as an elevator, climbing and descending vertically. Exhaust trail was noticeable only during forward speed. It appeared as a thin mist approximately same color (amber) as the object. Length about 5 times length of object.

During descent it appeared to touch the ground or was very close to touching it. It was approximately 3 to 5 miles away from Lockbourne Air Base in immediate vicinity of COMMERCIAL POINT. It positively was not a star, comet or any astronomical body to the best of my knowledge of such thing. I also rule out the possibility of it being a balloon, flare, dirigible, military or private aircraft.

[Conners Doc #4b Page 2 \(*\)](#)

Ltr, Subj: Report of Unusual Circumstance, 14 Jan 48 (Cont'd) I am 26 years old and in good health and have excellent vision. I have been actively engaged in aviation 6 years. I have a private pilot license and spent 3 years 10 months in the U. S. Army Air Corps as a Sergeant link trainer instructor, instrument flight observer.

The statements made herin are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and may be used for any official purpose as deemed necessary.

//signed//

ALBERT R. PICKERING
VHF/DF Operator
CAF 7

[Conners Doc #5 \(*\)](#)

UNCLASSIFIED
MCIA/ACL/amb
JAN 14, 1947

Request for Report on Crashed P-51 National Guard Aircraft

Commanding Officer
315th AAFBU (Reserve Training)
Godman Field, Kentucky

1. It has been brought to the attention of this office that an official report has been made regarding the National Guard P-51 aircraft that crashed as a result of chasing an unidentified object on 7 January 1948. Information contained in this report may contribute greatly in the accomplishment of intelligence investigations of unidentified flying objects, or so-called "flying discs".
2. It is requested, therefore, that a copy of this report be made available to this Command as soon as possible.

FOR THE COMMANDING GENERAL:
H. M. McCOY
Colonel, USAF
Chief of Intelligence

[Conners Doc #6 \(*\)](#)

PAGE II
STATE OF OHIO)
)

COUNTY OF CLINTON)

Before me, the undersigned Authority for administering oaths of this kind, personally appeared one James H. Hudson, Cpl, ASN 13220873 who, being first duly sworn by me, disposes and says; the following information came over Plan 62: This observation was made in Kentucky at the scene of the P-51 crash with an 8" telescope:

1. Height, 4 miles.
2. Width, 43 feet.
3. Height of object, 100 feet.
4. Speed at time, 10 mph
5. Shape, Cone.
6. Color, red with green tail.

This observation was taken at Godman Field, Kentucky, with a theodolite:

1854 CST.

Elevation, 2.4 Azimuth 254.6

1856 CST

Elevation, 2.0 Azimuth 253.9

1902 CST

Elevation, 1.2 Azimuth 253.0

1906 CST

Disappeared.

The following is my opinion: The object is not a comet or star, but was man made. It was not a balloon, comet, star, aircraft of known type. The light did not come from an aircraft's running lights. The whole object appeared to be surrounded with a burning gas or something that gave a light.

-- sketches --

Further the deponent sayeth not,

//signed//

JAMES H. HUDSON, Cpl

3220873

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 20th day of January, 1948

//signed//

GEORGE W. HOHANNES

Captain, USAF

[Conners Doc #7 \(*\)](#)

)
COUNTY OF CLINTON)
)

Before me, the undersigned authority for administering oaths of this kind, personally appeared one John P. Haag, S/Sgt, AF 17003481 who, being first duly sworn by me, disposes and says: The unidentified flying object was sighted in a South-West position at Clinton County Army Air Base at a heading of approximately 210 degrees on 7 January 1948, first being visible to this person at 19:35 o'clock when it was pointed out to me. The weather at the time was clear over the base, with a South-West wind which was moderate. There seemed to be an overcast in the South-West which was a layer approximately 1000 feet thick. The height of this overcast was approximately 5000 feet. The one and only object which was seen with the naked eye seemed to be about five miles from the field at an estimated altitude of 15,000 to 20,000 feet. The object seemed to remain stationary as first seen, with a light which resembled a complete wing of an airplane on fire. There was no beam of light projected. Then, for a period of five minutes I just took occasional glances at it as I went up the the Control Tower and observed the object through field glasses, which I then decided was not a comet or falling star, to my knowledge of astronomy. With the aid of field glasses, the object appeared to go from an altitude of 15,000 feet to 10,000 feet without any noticed forward or backward motion and then back up to its original altitude very rapidly, about three or four times. It seemed that when the object moved, a red light would dominate and change to a green light and then back to it's original color. It then began moving at a heading of 210 degrees and went behind the overcast and the light was seen through the overcast. The object moved very fast away; it stopped momentarily for three or four minutes and disappeared over the horizon at 15:55. No sound was heard from this object or no photographs taken.

Further the deponent sayeth not,

//signed//

JOHN P. HAAG

S/Sgt, AF 17003481

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 21 day of January, 1948

//signed//

ROBERT O. PETRANEKS

Caots in, USAFR

Note: Wendy Conners document # 6 mentions a "Plan 62". This was an important early discovery. Ruppelt's slip-up in his manuscript had mentioned that "The people on Project Sign worked fast on the Mantell Incident, [in fact they heard about it through Flight Service while it was all in progress.]..." The cat was out of the bag. A few months after our re-investigation had begun I asked Brad Sparks, who was by then heavy into the re-investigation with us, what Plan 62 was. June 7th: Brad Sparks: "I think it is the intercom system between Godman, Standiford, Lockbourne, Clinton County, etc., which was patched together the afternoon of Jan 7, 1948, to keep everyone up to the minute on events. People mention hearing about sightings at the other bases as it happened." Later, after further research, he was able to report, "The Air Defense Command (ADC) used the Plan 62 intercom system, through the Air Transport Command's Flight Service Centers, and the air traffic controllers of the Airways and Air Communications Service (AACS) in those centers and

outlying bases, to coordinate the use of air traffic control towers and radars to track the UFO. This was because at that time the ADC had only two operating radars in the nation, both too far away, across the continent on the West Coast (at Half Moon Bay, Calif., and Arlington, Wash.)." But more on that later.

A member of my Nuclear Connection Project, Loren Gross, became interested in UFOs as a teenager when he was a member of the civilian Ground Observer Corps in the 1950's. After graduation from high school, he served four years in the U.S. Air Force as a radar operator with the Air Defense Command. In 1966 he received his B.A. degree in social science from the University of California at Chico and has since completed postgraduate work in physical science, history, and art. Mr. Gross is the author of many booklets on the early history of the UFO problem: The UFO Wave of 1896 (1974), The Mystery of the Ghost Rockets (1974), and Charles Fort, The Fortean Society, and Unidentified Flying Objects (1976). His most well-known works are the UFOs: A History series of booklets.

March 29, 2006

On March 29, I emailed Loren to see if we could post information about Mantell from his UFOs: a History, 1948. I had Jean scan the section for limited in-house use until we got the OK. Later, on June 4th, Loren would approve this in order to update the case file we were putting together.

May 12, 2006

Over a month had passed since I had been in contact with WFIE and I sent a DVD copy of the Greene-Rouse production, "U.F.O." to Drew Speier to be used for b&w era footage. Four days later I got an email from Drew:

"I have read accounts that had Mantell flying a P-51 and an F-51. Are they the same? I have been going with F-51 but now I'm not so sure. Can you clear this up or do I need to contact one of the Generals I spoke with who were former commanders of the KyANG. The documentary and the newspaper articles say F-51...that must be correct."

I had told him 1946, which was an error, but it was in 1948, that the designation P-51 (P for pursuit) had been changed to F-51 (F for fighter) and the existing F designator for photographic reconnaissance aircraft was dropped because of a new designation scheme throughout the USAF. Later in the month we filmed my portion of the show.

May 23, 2006

The show aired on WFIE-TV, Channel 14. It was only the beginning. The evidence would continue to mount and the need for a second interview and another show explaining our new findings was a certainty.

Part 2 -2: WFIE Show Aires

May 23, 2006

The show aired on WFIE-TV, Channel 14. It did so well it required another installment to be filmed in July. We had uncovered reams of documents, telling a story much different than most UFOlogists had thought. A week later I posted the transcript.

Form: Media Transcript

Date: Thu, 01 Jun 2006 19:51:24 -0500

From: Francis Ridge <nicap@insightbb.com>

Subject: Mystery: Pilot Crashes While Pursuing UFO

Part 1, May 23, 2006, WFIE Interview

May 23, 2006 04:15 PM

Reporter: Drew Speier

New Media Producer: Rachel Chambliss

Transcript:

It's a mystery dating back to 1947. A UFO allegedly crashed in Roswell, New Mexico. That story is well documented, but equally puzzling was this mystery regarding a UFO in the skies above Kentucky just a few months after the Roswell incident.

In 1956, a government film addressed this case, a case that'll never be solved because Captain Thomas Mantell from Simpson County, Kentucky, an experienced pilot and World War II Ace, took the answer to his grave.

It made headlines across the country. January 7th, 1948, 1:30 pm, Kentucky State Police receive reports of a UFO near Godman Air Force Base. The unidentified object is described as a big, bright, shiny star. (Ridge: The second line is a soundbyte WFIE used that came from the Edwards Encounter tape, and does not describe the Godman sighting).

Four F-51 Mustangs, on their way to Standiford Air Force Base in Kentucky, are contacted by the tower. They're ordered to investigate a white object, some 300 feet in diameter. One plane returns for fuel and oxygen, the other three approached the object.

Pilot Thomas Mantell says he sees it ahead of him. The planes climbed to 22,000 feet, too high for WWII fighters without oxygen. Two returned to the base, leaving Captain Mantell in sole pursuit of the unknown.

Minutes later, Mantell with another transmission states, "Mantell to tower: it appears to be a metallic object, and it's of tremendous size."

Captain Mantell kept climbing, most likely past 30,000 feet. Radio contact was lost.

Minutes later, less than two hours from the initial sightings, Mantell's F-51 crashed on a farm in Franklin, Kentucky. His watch stopped at 3:16 p.m. His body, still strapped in his plane. By all accounts, he passed out from a lack of oxygen, forcing his plane to plunge to the ground.

Today, a historical marker sits near the site where Mantell's plane went down in Franklin, Kentucky. In fact, it went down on a farm nearby Joe Phillips farm. His son, a school child then, was one of the first on the scene.

William Phillips Jr. recalls, "We heard this real loud boom, you know. It actually shook the house. In fact, the best I remember it was two of them, like an

explosion."

Phillips Jr. was six years old and home sick with his younger sister when the crash occurred.

He says, "We ran to the window, and just happened to pick the right window, and see it hit the ground, as it hit the ground."

The news of the incident immediately made headlines. Newspapers reported Mantell had been shot down by a magnetic ray from a flying saucer. The story took on a life of its own.

Mantell was the first person ever to die while pursuing an unidentified flying object.

The military's response - it was most likely a weather balloon.

Phillips Jr. argues, "I can't see that a balloon could move and out run a P-51. The P-51 was the fastest thing the military virtually had in '47."

It's a story that, almost 60 years later, is still talked about in Franklin, Kentucky where Mantell was born and, oddly enough, died, just a few miles from the Simpson County tourism building where he's honored.

Dan Ware, Simpson County Tourism, says, "There are many UFO buffs who stop by to ask and see what we've got, and want to know as much as they can about the story. It continues to fascinate people, even after 50 years."

To this day, people still wonder what Captain Mantell was chasing.

Second segment:

Just over 58 years ago, a Kentucky National Guard pilot crashed his plane and died while pursuing a UFO. It was a story that made headlines and one that's still talked about today. But the question remains, what was Captain Thomas Mantell chasing that day?

A 1956 documentary on UFO's detailed the Mantell case, which occurred in January of 1948. It happened just months after another celebrated incident in Roswell, New Mexico, where a UFO had reportedly crashed in the summer of 1947.

Newswatch spoke with the man who was the commander of the Kentucky Air National Guard when the Mantell case occurred and a former Chief of Staff with the Guard to get their takes on what happened. Newswatch also talked with a UFO researcher. And as you might guess, we got two different opinions.

Francis Ridge, UFO researcher, says, "It is a classic to this day."

Francis Ridge, who is with the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomenon, is talking about the case of Kentucky Air National Guard pilot, Captain Thomas Mantell.

He explains, "He decided to go after this object which was, according to his description, large and metallic, tremendous in size."

Mantell, a World War II Ace, was chasing a UFO on the afternoon of January 7th, 1948, when he crashed his plane and died. The mystery died with him on a farm in Franklin, Kentucky.

Ridge and others remain convinced Mantell was chasing an object not of this world. (Ridge: Although a mystery in many ways, we do not consider the Mantell case an "unknown". There are over 1500 incidents we DO consider as "unknowns".)

Ridge says, "Several years later, when they restructured the project because Project Sign was the first one, and they were serious, and they came to the conclusion that they were dealing with something from somewhere else."

Project Sign later became Project Blue Book. Because Mantell was a well respected pilot, it gave the UFO story credibility. And the military was concerned.

Ridge defends, "If you look in the Blue Book records, which is the Air Force records, it shook a lot of military people up."

The man, who was the Commander of the Kentucky Air National Guard at the time of the incident, is retired [Major General Phillip Ardery](#). He's now 93 and lives in Louisville. He remembers the Mantell case.

General Ardery recalls, "I'm fascinated with it, that's all I can say about it. I find it a very, very interesting part of my experience."

Ardery believes Mantell was confused and didn't realize he had reached an altitude with no oxygen. He also believes Mantell wasn't chasing a UFO at all.

General Ardery argues, "There are times, we can imagine things that really are not there."

Retired [Brigadier General Edward Tonini](#), joined the Kentucky Air National Guard in 1969. He eventually became Chief of Staff and finished his career at the Pentagon.

General Tonini says, "It was universally accepted that this was not a UFO but a balloon."

He says officers, like Mantell, did not know of a highly classified secret program involving balloons, which is why Mantell thought he was chasing a UFO and why it was difficult for the military to explain the Skyhook Balloon Theory away. (Skyhook was not a highly classified project but a highly publicized one. What they were USED for might have been at times, but with over a hundred launches a year, they apparently didn't attract much attention.)

General Tonini says, "As a result, even if it were a balloon, that was part of a Navy secret project. Nobody was going to come out and say that's what it was because it was classified." (Ridge: Records show, actually FAIL to show, any launch responsible for this incident, which was preceded by and followed by UFO sightings.)

The military's position remains firm. So does the position of those who investigate UFO sightings, like Mantell's, for a living.

Ridge says, "It always impressed me that he was chasing something other than a balloon, even though to this day, it would be very difficult to prove it. One thing about it though, after searching all the records and after the Air Force claimed that it was a Skyhook Balloon, they have pretty good records on all the launches, but they never could establish a launch date for that day."

One footnote, there were several reported sightings of UFO's on the day of Mantell's death, including in Madisonville and Owensboro.

Newly found documents, left off of the official Blue Book records, show that some of these objects were maneuvering and could not be attributed to balloons of any kind.

For now, it all remains a mystery.

END OF TRANSCRIPT

May 25, 2006

Two days after the show aired, Dan Wilson found some maps of the area located in Blue Book files. These are presented, for the record, and may be accessed by using the URL provided.

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs5.htm>

MAXW-PBB3-657-666

He then found a 19-page checklist found in BB files.

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs4.htm>

MAXW-PBB3-678-695

In his 1956 book, Capt. Edward Ruppelt had claimed that nobody agreed on what Mantell had said during his radio transmissions. Ruppelt had suggested more than once that only UFO buffs have ever reported Mantell saying anything specific about the UFO. Two years prior to the book release, in the 1954 True article, Ruppelt had stated:

"There was almost no agreement among the seven men listening on the tower squawk box as to what Mantell actually said. Only one said he heard Mantell call the UFO "metallic and of tremendous size."

Notice the use of the term "squawk box", which is a reference to the Plan 62 mentioned earlier. In the very same article, just prior to the remark above, Ruppelt commented on the phrase:

"Later in the project, we had many instances of pilots mistaking Venus (and other planets) for something flying through the sky. None of them ever described it as "tremendous."

This alone strongly suggests Mantell was NOT chasing the planet Venus, and a Top Secret report in our possession also minces no words about what Mantell had said. Later, you'll see further evidence that Air Force personnel listening in on Plan 62 speakerphones, heard and reported specific comments by Mantell AND his wingmen and those on the ground.

I emailed a pdf file to Drew Speier, which was the April 28, 1949 Top Secret report, citing page 12, par. 2k at

<http://nicap.org/docs/airintelrpt100-203-79.pdf>

Paragraph k. " On 7 January 1948, a National Guard pilot was killed while attempting to chase an unidentified object up to 30,000 feet. While it is presumed that this pilot suffered anoxia, resulting in his crash, his last message to the tower was, 'It appears to be metallic object.... of tremendous size...directly ahead and slightly above....I am trying to close for a better look.' "

May 26, 2006

Dan Wilson found 8x10 glossy photos of remains of Mantell's F-51 located in BB files.

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs6.htm>

MAXW-PBB3-783-799

I already had copies of better versions of crash photos previously supplied by Wendy Connors. I decided to post those too. A montage of those photos is supplied with this report at the end of this chapter (Part 2-2) AND from the URL provide below.

http://www.nicap.org/mantell_crash.htm

Jerome Clark is an American researcher and writer, specializing in UFOs and other anomalous phenomena. Clark is one of the most prominent UFO historians and researchers active today. Although Clark's works have sometimes generated spirited debate, he is widely regarded as one of the most reputable writers in the field, and he has earned the praise of many skeptics. Clark is also a prominently featured talking head on made-for-television UFO documentaries, most notably the 2005 prime-time U.S. television special Peter Jennings Reporting: UFOs - Seeing Is Believing, discussing the early history of the U.S. Military's UFO investigations.

Jerome Clark, wrote:

"An investigation conducted in the early 1990s by ufologists Barry Greenwood and Robert G. Todd identified the balloon as one set off from Camp Ripley, Minnesota, at 8 A.M. on January 6, 1948" ["The Mantell UFO," 1994]). Most UFOlogists had written the case off for a number of reasons, but this was one aspect that could be verified."

I reminded Brad Sparks that Captain Edward J. Ruppelt (former Project Blue Book Director) had stated that no skyhook balloon launch record could be found to account for the Mantell object. This was a few years after the incident and with the Air Force ready and willing to put an identified label on the Mantell incident. Question: How did Barry Greenwood & Robert Todd accomplish in 1990 what Blue Book would have given its eyeteeth for 40 years earlier?

Sparks responded:

"Get RECORDS of the alleged balloon launch. It is frustratingly difficult dealing with nebulous claims. Which agency allegedly launched the Skyhook? If Ruppelt and ATIC didn't check with all the agencies or the particular one launching from Camp Ripley (ONR possibly??) then they would completely miss it. Another point is that I am almost 100% certain that Ruppelt/ATIC only checked THE DAY of the Mantell crash Jan 7, 1948, and DID NOT CHECK THE DAY BEFORE. No one ever thought of records for the DAY BEFORE until Greenwood & Todd came along. Which brings up another issue: Do the WEATHER RECORDS show that a Skyhook launched at 6 AM on Jan 6 would travel 700-800 miles away to the SE in 33+ hours, at about 20-25 mph average speed, to Ft Knox and Franklin, Kentucky? It seems to me the prevailing winds would be E not SE and even if on some stretches you could get a wind to the SE it seems unlikely to be maintained consistently on average to the SE over 1-1/2 days effectively vectored SE."

May 27, 2006

Dan Wilson found duplicates of USAF-SIGN8-240-241, the same interesting documents, but with different numbers that we mentioned in Part 1-4. They again refer to the State Police report of a huge, relatively low altitude object moving at high speed.

"At approximately 1400E, 7 January 1948, Kentucky State Police reported to Ft. Knox Military Police they had sighted an unusual aircraft or object flying through the air, circular in appearance approximately 250-300 feet in diameter, moving westward at a 'a pretty good clip'."

Ruppelt had detailed all of this in his book in 1956. We have illustrated them previously under different BB numbers, USAF-SIGN1-371-373 at the end of

Part 2-1. Dan's paper lists them again at :

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs8.htm>

[NARA-PBB2-853](#)

[NARA-PBB2-854](#)

[NARA-PBB2-855](#)

Frame 853 is also at

[MAXW-PBB3-710](#)

NARA-PBB2-854 was a potential bombshell that was right in front of us for days before it hit home:

"We then received information from Maxwell Flight Service Center that a Dr. Seyfert, an astronomer at Vanderbilt University, had spotted an object SSE of Nashville, Tennessee that he identified as a pear shaped balloon with cables and a basket attached, moving first SSE, then W, at a speed of 10 miles per hour at 25,000 feet. This was observed between 1630C and 1645C."

This was a verified sighting of the famous Skyhook balloon, a secret project that was supposed to be the real answer to the Mantell incident and not the planet Venus.

Then another document, one much more recent than any from the BB files, dated July 20, 1964, was discovered. From the Civil Aeromedical Research Institute, Federal Aviation Agency to T/Sgt Moody, Foreign Technology Division, WPAFB. It described a similar crash in 1964 of an F-51, the same plane flown by Mantell.

[MAXW-PBB3-709](#)

"I would like to thank you for forwarding us a copy of the Mantell case so promptly.

"As I explained in our earlier telephone conversation, we're interested in obtaining data on this case to compare it with a recent P-51 crash occurring in Oregon in which the pilot also apparently became hypoxic at an altitude of over 20, 000 feet and dove into the ground. Since in this case the aircraft also disintegrated prior to impact the copies of wreckage photos were particularly helpful.

"We are assisting the Civil Aeronautics Board with this investigation due to the similarity of certain points would like to obtain a second duplicate copy of this case for the record. I forwarded your earlier copy to the CAB. Secondly, we especially needed any medical information available concerning trauma to the pilot due to impact. This report was not complete since autopsy report, medical findings, and photos of the body of the pilot were not included.

"We should particularly like to obtain these medical data. Please air mail if possible."

Sincerely,

Richard G. Snyder, Ph. D., AM-119

Acting Chief, Protection and Survival Branch

May 28, 2006

The Current Encounters mailing list received an email from Mary Castner of the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies. She had seen the TV interview on

the internet and was wondering what I meant when I said, "It always impressed me that he (Mantell) was chasing something other than a balloon, even though to this day, it would be very difficult to prove it. One thing about it though, after searching all the records and after the Air Force claimed that it was a Skyhook balloon, they have pretty good records on all the launches, but they never could establish a launch date for that day." Castner, and about everyone else in the "UFO business", had accepted the Skyhook balloon theory based on Todd & Greenwoods research. It would soon be another in a series of mistakes anyone could have made. History was about to be re-written and a cover-up exposed.

Dan Wilson:

The cover-up begins. Page 2 Part 2: Mr. Loedding, a civilian investigator from Wright Field, arrived at Godman Field on January 9, 1948 and made a thorough investigation. Part 3. After obtaining statements and full information on the matter, he (Loedding) issued instructions that no report on the subject would be made until further instructions were given.

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs9.htm>

MAXW-PBB3 713-722

[USAF-SIGN1-377 \(*\)](#)

is a clearer version of MAXW-PBB3-714, found three weeks later, on June 21, by Tom DeMary.

MAXW-PBB3-713 states that, besides Mantell and his wingmen, the ones noted to be in attempted pursuit of the unknown object, two other aircraft taking off from Standiford Field might have been directed to go after it.

In Part 2 - 3 we explore some Blue Book documents in detailed transcripts.

Part 2 - 3: The Documents Speak

At this time we will go over what the primary documents tell us about the Mantell incident. This document (and 6 enclosures), signed by Lt. Colonel E. Garrison Wood, USAF reads as follows:

[MAXW-PBB3-713](#)

HEADQUARTERS A/GFH/hmg
315Th AF BASE UNIT (RES TNG)
OFFICE OF THE AIR INSPECTOR
GODMAN FIELD, FORT KNOX, KENTUCKY

9 January 1948

SUBJECT: Report of Observation of Unidentified Object in Skies Above Godman Field
TO: Commanding General
Eleventh Air Force

ATTENTION: Lt. Col. Chandler PIO Section

1. The inclosed certifications are of personnel from Godman Field who witnessed the object in the southwestern sky from Godman Field on 8 January 1948. With additional information concerning the loss of a P-51 (NG869).

2. Standiford Tower, Standiford Field, Louisville, Ky., reported that two aircraft of an unspecified type were taking off from Standiford at approximately 1500 hrs and could be directed to proceed to Godman to assist in determining a definite status of the reported object. These aircraft did not appear. Another flight composed of four P-51's flew directly over Godman Tower at approximately 1500 hrs., at which time they were asked their identification. Upon being informed that they were National Guard aircraft from Standiford Field, and upon their replying in the affirmative that sufficient gas was available, they were asked if they would deviate from their course to assist in determining the nature of the object. Their ETA for the flight to Standiford was changed at that time.

3. The object, as it appeared to the undersigned was circular in shape and, if it was a great distance away, was 1/10th the size of a full moon. If it was an earthly object, the size, as compared to the diminishing size of the P-51's flying toward it, seemed to be at least several hundred feet in diameter.

E. GARRISON WOOD

Lt. Colonel USAF

6 Incl Air Inspector

1. Statement: Pfc. Stanley Oliver

2. Statement: T.Sgt. Q. A. Blackwell

3. Statement: Capt. Cary W. Carter

4. Statement: Capt. James F. Duesler, Jr.

5. Statement: Col. Guy F. Hix, Commanding Officer

6. Statement: Lt Orner

The following transcripts of the above reports were produced by Jean Waskiewicz. The noted documents (which are presented in their actual form at the end of this section) are documented reports from witnesses, Pfc. Stanley Oliver, T.Sgt. Q. A. Blackwell, Capt. Cary W. Carter, Capt. James F. Duesler, Jr.,

Col. Guy F. Hix, Commanding Officer, and Lt. Paul I. Orner.

[USAF-SIGN1-374](#)

1. Pfc. Stanley Oliver statement

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
AIRWAYS AND AIR COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE, ATC
DETACHMENT 733-5 AF BASE UNIT (103D AACS SQ)
Godman Field, Fort Knox, Ky

9 January 1948

STATEMENT OF PFC STANLEY OLIVER

I, Pfc Stanley Oliver, was on duty in the Control Tower at Godman Field on the afternoon of 7 January 1948. When first heard of the object in the sky about 1320 CST, we received a phone call from Colonel Hix's office that a large object was sighted at Mansville, Kentucky, the supposed object was supposed to be about 250 feet to 300 feet in diameter at 1330 CST or more.

Sgt Blackwell sighted an object to the southwest of Godman Field and he asked me if I saw it. I saw the object but thought I was imagining I saw it and Sgt Blackwell told me to look again. This time I was really sure I saw an object and then we called Lt Orner, who came to the Control Tower and he too saw the object. Lt Orner then called Captain Carter who, after coming to the Control Tower, also saw this object. Captain Carter called Colonel Hix who came to the Control Tower and he too saw the object. We all then attempted to figure out just what it could be and to me it had the resemblance of an ice cream cone topped with red.

At or about 1445 CST we sighted five (5) P-51 aircraft coming on from the southwest and as they came over the Control Tower someone suggested contacting the aircraft. Sgt Blackwell contacted them on "B" channel (VHF) and aircraft acknowledged his call. Someone suggested they try to overtake the object and we requested the planes to try and the flight leader stated he would. The call sign of this ship was NG869. They turned around and stared toward the southwest again. One pilot in the formation told the flight leader that he would like to continue on to Louisville with the flight leader giving his permission to do so. We kept in contact with the flight leader for about twenty-five (25) minutes. The last contact we had with the flight leader was when one of his wingmen called and said "what the hell are we looking for". Flight leader stated had the object in sight and he was going up to see what it was. He said at present he was at 15000 feet and was still climbing. Those were the last words I believe we heard from him. Other pilots in the formation tried to contact him but to no avail.

In about another ten or fifteen minutes another P-51 took off from Standiford Field to look for the object. He gave me a call and asked if we still had the object in sight. He was told that at present the object was behind a cloud formation but he said he would try and locate it and in the meantime he tried contacting his flight leader but was unable to do so. He then reported he was unable to see the object and was coming back in when he came over the Control Tower.

I received a call from Standiford Operations that the plane had crashed and the pilot was killed at Franklin, Kentucky. He then sighted

[USAF-SIGN1-375](#)

STATEMENT OF PFC STANLEY OLIVER (Cont'd)

the object again and to my belief the object was a great distance from Godman Field and it was so far I couldn't tell if it was moving or not.

[MAXW-PBB3-684](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[MAXW-PBB3-685](#)

Pfc Stanley Oliver was on duty at the Control Tower at Godman Fld when Col Hix's office informed the tower that an unidentified object (supposedly some 250 ft to 300 ft in diameter) was sighted over Mansville, Ky. This was approx 1330 CST. Pfc Oliver saw the object southwest of Godman Fld. To him it resembled an ice cream cone topped with red. Could not ascertain if it were moving or not.

RELIABLILITY: Witnesses: Col. Hix, (CO), Capt. Carter, Lt Orner & M/Sgt Blackwell

NOTE: The report of alerting the P-51 aircraft contained in Pfc Oliver's statement and the witnesses correlates material contained in the other reports.

[NARA-PBB2-860](#)

2. T. Sgt. Q. A. Blackwell statement

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
AIRWAYS AND AIR COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE, ATC
DETACHMENT 733-5 AF BASE UNIT (103D AACS SQ)
Godman Field, Fort Knox, Ky

9 January 1948

STATEMENT OF T SGT QUINTON A BLACKWELL

I, T Sgt Quinton A Blackwell, AF18162475, was on duty as chief operator in the Control Tower at Godman Field, Ky. on the afternoon of 7 January 1948. Up until 1315 or 1320 matters were routine. At approximately that time I received a telephone call from Sgt Cook, Col Hix's office, stating that according to Ft Knox Military Police and "E" Town state police, a large circular object from 250 to 300 ft in diameter over Mansville, Ky. and requested I check with Army Flight Service to see if any unusual type aircraft was in the vicinity. Flight Service advised negative on the aircraft and took the other info, requesting our CO verify the story. Shortly afterward Flight Service gave Godman Tower positions on the object over Irvington, Ky. then Owensboro, Ky. of about the same size and description. About 1345 or 1350 I sighted an object in the sky to the South of Godman Field. As I wanted verification, I called my Detachment Commander, 1st Lt Orner, to the Tower. After he had sighted the object, he called for the Operations Officer, Capt. Carter, over the teletalk box from the Traffic Desk. He came up

stairs immediately, and looked at the object through the field glasses in the Tower. He then called for the CO, Col Hix. He came to the tower about 1420 (appx) and sighted the object immediately. About 1430 to 1440 a flight of four P-51s approached Goldman Field from the South, enroute from Marietta, Ga. to Standiford Field, Ky. As they passed over the tower I called them on "B" channel, VHF and asked the flight leader, NG 869, if he had enough gas and if so, would he mind trying to identify an object in the sky to the South of Godman Field. He replied in the affirmative and made a right turn around with two planes and proceeded South from Godman Field. The fourth plane proceeded on to Standiford Field alone. The three ship formation proceeded South on a heading of 210°, climbing steadily. About 1445 the flight leader, NG 869, reported seeing the object "ahead and above, I'm still climbing". To which a wing man retorted, "What the Hell are we looking for"? The leader reported at 15,000 ft that "The object is directly ahead of and above me now, moving about half my speed". When asked for a description he replied, "It appears metallic object of tremendous size". At 15,000 ft, the flight leader reported, "I'm still climbing, the object is above and ahead of me moving at about my speed or faster, I'm trying to close in for a better look. This last contact was at about 1515. About 5 min. afterward, the other two ships in the flight turned back. As they passed over Godman NG 800 reported "It appears like the reflection of sunlight on an airplane canopy". Shortly afterward, the same pilot and plane took off from Standiford and resumed the search. He went to 33,000 ft. one hundred miles South and did not sight anything. I left the Control Tower shortly afterward.

The foregoing statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

/s/Quinton A. Blackwell
QUINTON A. BLACKWELL
T Sgt AF18162475
Det 733D AFBU

“A CERTIFIED TRUE COPY”
JAMES F. DUESLER, JR.
CAPTAIN, USAF

[USAF-SIGN1-279](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[USAF-SIGN1-280](#)

At approximately 1320 Sgt. Cook from the CO's office notified the observer (T/Sgt Quinton A Blackwell) that according to Ft Knox Military Police & "E" Town State Police, a large circular object about 250 to 300 ft in diameter was over Mansville, Ky. Advised him to check with Army Flight Svc. They advised negative but shortly thereafter reported object over Irvington, Ky, then Owensboro, Ky. Object first sighted by Blackwell about 1345 to 1350 over south Godman Fld.

Verification:
1st Lt Orner (Detachment Commander)
Capt Carter (Operations Officer)
Col Hix (CO) sighted it about 1420

At approximately 1430 to 1440, four P-51's approached Godman f/south enroute f/Marietta, Ga. to Standiford Fld, Ky. Blackwell asked Flight Leader NG 869 to attempt to identify object. Accompanied by two other planes he proceeded south f/Godman. Fourth plane proceeded to Standiford Fld alone.

About 1445, flight leader (NG 869) reported sighting object "ahead and above - still climbing" At 15,000 ft he reported "Object directly ahead and above and moving about half my speed." Again "it appears metallic of tremendous size." Still later "I'm still climbing - object is above and ahead moving about my speed or faster - I'm trying to close in for better look." This was about 1515. Five minutes later the other two ships turned back. NG 800 reported "it appeared like the reflection of sunlight on an airplane canopy" Shortly afterward this same pilot (NG 800) resumed search going to 33,000 ft, 100 miles south but did not sight anything.

MAXW-PBB3-718 ,234,235

[MAXW-PBB3-718](#)

3. Capt. Gary Carter statement

HEADQUARTERS
315 AF BASE UNIT (RES TNG) A/hmg
GODMAN FIELD, FORT KNOX, KENTUCKY

9 January 1948

The undersigned was on duty at Godman Field 7 Jan 48 as Operations Officer.

At approximately 1400 hours and 7 minutes, 7 Jan 48 I received a call from Lt. Orner, AACS Detachment Commander, that the tower had spotted an unidentified object and requested that I take a look. Lt. Orner pointed out the object to the southwest, which was easily discernible with the naked eye. The object appeared round and white (whiter than the clouds that passed in front of it) and could be seen through cirrus clouds. After looking through field glasses for approximately 3 or 4 minutes I called Co. Hix's office, advising that office of the object's presence. Lt. Col Wood and Capt. Duesler came to the tower immediately. Col. Hix followed them.

About this time a flight of four P-51 aircraft were noticed approaching from the south. I asked Tec. Sgt. Blackwell, Tower Operator to contact the planes and see if they would take a look at the object for us. The planes were contacted and stated they had sufficient gas to take a look. One of the planes proceeded on to Standiford, the other planes were given a heading of 230°. One of the planes said he spotted the object at 1200 o'clock and was climbing toward it. One of the planes then said, "This is 15,000 ft., let's level out". One of the planes, at this point (apparently the plane who saw the object) estimated its speed (the object's) at 180 M.P.H. A few seconds later he stated the object was going up and forward as fast as he was. He stated that he was going to 20,000 feet, and if no closer was going to abandon the chase. This was the last radio contact I heard. It was impossible to identify which plane was doing the talking in the above report. Later we heard that one plane had landed at Standiford to get fuel and oxygen to resume the search.

The undersigned reported to Flight Service a description, position of the object while the planes searched for it.

/a/Cary W. Carter
CARY W. CARTER

Captain, USAF

“A CERTIFIED TRUE COPY”

JAMES F. DUESLER, JR.
CAPTAIN, USAF

[SIGN8-PBB3-234](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[USAF-SIGN8-235](#)

At approx 1407, 7 Jan 48, Capt. Carter was called by Lt. Orner, AACS Detachment Commander, to come to Tower to witness an unidentified aerial object.

Object appeared round and white (whiter than clouds that passed in front of it) and could be seen thru cirrus clouds.

After observing it thru field glasses for some 3 - 4 minutes, he called Col Hix's office. Col Hix, Lt Col Wood & Capt Duesler came to the tower shortly thereafter.

Capt Carter then suggested that a group of P-51 aircraft in the vicinity be contacted to pursue the object. T/Sgt Blackwell, Tower Operator, contacted the flight leader to take a look. Three planes proceeded on a heading of approx 230°. One of the planes (Mantell's) spotted it at 1200 o'clock position. Another plane relayed "This is 15,000 ft, let's level out" First speed was relayed by Mantell (180 MPH). Later, "object going up and forward as fast as I am" - or 360 MPH. Mantell then stated he was going to 20,000 ft and if no closer would abandon chase. Last radio contact heard by Capt. Carter.

NOTE: Apparently, Mantell blacked out at 20,000 ft or proceeded on since the object apparently appeared closer (if such were the case) and then crashed thru lack of oxygen.

Does not seem to tally with report that the phenomena was "Venus or a comet"

[MAXW-PBB3-719](#), 832,833

4. Captain James Deusler statement

HEADQUARTERS
315 AF BASE UNIT (RES TNG)
GODMAN FIELD, FORT KNOX, KENTUCKY

A/hmg

9 January 1948

At approx 1420, 7 Jan 48, I accompanied Lt. Col. E. G. Wood to the Godman Field Control Tower to observe “an object hanging high in the sky south of Godman”.

Shortly after reaching the tower, Col Guy F. Hix, the Commanding Officer, was summoned; it was at that time that I first sighted the bright silver object.

Approximately five minutes after Col. Hix came into the tower, a flight of four P-51's flew over Godman. An officer in the tower requested that the Tower Operator call this flight and ask the Flight Leader to investigate this object if he had sufficient fuel. The Flight Leader (Capt. Thomas F. Mantell) answered that he would, and requested a bearing to this object. At that time one member of the flight informed the leader that it was time for him to land and broke off from the formation. This A/C was heard requesting landing instructions from his home field, Standiford, in Louisville.

In the meantime the remaining three P-51's were climbing on the course given to them by Godman Tower towards this object that still appeared stationary. The Tower then advised the Flight Leader to correct his course 5 degrees to the left; the Flight Leader acknowledged this correction and also reported his position at 7,500 feet and climbing. Immediately following the Flight Leaders transmission, another member of the flight asked “where in the hell are we going?” In a few minutes the Flight Leader called out an object “twelve o'clock high”. Asked to describe this object, he said that it was bright and that it was climbing away from him. When asked about its speed, the Flight Leader stated it was going about half his speed, approximately 180 M.P.H.

Those of us in the Tower lost sight of the flight, but could still see this object. Shortly after the last transmission, the Flight Leader said he was at 15,000 ft, and still climbing after “it”, but that he judged its speed to be the same as his. At that time a member of the Flight called to the leader and requested that he “level off”, but we heard no reply from the leader. That was the last message received from any member of the flight by Godman.

/a/James F. Duesler, Jr.
JAMES F. DUESLER, JR.
Captain, USAF

“A CERTIFIED TRUE COPY”
JAMES F. DUESLER, JR.
CAPTAIN, USAF

[MAXW-PBB3-832](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[MAXW-PBB3-833](#)

At approx 1420 7 Jan 48, Duesler accompanied by Lt Col E. G. Wood went to Godman Control Tower to observe an unidentified aerial object. Shortly after their arrival Col Hix, the Commanding Officer was summoned. At about this time Duesler first sighted a bright silver object. Then Col Hix arrived. Shortly thereafter a flight of four P-51's flew over Godman. Leader was contacted to pursue object. He assented

and three P-51's climbed on the course, the fourth P-51 returning to base. Flight leader called to observe that "object was twelve o'clock high." Asked to describe it, he stated "it is bright and climbing away from me." He stated at first that it was going about 180 MPH. Then Control Tower lost sight of the flight but could still see the object. (In connection with this, Lt Col E. Garrison Wood, who witnessed the sighting stated that while it appeared about 1/10 the size of a full moon, if the thing were a great distance away, as compared to the diminishing size of the P-51's flying toward it, it would seem that it was at least several hundred feet in diameter.) Shortly after NG 861, the flight leader, stated that he was "at 15,000 ft and still climbing" He stated that he judged the speed to be the same as his or approx 360 MPH. One of his planes then asked him to level off but no reply was heard from the flight leader. That was the last message received from any member of the flight.

After dark, another or the same object appeared in approx 234° from Godman at 6° elevation. This body moved to the west (259°) and then down. The shape was fluid but generally round with no tail, the color changing from white, to blue, to red to yellow and had a black spot in the center at all times.

At 1600 CST it was obscured by clouds.

NOTE: Later, an astronomer was contacted who attempted to account for this phenomena as either Venus or a comet.

SEE ALSO: Report of civilians and state police and corroborated version of this incident.

PFC Stanley Oliver was on duty at the Control Tower at Godman Fld when Col Hix's office informed the tower that an unidentified object (Supposedly some 250 ft to 300 ft in diameter) was sighted over Mansville, Ky. This was approx at 1330 CST. Xx PFC Oliver saw the object southwest of Godman Fld. To him it resembled an ice cream cone topped with red. Could not ascertain if it were moving or not.

RELIABILITY: Witnesses: Col. Hix, (CO), Capt. Carter, Lt. Orner & M/Sgt Blackwell

NOTE: The report of alerting the P-51 aircraft contained in PFC Oliver's statement and the witnesses correlates material in the other reports.

[MAXW-PBB3-720](#)

5. Col. Guy F. Hix statement

HEADQUARTERS
315TH AF BASE UNIT (RES TNG)
GODMAN FIELD, FORT KNOX, KENTUCKY

A/hmg

9 January 1948

At approximately 1300 hours a call came to this Headquarters from State Police, reporting a flying object near Elizabethtown. Another report came in from Madisonville about ten minutes later. A third call came in from Lexington, Kentucky. (All towns are south of Godman Field).

We alerted the Tower to be on the lookout for flying objects. At 1445 hrs the Tower notified me that an object had been sighted at about 215°. I went to the Tower and observed the object until 1550 hrs., when it disappeared behind the clouds.

The object observed could be plainly seen with the naked eye, and appeared to be about one-quarter the size of a full moon, white in color. Through eight-power binoculars, the object seemed to have a red border at the bottom, at times, and a red border at the top at times. It remained stationary for 1½ hours.

When I arrived at the Tower, Tech. Sgt. Quinton Blackwell had contacted there P-51 airplanes over the field and suggested that they have a look if they had sufficient fuel. When I arrived they were within sight of the Tower, heading on a course of 215°.

I heard one of the pilots report that he saw the object straight ahead and estimated the speed of 180 M.P.H. The pilot stated that the object was very large and very bright.

/a/ Guy F. Hix
GUY F. HIX
Colonel, USAF
Commanding

“A CERTIFIED TRUE COPY”
JAMES F. DUESLER, JR.
CAPTAIN, USAF

[MAXW-PBB3-690](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[MAXW-PBB3-691](#)

At approx 1300 hrs State Police, reported a flying object near Elizabethtown. Ten minutes later sighted near Madisonville. A third call reported it over Lexington. (All south of Godman) Tower then alerted. Tower sighted object at 1445 and notified Col Hix who went immediately to tower where he observed the object thru 8-power binocs. Object also lined up with sighting bar. Three P-51 planes were already pursuing the thing on a course of 215°. (One pilot reported the thing to be traveling at 180 MPH). Col Hix reported the object appeared to the south near the sun. “It was very white and looked like an umbrella,” he stated. “I thought it was a celestial body but I can’t account for the fact it didn’t move.” “I just don’t know what it was.” Appeared about ¼ size of full moon and white in color. Thru binocs it appeared to have a red border at the bottom at times and a red border at the top at times. It remained stationary (seemingly) for 1-1/2 hours.

RELIABILITY: CO of Godman Fld. Obj chased by National Guard planes and followed from the ground by State Highway patrolman. See corroborating accounts.

[NARA-PBB2-865](#)

6. Lt. Paul Orner Statement

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
AIRWAYS AND AIR COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE, ATC
DETACHMENT 733-5 AF BASE UNIT (103D AACCS SQ)
Godman Field, Fort Knox, Ky

9 January 1948

STATEMENT OF LT PAUL I ORNER

Following is an account of the sighting of unknown objects from the Control Tower on 7 January 48 at Godman Field.

On the above date at approximately 1400 CST a report came in to the Control Tower through M Sgt. Cook of a report of an unidentified object flying at terrific speed in the vicinity of Maysville. This call was cancelled minutes later by the Military Police at Fort Knox who had instructions from the Kentucky State Police.

Very soon thereafter several reports of the same nature came from Flight Service saying this object was over Irvington and Owensboro, Kentucky. At the same time an object was reported by T Sgt Blackwell, Chief Control Tower operator on duty. I was in the office of the Commanding Officer checking the call from the Fort Knox Military Police at this time. When the call was cancelled I was returning to the Control Tower to see the object sighted by them. I immediately went to the Control Tower and saw a small white object in the southwest sky. This object appeared stationary. I was unable to tell if it was an object radiating its own light or giving off reflected light. Through binoculars it partially appeared as a parachute does with bright sun shining on the top of the silk but there also seemed to be some red light around the lower of it.

The Commanding Officer, Operations Officer, S-2 and Executive Officer were called immediately. Several minutes after the object was sighted a flight of four (4) P-51's came over the field from the south. I instructed T Sgt Blackwell to call flight leader and ask if they had seen any evidence of this object. The flight leader answered negative and I suggested to the Operations Officer that we ask them if they had enough gas to go look for this object. The Tower operator was instructed to call the flight leader and he answered "yes" to this question. One (1) P-51 had permission from the flight leader to break formation and continue where he landed several minutes later on their original flight plan. The flight leader and two (2) other planes flew a course of 210° and in about five (5) minutes sighted the object. At first the flight leader reported it high and about one-half his speed at "12 o'clock". Shortly thereafter the flight leader reported it at about his speed and later said he was closing in to take a good look. This was the last message from NG869, the flight leader. NG800 shortly thereafter reported NG869 disappeared. From pilots reports in the formation NG869 was high and ahead of the wing man at about 1515 CST to 1530 CST when he disappeared. NG800 said he was breaking off with other wing man to return to Standiford Field due to lack of gas. This was about 1523 CST to 1530 CST. From messages transmitted by the formation it is estimated the flight leader was at 18 to 20 thousand feet and the wing man at approximately 15 thousand feet wide formation when the flight leader NG869 disappeared. NG800 and other wing man returned to Standiford Field.

[NARA-PBB2-866](#)

NG800 gassed up and got more oxygen and flew a second mission on the same heading of 210° to a position of about 100 miles south of Godman Field to an altitude of 33 thousand feet and did not sight the object. At about 1645 CST when NG800 reported not seeing the object I

left the Control Tower.

At about 1735 CST I returned to the Control Tower and a bright light different than a star at a position of about 240° azimuth and 8° elevation from the Control Tower. This was a round object. It seemed to have a dark spot in the center and the object moved north and disappeared from the horizon at a point 250° from the Tower. The unusual fact about this object was the fact that it remained visible and glowed through the haze near the Earth when no other stars were visible and did not disappear until it went below the level of the earth in a manner similar to the sun or moon setting. This object was viewed and tracked with the Weather Station theodolite from the hangar roof.

[MAXW-PBB3-682](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[MAXW-PBB3-683](#)

Unknown object first reported by Military Police at Ft. Knox, approx 1400 CST, vicinity of Mansville. Later over Irvington & Owensboro, Ky. Sighted, Godman, by Blackwell, Chf Control Tower. Lt Orner then left office of CO, proceeding to Control Tower where he sighted a small white object in the southwest sky. It appeared stationary. Could not determine of object radiated or reflected light. Thru binocs it appeared partially as parachute with bright sun reflecting from top of the silk, however, there seemed to be some red light around the lower part of it. Three P-51's alerted to pursue object. Took a course of around 210°. Approx 5" later object sighted. NG 869 (flight leader) reported it high and traveling about ½ his speed at 12 o'clock. Later he stated he was "closing in to take a good look". This was his last message. NG800 then reported NG 869 had disappeared. At the time of his disappearance he was reported high and ahead of wing man at approx 18,000 to 20,000 ft and wing man at approx 15,000 ft. Wing man (NG800) returned for fuel and resumed pursuit going to altitude of 33,000 ft but did not sight object. At about 1645 Lt Orner left tower.

Later, Lt Orner, returned to Control Tower (about 1735 CST) and perceived bright light at a position of about 240° azimuth and 8° elevation. It was a round object and did not resemble a star. Although there was a ----x haze the object remained visible and did not disappear until it went below the level of the earth in a manner similar to the sun or moon setting. This object was viewed and tracked with the Weather Station theodolite from the hangar roof.

RELIABILITY: Verified by Commanding Officer, Operations Officer, S-2 and Executive Officer. However, these officers were apparently present when second sighting took place.

With this information now under our belt, we stop for a moment to discuss the Air Force project that went into operation the same month Mantell was killed chasing a UFO on that afternoon of January 7th, 1948.

Part 2 - 4: Project SIGN

There is a large amount of ground to cover with the Mantell incident, but for a moment let's discuss the UFO project which had just "officially" began in

January of 1948, a few weeks after the tragic incident. Project SIGN, the forerunner of Projects Grudge and Blue Book, was actually started a month before, if not years before and was referred to as "Project Saucer".

Project Sign was instigated following a recommendation from Lt. General Nathan F. Twining, then the head of Air Materiel Command. Just before this, Brig. Gen. George Schulgen, of the Army Air Forces air intelligence division, had completed a preliminary review of the many UFO reports, then called "flying discs" by military authorities, which had received considerable publicity following the Kenneth Arnold sighting of June 24, 1947. Schulgen's study, completed in late July 1947, concluded that the flying discs were real craft. Schulgen then asked Twining and his command, which included the intelligence and engineering divisions located at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, (then referred to as Wright Field), to carry out a more exhaustive review of the data. In his formal SECRET [letter to Gen. Schulgen \(*\)](#) on September 23, 1947, in part, General Nathan Twining wrote:

"2. It is the opinion that:

"(a) The phenomenon reported is something real and not visionary or fictitious.

"(b) There are objects probably approximately the shape of a disc, of such appreciable size as to appear to be as large as a man-made aircraft.

"(c) There is the possibility that some of the incidents may be caused by natural phenomena, such as meteors.

"(d) The reported operating characteristics such as extreme rates of climb, maneuverability (particularly in roll), and action which must be considered evasive when sighted or contacted by friendly aircraft and radar, lend belief to the possibility that some of the objects are controlled either manually, automatically or remotely."

He recommended that " ...Army Air Forces issue a directive assigning a priority, security classification and code name for detailed study of this matter." Though conducted by the Army Air Force, the study's information and conclusions would be made available to all the armed services, and to scientific agencies with formal government ties.

Twining's suggestion was approved on December 30 by Major General Laurence C. Craigie, Director of Research and Development under the Deputy Chief of Staff for Materiel at Headquarters U.S. Air Force. According to Craigie's directive, it would be the role of Sign to: "...collect, collate, evaluate and distribute to interested government agencies and contractors all information concerning sightings and phenomena in the atmosphere which can be construed to be of concern to the national security."

On January 22, 1948, Project Sign formally began its work as a branch of Air Technical Intelligence Center (ATIC) at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, under the direction of Captain Robert R. Sneider.

Sign was seen as a very important undertaking: Ruppelt wrote that Sign "was given a 2A priority, 1A being the highest priority an Air Force project could have." Though it was classified "restricted", the study's existence was eventually known to the general public, and was often called "Project Saucer". However, UFO historian Wendy Connors established, through an interview with a surviving Sign secretary, that "Project Saucer" was the project's original informal name and had actually begun in late 1946. If this was the case, then the Army Air Force had already begun investigation of UFOs well before the Kenneth Arnold sighting that launched the first flood of UFO reports of June-July 1947 in the United States.

May 28, 2006, continued:

Michael D. Swords is a Professor of Natural Science at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan. His major professional and involvements are teaching and writing in the areas of general sciences and anomalous phenomena. His teaching centers about human biology, the history and philosophy of science, scientific methodology, and the "parasciences" of which UFOlogy is a member. His writings have concentrated mainly on topics in UFOlogy, parapsychology, and cryptozoology, and several have been published in the "MUFON UFO Journal". A very relevant paper is:

[Project SIGN & the Estimate of the Situation \(2000\).](#)

Dr. Michael D. Swords writes:

"The core personnel for the project were probably the most talented group to work on UFOs until the Air Force ended its investigation in 1969. Aiding chief officer, Capt. Robert R Sneider, were two outstanding aeronautical engineers, Alfred Loedding and Alfred B. Deyarmond. Completing the group was nuclear and missile expert Lawrence Truettner. The quality of these people indicates the seriousness (and the comparative difference in later years) with which the Air Force considered the flying disk problem."

Wendy Connors:

In 1947, Wright-Field's T-2's job (Dayton, Ohio) was to acquire, collect, analyze and produce foreign aerospace technical intelligence for the Army Air Forces. Loedding was an expert in such areas as Vertical Takeoff aircraft, the hydro bomb, rockets/fuel and low aspect ratio aircraft. Documents show Colonel Howard McCoy sent Loedding to the Pentagon as the first liaison between T-2 Intelligence and the AF Office of Intelligence (AFOIN). This was done in July 1947 because General McDonald wanted someone to work with Dr. Charles Carroll in setting up the preliminary outline for a formal and parallel project to investigate the "flying disc" phenomenon that was rapidly developing. Loedding's expertise was necessary because at the time the "boys at the Pentagon" were of the opinion that the discs were advanced technology from Russia and invading US airspace.

Dan Wilson's reports to the A-Team:

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs9.htm>

MAXW-PBB3 713-722

The cover-up of the Mantell case begins with the timely discovery of a document (MAXW-PBB3-714) signed by base commanding officer, Colonel Guy F. Hix. In the document below it clearly states that the civilian investigator (Alfred Loedding) from Wright Field, arrived at Godman Field on January 9, 1948 and made a thorough investigation. After obtaining statements and full information on the matter, he (Loedding) issued instructions that no report on the subject would be made until further instructions were given.

Fran Ridge:

[USAF-SIGN1-377](#)

is a better version of MAXW-PBB3-714, transcript below (Frame 377, see Part 2-2) .

THIS PAGE IS UNCLASSIFIED

HQ 315th AF BASE UNIT (RES TNG), Godman Field, Ft. Knox, Ky. 9 Jan 48

TO: Commanding General Eleventh Air Force, 1612 South Cameron Street Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

ATTENTION: Lt. Col. Chandler, PIO Section

1. Forwarded in accordance with telephone instructions, your office this date.
2. A Mr. Loedding, civilian investigator for the intelligence Division, Department of the Air Force, assigned to Wright Field, Ohio, arrived at this headquarters, this date, and made a through investigation of the matters listed in basic letter.
3. After obtaining statements and full information on the matter, he issued instructions that no reports on the subject would be made until further notice was given.
4. This report, however, is forwarded in compliance with your instructions.

6 Incls

GUY F. HIX

N/C

Colonel, USAF

Commanding

The next day, May 29, Brad Sparks sent the group an email: He had gotten the records on the balloon flight.

Brad Sparks:

I read over the posted June 1994 CAUS article on Mantell expecting to find a RECORD of a Skyhook launch on Jan 6, 1948. I was hoping to find a THEODOLITE tracking on a MAP, since "theodolite" tracking was made much of in the article. I was bitterly disappointed to find neither. In fact there is an eerie deja vu here with the infamous C B Moore again involved in peddling questionable stories about balloon antics that are not documented and are flagrantly contradicted by the facts -- just like with his wholesale falsification of the Roswell MOGUL balloon fiction which Dave Rudiak and I thoroughly exploded as a tissue of lies, deceit and fabrication from start to finish. (more on Moore's lies below).

If it was a UFO it was very poorly documented. If it was a Skyhook balloon it was very poorly documented.

How do we know the alleged Skyhook balloon was lost after passing the Georgia/South Carolina coastline? That kind of assertion in the article makes it seem like there was a TRACKING of the balloon over a distance of 1,000+ miles out to the Georgia/South Carolina coast, a seemingly solid documentary record.

Or is this just a bald assertion based simply on drawing a straight line from Camp Ripley, Minn., to Mantell's crash site near Franklin, Ky., and then continuing the line out to the Georgia/South Carolina? That is not a RECORD, that is a hypothetical extrapolation dressed up to LOOK like a documentary record made at the time, in 1948, which is not quite kosher, it's misleading. That would be pretty amazing given all the cross-winds at altitude that are hypothesized just to get a Camp Ripley -- Believe it or Not! -- balloon over central Kentucky at the time

of the Mantell and other sightings, and to stop and start at the right time, etc.

Interestingly the AF claimed to have had actual "wind plots" (Ruppelt book) to show that a Clinton County AFB Skyhook launch would have traveled SW to the sighting area in Kentucky -- about 90 degrees off of C B Moore's alleged SE heading claimed for the purported Camp Ripley balloon. How is that possible? Where are the WEATHER RECORDS to prove the Camp Ripley theory??? Moore is a meteorologist for crying out loud so where are the meteorological records to support his baseless theory??? At least the Clinton County Skyhook theory has WEATHER RECORDS, but these would seem to contradict any Camp Ripley balloon path.

The article claims that "Complete weather and tracking data for the Camp Ripley launch are not available for the entire path." Well that implies there ARE such "weather and tracking data" available for SOME of the balloon flight path so WHERE IS IT????

Speaking of amazing coincidences, isn't it a pretty extraordinary "coincidence" that just a few hours after an alleged Skyhook balloon supposedly passes over the general region that at 7:20-8:00 PM (EST) on Jan 7, 1948, or almost 2 HOURS AFTER SUNSET AT BALLOON ALTITUDE AND WHEN THE BALLOON COULD NOT POSSIBLY BE SEEN there were Skyhook-balloon-like sightings from Lockbourne AFB and Clinton County AFB in southern Ohio??? How is that possible??? Pretty amazing when one considers a Skyhook could not possibly have been seen as a classic "ice cream cone" shape in PITCH DARKNESS of night. Even if the instrument package underneath the balloon carried a tiny light the light could not possibly have illuminated the 100-foot cone-shaped gas bag above it. These are just physical impossibilities you can take to the bank.

Here is what I found in the AF file on the Mantell case about these impossible NIGHTTIME Skyhook-like sightings of a "flaming red cone" with "intense brightness" seen by the Clinton County Air Field Control Tower operators and flight crew members, an object so bright that when a cloud drifted in front of it the object's light could still be seen even though stars were completely blotted out (Maxwell Roll 3, p. 737; see also Sign Roll 1, p. 513-4, 518, 526-7, 531, etc.):

"Description of object seen at Clinton AFB.

"A. 6 observers at Wilmington, site of Clinton AFB, stated that a cone shaped object ... similar to what a partially inflated Skyhook balloon would look like. It was in sight for approx. 30 [mins]. All stated it disappeared in general SW direction.

"B. 2 observers described it as an inverted triangle or a cone -- it climbed and descended. Wind was from NE to SW, which is in the exact direction of GODMAN.

"CONE INVERTED TRIANGLE
[drawings] partially inflated balloon"

I noticed in the article that famed astronomer Carl Seyfert's sighting of a balloon from Vanderbilt Observatory near Nashville, Tenn., is seriously MISQUOTED leaving out the crucial observation that the balloon seen in the SSE was "moving first SE" (which would fit the Camp Ripley Skyhook theory) but then it WENT WEST "then W" which would contradict the Ripley "Believe It or Not" Skyhook balloon theory. The part saying "then W" was left out and no ellipses indicated any deletion, and so was the word "first" left out of "moving first SE, then W" so as to further cover up the direction change. There were several other distortions in the mangled quotation or misquotation. (Maxwell Roll 3, p. 711)

If the Camp Ripley Skyhook was held stationary for 1-1/2 hours from 1:45 to 3:15 PM (CST) as the article and Moore apparently both claim, because of ascending into a "turnaround altitude" from 60,000 to 75,000 ft then how is it that astronomer Seyfert just over an hour later at 4:30 PM CST estimated the balloon was at just 25,000 ft moving at 10 mph, a speed which Moore seemed to agree with. But you can't have both because if Seyfert was able to accurately estimate a 10 mph speed then he must have had a reasonable estimate of distance and height in order to calculate the speed. If the Skyhook was rapidly descending 35,000+ ft in perhaps another 1 hour then it should have impacted the ground in south-central Tennessee at about 5:30 PM CST. It could not possibly then have traveled to the Atlantic Ocean over the Georgia/South Carolina border as Moore claims.

The article claims, based on what Moore was alleging, that the Navy did the Skyhook launch from Camp Ripley but did not disclose this at the time to the AF investigation of the Mantell crash because the Navy did not want to get blamed for Mantell's death. We also get the usual bullshit about how Skyhook was "highly classified" at the time, too, which it WAS NOT. It was HIGHLY PUBLICIZED at the time. Certain projects using Skyhooks were classified but not the Skyhook launches or the Skyhook balloons. This is a cute new "reasonable cover-up" theory similar to the Roswell MOGUL fraud but it's missing any proof that the NAVY launched the Skyhook from Camp Ripley on Jan 6, 1948. Moore's finding photos of the alleged Camp Ripley launch in his files implies that he personally was there and that he launched the Skyhook (why not say so? why conceal his personal involvement?). But Moore was under AIR FORCE CONTRACT at the time and he is able to cite chapter and verse by AF Contract Number "AF 19(122)-633" to prove that Clinton County, Ohio, was not launching Skyhooks until 1951, but doesn't do the same for Camp Ripley in 1948. Where is the NAVY CONTRACT NUMBER and PROJECT IDENTIFICATION for the Camp Ripley Skyhooks in 1948????

Where is the actual RECORD of the alleged Skyhook balloon launch from Camp Ripley, Minn., on Jan 6, 1948???? It was launched at "about" 8 AM? Why is there no exact recorded time? Is that because this "record" is actually all dependent on the confabulated convenient memory of one person, C B Moore, one of the most notorious liars in the history of UFOlogy who has been caught red-handed in numerous outright proven lies and falsifications of data and preposterous math? Moore makes George Adamski look like an honest Boy Scout in comparison.

<snip>

The Mantell crash itself seems to suffer from outright doubletalk. In the same Accident Report it first says Mantell's fighter crashed because "as nose depressed, [Mantell] finally began a spiraling dive which resulted in excessive speeds causing gradual disintegration." So Mantell's aircraft was in a crash dive nose down going so fast it broke apart, yet then the report admits the plane did not hit ground nose first but came down pancaking flat on its belly, while still trying to maintain the fiction of coming "straight down," but IN A "HORIZONTAL POSITION"!!! Huh???? Note the slick weasel-wording:

"The aircraft came straight down in a horizontal position and landed on the left side." (Maxwell Roll 3 p. 750)

Fran Ridge:

I then discovered two restricted documents, one which tells more about what Mantell had said than any previous document found. MAXW-PBB3-681 reads in part:

"About 1445 flight leader (NG 869) reported sighting object 'ahead and above still climbing'. At 15,000 ft he reported: 'Object directly ahead and above and moving about half my speed ' Again 'it appears metallic and of tremendous size.' Still later 'I'm still climbing - object is above and ahead moving about my speed or faster - I'm trying to close in for better look'. This was about 3:15 PM. Five minutes later the other two

ships turned back. Both documents appear on the web page I created, <http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs11.htm>, but the actual documents are located at the end of this chapter.

[MAXW-PBB3-680](#)

[MAXW-PBB3-681 \(*\)](#)

Interest in the case re-investigation was mounting, but some were questioning why re-investigate in the first place?

Mary Castner of CUFOS wrote:

"Please tell me what makes you think this Skyhook couldn't be what Mantell saw and why a Skyhook had to be launched on 1/7 to qualify for what Mantell saw?"

Fran Ridge:

As I told the list members, first of all, I was approached in March by Drew Speier of WFIE to help on a story they wanted to do on the Mantell incident. To set the record straight, I told him that there were MUCH better reports and that the Mantell incident was not even an "unknown". He insisted that it was a "local" story and told me that it would possibly lead to other stories if it went well. May was ratings month and that was the release period.

There are a LOT of problems with the Mantell incident. It was NOT an open and shut case of a balloon. I didn't go into them at this time because when Drew asked me to do the story I re-opened the investigation. I told her (and the list) that, when Dan and I get all the documents posted, the case will be presented for comment. The case was not listed as an unknown at this point.

I have worked with people, one which served on on Project SAUCER (Code-named SIGN), and there is reasonable doubt about many factors in this case. There WERE UFO reports that day. One report of an object 250' in diameter moving at a good clip does not square with a Skyhook balloon, reported BEFORE Mantell and the tower saw anything. And some pilot friends of mine cannot accept the idea of a pilot who, during the stress of aerial combat in WWII, while chasing a balloon OR flying saucer would forget his oxygen. Whether we like it or not, we still have a mystery. We may not end up with an unknown, but mystery we do have.

Later that day I found this document, showing the Project SIGN first quarter sightings, early on lists the case as solved, yet doesn't do an across the board balloon explanation to explain the rash of sightings in the region. Venus is the explanation for ALL of them, except the Mantell incident. The Jan-Feb-March sighting listings lists the sighting at Godman as a "balloon"!!!

[NARA-PBB1-15 \(*\)](#)

The Air Force publicly blamed the planet Venus as the cause for all of the series of sightings, including the daylight incident in Kentucky (not Mantell). In actuality, however, many of the intelligence officers in TID's Sign project were slowly becoming convinced UFOs were extraterrestrial in origin during the course of the long accident investigation that continued through April. Loedding and Sneider got the Venus idea from Dr. Hynek who had only offhandedly suggested the planet as one possible explanation. They, however, used it as a cover or a quick fix to explain away what, at the time, became a very widely publicized incident in the midst of what was obviously going to be a long investigation. Sign team members thought they might have to suggest a far more shocking conclusion, but not before they had the time to develop the theory.

Part 2 - 5: Balloon Deflated

May 31, 2006

One of the many reasons why I never believed the Mantell case was actually explained was the [LIFE Magazine article](#) in 1952. On May 31st, I mentioned this and listed it as part of the record. On April 7, 1952, four years after the incident mind you, in this article, cleared by the Air Force, Robert Gina of LIFE Magazine states:

"Nevertheless in serious moments most people were a little worried by all the 'chromium hubcaps,' 'flying washtubs' and 'whirling doughnuts' in the sky. Buried in the heap of hysterical reports were some sobering cases. One was the calamity that befell Air Force Captain Thomas F. Mantell on Jan. 7, 1948. That afternoon Mantell and two other F-51 fighter pilots sighted an object that looked like "an ice-cream cone topped with red" over Godman Air Force Base and Fort Knox, Ky. Mantell followed the strange object up to 20,000 feet and disappeared. Later in the day his body was found in a nearby field, the wreckage of his plane scattered for a half mile around. It now seems possible that Mantell was one of the very few sighters who actually were deceived by a Skyhook balloon, but the incident is still listed as unsolved by the Air Force files."

Barry Greenwood has pursued the UFO topic since 1964. He specialized in researching government documents in the late 1970s, leading to co-authoring the book "Clear Intent" (with Larry Fawcett) in 1984. He also edited the newsletter "Just Cause" for "Citizens Against UFO Secrecy" (CAUS) from 1984 to 1998. Other research has been published in the "MUFON Journal," "Flying Saucer Review" and a variety of international publications since the mid-1970s. In more recent years, he has specialized in UFO history, compiling "The New England Airship Wave of 1909" and editing "U.F.O. Historical Revue," a newsletter issued from 1998 to date. He also published the online "Union Catalog of Periodical UFO Articles," a massive listing of UFO articles published in worldwide periodical literature and is an associate of "Project 1947" and the "Sign Historical Group" (SHG), and is an overseer of one of the larger archives of historical UFO materials in existence, having spent thousands of hours in library and archive research.

On this same day, Greenwood responded to Brad Sparks May 29 email:

Barry Greenwood:

Since you dismissed the Camp Ripley data in my Just Cause article as "not worth the paper they are written on," perhaps you can explain why you continue to carry the General Mills sighting at Arrey, NM on 4-24-48 as an unknown since the main witness, Charles Moore, is not credible by your reckoning. If he lied about Roswell and lied about Mantell, why should the Arrey report hold any credence?

Fran Ridge:

Barry, it's no reflection on you or your great work, which I have always admired. It just turns out that Moore fooled us all...for a while. The more we dig; the more we find. Exactly what you would expect if there is something to all this. And the most surprising thing about it all, to me (as I told the WFIE reporter), is that the evidence is right in front of us in the Blue Book files.

Barry Greenwood:

Might we safely say that we can now dismiss the 1949 General Mills sighting as a hoax because Charles Moore was involved, based upon what we've seen here today? If he is a liar and forger, there can be no other conclusion.

Brad Sparks:

Moore wasn't the only witness on April 24, 1949, and we have the statements from the other four Navy witnesses obtained by AFOSI (William Akers, Richard G. Davidson, Clifford E. Fitzsimmons, Moorman).

Fran Ridge:

Remember the famous balloon at Sandy Hook that was chased by the T-33 after the Fort Monmouth incident? Everybody wanted to toss that case out, too. Ruppelt (like Moore) placed the balloon at the right place and the right time. We (the report) went from a reference in Ruppelt's book to a full report almost 2" thick that blew that (explanation) out of the water once and for all. It is now listed as an unknown!!!

Jan Aldrich is the creator and coordinator of Project 1947, an ongoing and unprecedented effort to collect and archive UFO data. Aldrich's project has compiled a massive amount of data ranging from government documents, newspaper stories, magazine clippings, and other documents. Jan is also the author of several UFO articles. He is also a member of the NICAP A-Team.

Jan Aldrich:

I am sorry but this is completely untrue. I have always said that the AF's explanation was flawed here (Sandy Hook). This is based on the AF claims that a balloon can act like a high speed aircraft and out distance the chase plane in low winds. I am not the only one that said that and have posted on the case several time on UFO Updates. As far as the Mantel (sic) case...there were UFOs in the area? So what! Are the two connected? Look at Mantel's (sic) description. There were sightings of a big balloon in the area afterward. It is your opinion that a pilot would not go above 20,000 without oxygen. An NG pilot did the same thing in 1956 and from the same outfit as Mantell. Why? Probably, because of lack of judgement when flying at high altitudes with lack of oxygen. Thinking that they can just go that little extra altitude and get back down before being effected.

Fran Ridge:

Jan, You supported us when we redid that entire (Fort Monmouth) report. When I made the comment I meant that MOST of the UFO community was satisfied with Ruppelt's explanation by doing nothing and letting it lie. You were one of the people that helped (us), so when I said "everyone" I meant that, if we hadn't created the full report with all the documents, it would still be written off.

Brad Sparks:

But that's the whole point Jan -- the "Skyhook-like" sightings 4 HOURS after Mantell crashed and 2 HOURS AFTER SUNSET at high altitude, made by numerous competent Clinton County AFB tower personnel (and others elsewhere including at the Mantell crash site) with binoculars who MADE DRAWINGS. How do you explain this???? Ice-cream cone shaped intense red light, just like red sunset light. Gotta be a Skyhook balloon right??? How can it be otherwise??? How can you have such a "coincidence" otherwise??? See full rebuttal at http://www.nicap.org/mantell/whole_point.htm

I had noticed that Bill Booth had made some great comments on our show, so I posted the URL for the web site. This is what Booth said:

"Thomas Mantell Dies Chasing UFO is a skillful piece of writing, and the gentleman who wrote it certainly did his research. It is rare that I say this, but the video that accompanies the article is a must see. It is surely a professional creation with great facts mixed with archival footage from the U S Air Force. I must give credit where it is due. Reporter: Drew Speier, New Media Producer: Rachel Chambliss, both of you, KUDOS! A well balanced report giving both sides of the argument. Once again, we face the familiar argument of the debunkers who say that Mantell was merely chasing a top secret balloon. Where have we heard this before? The proponents of the UFO theory point out that

even Project Blue Book, who were interested in the case because Mantell was a pilot, would assert that the maneuverability of the object was beyond the capabilities of a balloon. The documents with this information were originally left off of the official report. There the mystery rests."

<http://ufos.about.com/b/2006/05/29/thomas-mantell-dies-chasing-ufo.htm>

Joel Carpenter is a pilot and a member of NICAP's A-Team, He is a consultant on early UFOs and "foo-fighters".

Joel Carpenter:

Why doesn't anyone think he recovered consciousness in the last seconds, tried to pull out of the dive, began to, and lost the wing in up-bending -- just as the report says. In this case, the plane would not be in a screaming nosedive from 20,000 ft, but would be decelerating tumbling debris. (Note: There were certain control settings that implied that he had regained consciousness and reset things just before impact -- I don't recall exactly -- fuel pump, carb setting, something like that -- that wasn't in positions that would be expected during a high-speed climb. This is similar to the kind of thing NASA said about the Challenger astronauts -- certain switches were set to positions that they weren't in at launch, which implied that at least a couple of the astronauts had survived the explosion and tried to prepare for a crash.) <snip> I believe the report specifically noted that a fuel switch was in a position that wouldn't be expected in a climb, which implied that he might have recovered consciousness and changed it in the last seconds.

Joel then provided information on problems noted with the P-51, over three years prior to the Mantell crash. He quotes the internet source:

"The loss of a P-51 Mustang fighter and the tragic death of its pilot over Preston in mid-1944 is probably one of the lesser-known local incidents of the Second World War. Yet this was the second such loss in identical circumstances in a matter of weeks and the potential consequences for the American and British Air forces were immense.

"The first incident occurred on 12th June 1944 when P-51D Serial No. 44-13403 embedded itself in the Ribble mud close to BAD2 at Warton killing its pilot, Second Lieutenant W. T. Clearwater. Detailed examination of the recovered wreckage showed that there had been catastrophic structural failure of the wing assembly. It was some two weeks later that another BAD2 test pilot, 2nd Lt. Burtie Orth, was making a similar test flight in P-51D Serial No. 44-13593 on the morning of 27th June 1944. Weather conditions were not ideal with frequent thunder showers and 7/10th cloud cover at 1400 feet, but there were clear areas and the pilot may well have flown over Preston in order to carry out his testing schedule in just such an area. Although the aircraft's movement were not observed prior to the crash, it is believed that Burtie would have adhered strictly to the limitations on aerobatics flying which had been placed following the crash two weeks earlier. Exactly what happened next will never be known, but as in the case of previous crash, the first indication to those on the ground was the scream of the engine running out of control. At approx. 9:00 am morning assembly was taking place at Fulwood and Cadley School, when the children's attention was diverted by the noise and many ran to the windows in time to glimpse the last moments of the aircraft, a memory that was to stay with them for the rest of their lives. It appeared to those watching that the pilot somehow had some partial control over the direction of the aircraft's descent and it "steered" away from the school and houses below. The stricken plane exploding on impact, on an area of farmland in the Cadley area of the town. Those first on the scene quickly realised that they could do nothing for the unfortunate pilot.

"At the time of the accident it was suggested that although there was a recognised weakness in the wing of the new P-51D, the actual failure of the structure could have been triggered by the Starboard main undercarriage leg inadvertently lowering into the slipstream at cruising

speed and placing immense pressure on the wing spar. However examination of the official crash reports for both incidents clearly places the blame on a weakness in the front wing spar assembly and associated stressed skin structure between "Rib stations 75 to 91.5, i.e. the Gun Bay area. The report on Orth's aircraft does go on to suggest that failure of the retracting/locking system could be a contributory factor, but merely recommends further investigation.

"For many years local enthusiasts believed that both these incidents occurred close to the site of BAD2 at Warton and one group actually went so far as to identify the crash site of an American fighter on the marshes at Freckleton as being that of 44-13593 and partially excavated the site! (See "Flypast" Nov. 1983 & Mar.1985) However a brief examination of the known details soon showed that this deduction was flawed. Inspection of local papers close to the date of the accident revealed little, though a small note about local school children sending flowers for the funeral of an American pilot put us on the right track. Following information appeals in the local press we soon had several witnesses to interview - mainly former pupils at the local school - which the aircraft had narrowly missed. Pinpointing the exact site proved a little harder - it had been well guarded and few of those interviewed had got near, also photos of the site obtained from the BAD2 Association clearly showed a substantial farm building in the background - which we failed to locate. Fortunately the present owner of the former farmhouse recalled demolishing the aforementioned building many years before and we were soon systematically searching a nearby field with a metal detector. Just days later the crash report arrived from Craig Fuller of AAIR, confirming the location beyond question.

"Our excavation of the site took place, coincidentally, on 27th June 1998 and we knew from the start that little was likely to be left, though our trusty Forster Locator was giving a good signal! Considering the importance placed at the time on discovering the cause of these two tragic accidents, we were most surprised to discover the top section of the starboard undercarriage leg. This comprised of the complete pivot casting from the top of the leg encased in the corroded remains of the magnesium pivot block, mounted on a section of the front wing spar and including the undercarriage locking mechanism. The position of the casting in the block clearly showed that the leg had in fact been in the fully retracted position at the time the remainder of the leg had been torn off. The force of the wing breaking away, with the wheel presumably held fast in the wheel well, had exerted immense pressure on the four bolts holding the leg into the pivot casting collar and these had sheared allowing the wing to break completely away and the heavy undercarriage leg to fall free. The latter falling in nearby Mill Lane according to one witness interviewed. Other finds included; the remains of three instruments, radio tuner control, spare lamp-bulb locker cover, drop tank release handle, an electric motor and many very small fragments, such as a locking cone from the pilot's parachute pack. As predicted the finds petered out at less than one meter in depth and the rest of the day was spent carefully checking through the spoil for missed items and reinstating the site just as we found it."

Richard Hall enlisted in the fledgling U.S. Air Force in 1949 and served into early 1951, followed by six years in the Air Force Reserve. After returning to civilian life he enrolled at Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1954. Attracted by then emerging news about sightings of "flying saucers" (UFOs) in the 1950s he opted to make himself available to the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) then being formed. After working for NICAP for about 10 years, Hall resigned to find paying work because of his impending marriage. For a number of years thereafter, he worked for various trade associations in Washington, D.C., and for some "Beltway Bandit" consulting firms as a writer-editor. His final formal job before semi-retirement was as an abstractor-indexer at Congressional Information Service, Bethesda, Maryland for about 10 years. (See full resume below.) Hall served as Chairman of the Fund for UFO Research, 1993-1998, and is the author of several books. He is a prime member and consultant to the NICAP A-Team.

Dick Hall:

For heavens sakes, guys! I thought my memory problems were bad, but you all make me feel better. The whole business about oxygen in the Mantell case has been on the record all along. A quick look at the two-volume edition of Jerry Clark's Encyclopedia found at:

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell2.htm>

"Mantell's right wingman, 1st Lt. Albert Clements, put on his oxygen mask. Already the air was getting dangerously thin [at 16,000 feet] and Mantell and the left wingman, 2nd Lt. B.A. Hammond, had not brought oxygen masks with them. Mantell, without oxygen, said he wanted to go up to 25,000 for 10 minutes, then if he could get no closer he would abandon the chase.

"The wingmen broke off the pursuit at 22,500 feet, and the last they saw of Mantell he was "still climbing almost directly into the sun," according to Clements. A couple of minutes later his plane was seen circling lazily around, and it seems obvious that he had passed out from lack of oxygen. The ground witness saw it start to spiral down and it started to break up in the air before pancaking to the ground.

"The best guess is that Mantell was excited by the object he was viewing and committed a lapse of judgment under the very unusual circumstances."

Don Ledger is the author of three books, "Maritime UFO Files" which catalogues some 135 UFO sightings in eastern Canada, "Swissair Down" a detailed look at the crash of Swissair Flight 111 off the coast of Nova Scotia and more recently "Dark Object" which chronicles the Shag Harbour Incident of October 4, 1967. Don has been investigating the UFO phenomenon for 20 years and presently concentrates on UFO sightings by pilots. He is the Canadian Affiliate and technical specialist for NARCAP, the National Aviation Reporting Center for Anomalous Phenomena. He has appeared in numerous documentaries, television and radio, lectured at various UFO conferences around North America and has contributed to various periodicals and magazines. Don is a member of the NICAP A-Team.

Don Ledger:

That's one I'd never heard before. As you say, hearsay, however. That portion of dialogue between the controllers and Mantell has never been mentioned, either to support that Mantell had the oxygen or that he did not. Frankly it has always bothered me that an experienced fighter pilot would ever climb past 12,000 feet [daytime flight] without oxygen. Excited he may have been about chasing the "object" but it would not compare with the various and heightened emotions that fighter pilots would experience when engaging an enemy.

Fran Ridge:

That part has always bothered me, and you expressed it very well. I had said that Mantell had been in stressful situations in aerial combat, yet going after an unidentified object in broad daylight shouldn't have affected his mind enough to do something life threatening. And while it was true that Mantell would have trouble reaching the balloon height (his 30,000 verses 50-100,000 ' for the balloon), the speed of the then one of the fastest airplanes we had of almost 450 mph would have overshot the higher object very quickly, not traveling faster or even "at half my speed".

Don Ledger:

Though the F-51 was capable of speeds in excess of 425 mph in straight and level flight under optimal conditions, it would have been a very rare day for it to reach 450 mph. Easy downhill mind you. In a climb it would have been struggling at its maximum climb angle of 17 degrees [the wing would stall over that angle even with engine laboring and blower at high readings in inches of manifold pressure] to get up to or over 200 mph. Even then it would have been probably mushing. The greater the altitude the less the rate-of-climb [ROC] versus forward speed. But yes, the real puzzler was Mantell's disregard for anoxia. He knew better. I can't understand why he would have gotten so excited

about this object, more excited than if he had been in combat, to ignore this obvious danger.

Although I had mentioned this earlier in this report, this is a good time to once again look at the facts. This is what Mantell's friends had to say:

Ruppelt

One very important and pertinent question remained. Why did Mantell, an experienced pilot, try to go to 20,000 feet when he didn't even have an oxygen mask? If he had run out of oxygen, it would have been different. Every pilot and crewman has it pounded into him, "Do not, under any circumstances, go above 15,000 feet without oxygen." In high-altitude indoctrination during World War II, I made several trips up to 30,000 feet in a pressure chamber. To demonstrate anoxia we would leave our oxygen masks off until we became dizzy. A few of the more hardy souls could get to 15,000 feet, but nobody ever got over 17,000. Possibly Mantell thought he could climb up to 20,000 in a hurry and get back down before he got anoxia and blacked out, but this would be a foolish chance. This point was covered in the sighting report. A long-time friend of Mantell's went on record as saying that he'd flown with him several years and knew him personally. He couldn't conceive of Mantell's even thinking about disregarding his lack of oxygen. Mantell was one of the most cautious pilots he knew. "The only thing I can think," he commented, "was that he was after something that he believed to be more important than his life or his family."

Keyhoe:

One of these (friends) was General Sory Smith, now Deputy Director of Air Force Public Relations. Later in my investigation, General Smith told me: 'It was the Mantell case that got me. I knew Tommy Mantell very well - also Colonel Hix, the C.O. at Godman. I knew they were both intelligent men -not the kind to be imagining things.'

Brad Sparks:

I would like to verify Mantell's WWII service. Doesn't seem likely that a mere troop transport pilot would come to the attention of brass like Gen Garland. Capt Tyler's statement says that Mantell flew "transition in B-24's" in WWII (not sure what "transition" means unless he was training for B-24 flight duty). B-24's were bombers not troop transports, and flew much higher (to 32,000 ft), where oxygen was necessary and thus Mantell had to be familiar with oxygen requirements from personal experience. The excuse that he only flew low-altitude transports doesn't cut it.

And my research note:

Mantell had 2,867 flying hours, 67 of them in the F-51. He was a very experienced flyer and a veteran of the Normandy Invasion, having also won a Distinguished Flying Medal. He was also then operating his own flying school. At 22,000 feet or higher could he not have recognized a high altitude balloon that should have resembled a cone-shaped object, much like ground observer Pfc Oliver described?

Steven Kaeser is an Executive Board Member, Fund for UFO Research and has been on the NICAP A-Team from day one.

Steven Kaeser:

Fran, has the original report on this crash been located? Some sort of official investigation would have taken place after this incident, but (I) haven't seen any discussion of what it says about the accident. <snip> So, a case that is probably older than most of us discussing it, has again reared its ugly head and confused us with evidence that we can either ignore or deal with. Frustration has been expressed regarding the re-opening of this case to debate, but to my knowledge there are no major UFO cases that have been fully proven as mundane, and the Mantell crash is no different.

Rod Dyke spearheads the Archives for UFO Research, News and Information Service in Bainbridge Island, in the US West Coast state of Washington.

Rod Dyke:

The Archives for UFO Research (AUFOR), has a copy of the Official Accident Report (Inquiry # 10-480107-1) ... 125 pages long. IF anyone requires a copy, we can supply for \$20 via media mail or \$25 via priority mail.

It was essential that we order the FULL official accident report report, and this was done immediately. Up until now we had pages from it, but not the whole document. It was supposed to be 450 pages; then, it turned out to be 250 pages, and when we finally got it, it was 127 pages. What happened to the other pages, and what's on those missing documents?

Also of note are some excerpts from popular magazines that relate to Mantell, I recalled, in Ruppelt's TRUE article, a note by editors. In a letter to TRUE on this point, Capt. William B. Nash, had written:

"As a pilot, Ruppelt must know that he wrote pure deception when he said of the Mantell case, 'The propeller torque would pull it into a slow left turn, into a shallow dive, then an increasingly steeper descent under power. Somewhere during the screaming dive, the plane reached excessive speeds and began to break up in the air.' Any Dilbert knows that as the speed of an airplane increases its lift increases, and the plane's nose would come up until the speed decreased again and the nose dipped once more to pick up speed and lift, thus creating an oscillation all the way to the ground-not a 'screaming dive.' The plane could spin or spiral instead of oscillate, but a spin is a stall maneuver, and planes do not come apart in a stall. This oscillation would be especially likely to occur if the airplane had been trimmed to climb . . . and . . . Ruppelt says, 'The wreckage showed that the plane was trimmed to climb.'"

When newsmen began asking him whether the article was Air Force inspired, Ruppelt replied that they had furnished Life with some raw data.

Ruppelt:

"My answer was purposely weasel worded because I knew that the Air Force had unofficially inspired the Life article... [and also knew that the strongly implied answer that UFOs were interplanetary] was the personal opinion of several very high-ranking officers in the Pentagon - so high that their personal opinion was almost policy."

LIFE:

"Nevertheless in serious moments most people were a little worried by all the "chromium hubcaps," "flying washtubs" and "whirling doughnuts" in the sky. Buried in the heap of hysterical reports were some sobering cases. One was the calamity that befell Air Force Captain Thomas F. Mantell on Jan. 7, 1948. That afternoon Mantell and two other F-51 fighter pilots sighted an object that looked like "an ice-cream cone topped with red" over Godman Air Force Base and Fort Knox, Ky. Mantell followed the strange object up to 20,000 feet and disappeared. Later in the day his body was found in a nearby field, the wreckage of his plane scattered for a half mile around. It now seems possible that Mantell was one of the very few sighters who actually were deceived by a Skyhook balloon, but the incident is still listed as unsolved by the Air Force files. (Re: April 7, 1952: Life Magazine article, "Have We Visitors From Space?)"

<http://www.nicap.org/life52.htm>

Part 2 - 6: The Accident Report

[Wreckage shown in Louisville Courier photo *](#)

[Photo collage of crashed aircraft \(Courtesy of Wendy Connors\) *](#)

On June 1, 2006, while we waited on the 127-page accident report from Rod Dyke's Archives for UFO Research, Dan Wilson located some of documents in the BB Archive files.

Dan Wilson:

A few pages of the Accident Report are located here. (USAF-SIGN1-310, bottom line, says "Oxygen system was not serviced: System was in working order." (BTW, these documents are "reverse" print, with white type on black background. - Fran Ridge)

[USAF-SIGN1-309](#)

[USAF-SIGN1-310 \(See doc at end of Part 1-4, USAF-SIGN7-26\)](#)

[USAF-SIGN1-311](#)

[USAF-SIGN1-312](#)

Dan Wilson:

39-page AF Report of Major Accident was found and posted.

[MAXW-PBB3-748](#) is same doc as USAF-SIGN1-310 above.

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs12.htm>

which lists all of the following documents, MAXW-PBB3-746-782

Frame 6 (of 32), Part 1 of 4 of full Accident Report

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/MantellAccRptPages1-32.pdf>

is

[UFOArchivePage006](#)

also is

[MAXW-PBB3-743](#)

States that Capt. Mantell did not have oxygen or oxygen mask. One must be careful when reading USAF aircraft accident reports for what I have found, they do not always tell the truth.

Raymond E. Fowler was born in Salem, Massachusetts and received a B.A. degree (magna cum laude) from Gordon College of Liberal Arts. His career included a tour with the USAF Security Service and 25 years with GTE Government Systems. He retired early after working as a Task Manager and Senior Planner on several major weapons systems including the Minuteman and MX Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles. Ray Fowler's contributions to UFOlogy are respected by UFO researchers throughout the world. His investigation reports have been published in: Congressional Hearings,

Ray Fowler:

In one of my courses on UFOs, I quoted from a declassified document which I no longer have but may have on a slide. "pilots Hammond NG737 and Clements NG800 climbed to 22,000 feet with Mantell in NG869, then continued on to their original destination because of lack

of oxygen". This could imply that Mantell continued the chase because he HAD oxygen. I will try to find the slide of the government document. I believe the actual document is now with Barry Greenwood who purchased my non-abduction UFO files.

Fran Ridge:

Ray, since it was probably a BB doc, and we have looked at most of them recently, I did some checking. The Accident Report says:

"The object was still visible, and the Flight Commander was requested to investigate and attempt to determine the nature of the UFO if his mission allowed. The Flight Commander, Captain Mantell, stated he was on a ferry mission, but would investigate. Captain Mantell then started a spiraling climb to 15,000 feet, then continued to climb on a heading of 220 degrees, the approximate direction of the UFO from Godman Field. At 15,000 feet the wing men turned back because they were not completely outfitted for flights requiring oxygen."

"Not completely outfitted" may mean all they lacked was tanks, but implies Mantell may have been equipped. Then later they say he wasn't equipped. <snip>. Also shown on our March 8 entry, specifically note MAXW-PBB3-668, which may be the doc you are referring to)
http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell_668-677.htm
[MAXW-PBB3-668 - 677](#)

"It is believed that Captain Mantell never regained consciousness. This is borne out by the fact that the canopy lock was still in-place after the crash, discounting any attempt to abandon the aircraft. The UFO was in no way way directly responsible for this accident. However, it is probable that the excitement caused by the object was responsible for this experienced pilot conducting a high altitude flight without the necessary oxygen equipment." (Note: the object was referred to as a "UFO".)

On this day during the re-investigation sequence, a very controversial aspect of the Mantell tragedy came up. One source had mentioned Mantell's plane and his body were riddled with tiny pinholes. A short discussion ensued.

Don Ledger:

I have heard this story (holes in fuselage) as well a few times over the years, but I'd be surprised if there weren't hundreds of holes in the aircraft's skin. It was held together with thousands of countersunk rivets, many of which could have pulled through from the stress of the spiral dive and the impact. I wonder if pulled through rivets holes is where the story (began).....

Dan Wilson:

21 Jan 1948 cover letter and 35 pages from Accident Report that might have something in there.:

MAXW-PBB3-746-782

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs12.htm>

(The following page, page 3 of that document group, is a better version of the one saying Mantell had oxygen, although un-serviced. See Frame 310, Part 1-4 - Fran Ridge)

[MAXW-PBB3-748](#)

Don Ledger:

I noticed two discrepancies in the Mantell incident as compared to the AAF report. First it mentions that the weather was CAVU-Ceiling And Visibility Unlimited which doesn't square with the mention of clouds in some reports. Also it states that Mantell "Violated AAF Reg. 60-16 Par. 45. However, Capt. Mantell was requested by Godman Field Control Tower to investigate objects in the sky causing this officer to go

above limits of AAF Reg. 60-16." Note that (objects) was mentioned. Not object, indicating more than one bogey might have been seen in the sky by Godman Tower controllers.

Brad commented on this later on September 12 (2008) and it is placed here for its contextual value: "Yes, as I discovered earlier this year, there were two (2) UFO's, the main object at 205-210 degrees azimuth chased by Mantell, and the second one at 240-250 degrees tracked intermittently by theodolite on the roof of the hangar at Godman Field at the same time."

Actually, Dan Wilson had found the documents citing this information two years prior and we posted them on May 28, 2006. Jean Waskiewicz had provided the transcripts.

[NARA-PBB2-866](#)

Lt. Paul Orner:

NG800 gassed up and got more oxygen and flew a second mission on the same heading of 210° to a position of about 100 miles south of Godman Field to an altitude of 33 thousand feet and did not sight the object. At about 1645 CST when NG800 reported not seeing the object I left the Control Tower.

At about 1735 CST I returned to the Control Tower and a bright light different than a star at a position of about 240° azimuth and 8° elevation from the Control Tower. This was a round object. It seemed to have a dark spot in the center and the object moved north and disappeared from the horizon at a point 250° from the Tower. The unusual fact about this object was the fact that it remained visible and glowed through the haze near the Earth when no other stars were visible and did not disappear until it went below the level of the earth in a manner similar to the sun or moon setting. This object was viewed and tracked with the Weather Station theodolite from the hangar roof.

Brad Sparks:

Mary and Joel have obtained the map from Barry who got it from C B Moore. The shocker is that Moore apparently even lied about Camp Ripley as the Skyhook launch site. It was NOT launched from Camp Ripley but from Milaca, Minn., almost 50 MILES from Camp Ripley!!! This guy can't tell the truth about ANYTHING especially when he alone has the documentation in front of him.

Re: Maps Just to clarify: Barry Greenwood had it in his files all along since 1994, which is when he got it from Moore, not that he recently got it from Moore. However Mary pried it out of Barry who had to scan it in several sheet segments then email it and then Mary got Joel to stitch the scans together, which he should be done with soon. Also they are highlighting the 1-6-48 launch in red otherwise it is hard to tell which one is it.

(Joel's working on the map) Nashville Int'l Airport/Berry Field has Winds Aloft / Upper Air twice a day in Jan 1948 up to an average height of about the 257 mb level or 33,000 ft. Louisville should have similar. Maybe you can navigate to see if the data is actually online or whether NCDC in Asheville NC has to be called by phone to get it.

<http://www4.ncdc.noaa.gov/cgi-win/wwcgi.dll?wwDI~StnSrch~StnID~20018355>

Fran Ridge:

Transcript of WFIE-TV Show (already sent to a few on the list) was now posted on the NICAP site.

http://nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107_WFIE.htm

June 2, 2006

I asked Jean to send the file on Mantell from Loren's UFO History to Brad ASAP.

Fran Ridge:

What about the State Police report of an object 250' in diameter moving at a good clip? This is how it all started and they called Godman.

Brad Sparks:

All those initial reports are confused in my mind. We need solid BB (Sign) reports to sort them out and I didn't find them in the BB files (yet). Obviously size estimates like that 250-ft are notoriously unreliable -- could have been ten times closer and only 25 ft in size, etc.

(Blue Book documents regarding this was among the first ones we had in 2005 before the re-investigation started. Fran Ridge).

[USAF-SIGN8.241](#)

Also USAF-SIGN1-371 presented in Part 1-4..

Brad Sparks:

(Col. Hix report discussion).

Dr. Kevin D. Randle is a major in the Iowa National Guard as well as a prominent UFOlogist. Within the [UFO](#) Community he is often regarded as one of the leading experts on the reported crash of a UFO near Roswell New Mexico in July 1947.

Kevin Randle:

Thomas Mantell died in a tragic mistake of misidentification complicated by his violation of regulations. It's a sad tale but it is time to retire this from the UFO lore.

Fran Ridge:

Mantell didn't violate any regs. He was ordered to pursue this object. When the military asks you to do something, that's an order.

Kevin Randle:

While the skyhook balloons might not have been classified, the project was, and Mantell and those with him and those in the tower were unfamiliar with the skyhook balloons. The evidence available today suggests that Mantell was attempting to intercept a skyhook that was at 80 to 100,000 feet, or something like 10 to 12 miles above him. weather balloons of fifteen or twenty five in diameter, a skyhook that was four or five times as large and made of shiny material, seen at such a distance would certainly fool them. If you look at the drawings of the object made by the men in the tower, it is clear what they were describing.

Brad Sparks:

I believe the NY Times had a big article on Skyhook balloons in Sept 1947 when they were first launched and I think the article was reprinted in papers across the country. I know of no way that an eyewitness observer can "see" a "project" whether secret or not, a "project" is an

intangible and invisible structuring of human organization. A person can only "see" a balloon, a physical object (and only if big enough and close enough).

Fran Ridge:

There were about 100 launchings of Skyhooks per year, about two a week. Skyhooks were written about (highly publicized) and discussed in unclassified documents. But, there is no launch date and location that even comes close to producing a Skyhook over Godman at that time. There WAS, but that has been changed twice and apparently turns out to be completely wrong. I'm open to new evidence and won't be upset if it indeed turns out to be a balloon explanation, but now is the time to place these events where they properly belong for the record.

Joel Carpenter:

This is the famous statement "declassifying" the research applications of the Skyhook balloon system. "SKYHOOK BALLOONS PUBLICLY REVEALED, This article was published in the daily newspaper The Evening Telegraph, of Dixon, Illinois, USA, on February 13, 1951. "The physicist (Liddel) said 2,000 reports of 'flying saucers' were checked, and those considered 'whimsical' were eliminated. Of the 'reliable' reports, he said, "there is not a single observation which is not attributable to the cosmic balloons.' " (See transcript below and actual document on the link provided).

http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell_publiclyannounced.htm

If You Saw 'em You Were Right, They Were Saucers

NEW YORK, (AP) -- A navy official confirmed today that "flying saucers" really existed, but actually were huge plastic balloons used in high altitude cosmic ray studies.

Dr. Urner Liddel, chief of the nuclear physics branch of the Office of Naval Research, made this disclosure in an article in the current magazine.

Liddel, in Washington, discussed the story further when newsmen queried him.

The Navy balloons, Liddel declared, were 100 feet in diameter and sometimes rose to a height of 19 miles. He added that winds might sweep them along at 200 miles an hour.

Sun did it

At dusk, the slanting rays of the sun lighted up the balloons' bottoms, giving them the saucer like appearances, Liddel said.

He added that many of the disks were sighted as the sun set. Liddel said the existence of the big balloons was kept secret because the project was connected with atomic developments.

Liddel, who was in charge of the balloons tests, said they carried instruments to record the results of collisions between cosmic rays and atoms in the earth's atmosphere.

No Longer Secret

He added that secrecy was "no longer necessary."

Liddel said he was convinced that a "saucer" photographed at 77,000 feet altitude over Minnesota was a Skyhook. The physicist said 2,000 reports of "flying saucers" were checked, and those considered "whimsical" were eliminated. Of the "reliable" reports, he said, "there is not a single observation which is not attributable to the cosmic balloons."

These balloons, called Skyhooks by the Navy, were first used in 1947, about the time the disk were first sighted. Liddell said reports of "flying saucers" increased or decreased in proportion to the number of balloons sent aloft.

Fran Ridge:

That's interesting, Joel. We'll make that part of the record that it was "officially" announced in 1951, a little over three years after the Mantell incident. The part about the physicist checking 2,000 "flying saucer" reports, and after eliminating the "whimsical" ones there wasn't a single case that could not be attributed to "cosmic balloons" (Skyhooks) reminds me of the report about the U-2 years back. Same old bull crap.. The piece was obviously released as a debunking ploy, not as accurate information.

For the record, the May 1948 issue of Popular Science. "Are Secret Balloons The Flying Saucers?" spilled the beans three years earlier:
[Popular Science, May 1948](#)

Brad Sparks:

This is secrecy revelation-mongering where the alleged secrecy has to be played so that the revelation seems all the more sensational. What about NY Times news stories in Sept 1947 when the Skyhooks were first launched? Kinda deflates the whole super-secrecy aspect.

Brad Sparks:

Response to Mary Castner's balloon/wind data.

Jean:

(I) attached pages from Loren's 1948 UFO History to Fran & Brad. (later posted to list)
http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/Mantell_Gross1948.pdf

Brad:

(Gives OK to post preliminary analysis).

I would only add one more comment: Maximum possible range to see a 100 ft Skyhook is 50-60 miles, otherwise it is smaller than the MAR subtended angle of about 1 arcminute. And that 50-60 miles is assuming very generously that ALL 100 feet of the Skyhook is lit up by sunlight in the daytime of course (NOT visible at all at NIGHT) which I doubt very much. Looking at the 1994 CAUS article photos of the Jan 6, 1948, launch NOT from Camp Ripley (Moore lied even about that) but launched from 50 miles away at Milaca, Minn., it looks like maybe the 100 foot length includes about 50 feet of cabling to the instrument package and about 50 feet of balloon.

Dan Wilson:

Incident 30 & 32 at Columbus, Ohio. Hard to read. Says UFO was Venus.

http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/ohio_480107docs.htm

MAXW-PBB3-379- 386, 389 - 402

A far better version exists in

[NARA-PBB2-489](#)

(Note: Transcripts for these documents, created by Jean Waskiewicz and released on Aug. 10, 2006, are moved up in this chronological timeline to match these documents secured by Dan Wilson).

Incident 30, Captain Charles McGee statement:

[USAF-SIGN1-248](#)

Very bright white light southwest of the field. The light did not cast a beam and seemed the size of a flood light. From the ground the light appeared to move westward. It was further west and lower than I saw it in the air, also the light was similar to that of a lantern light in that it was glimmering. The light varied yellowish to orange and appeared to be descending and burning out. The latter observation may be that in its westward movement it appeared to be fading out and descending however the light was not nearly as bright on the second observation. At first it was very white and did not appear to be moving though when it flashed on and off it appeared as in a fast descent. With the naked eye I could at no time make out any shape other than the light being oval shaped as though looking at a large spot light. It was not a heavenly body of any type in that the sky was solid overcast in the Lockbourne area and the object's movement outweighs such a thought. I heard no noise in connection with the object. I estimated at the first observation that it was 4-5 miles southwest of the base. At the second appearance it was 6-7 miles west and moved westerly in a hovering manner but moving away.

[USAF-SIGN1-261](#)

AIRDROME OPERATIONS
LOCKBOURNE ARMY AIR BASE
Columbus 17, Ohio

CH?/wew

ADGP/319.1 14 January 1948

SUBJECT: Report of Unusual Circumstance.

TO: Commanding Officer, 332d Fighter Wing, Lockbourne Army Air Base, Columbus 17, Ohio.

1. At approximately 1925 EST on the 7 January 1948 I turned to runway 23 for an overhead approach at traffic altitude (1500 ft). Just prior to break-away saw a very bright white light southwest of the Field. I began my 360° approach. It struck me that the light was very unusual and it was not on the ground so I looked in its direction at again from my base leg position, It appeared the same and as though it were about 3000 feet in the air. While on my base leg the light suddenly disappeared. The light did not cast a beam and seemed the size of a flood light. While on my approach it flashed on and off again immediately. I landed and taxied to the ramp thinking that it may have been a reflection from the ground or the like.

2. Before flying I had heard part of an interphone conversation from Letterson Center to Olmstead Center relative to a circular object seen over Tennessee. I returned to the Operations Building. While there, the airways operator, Mr. Eisele, said the tower operator, Mr. Boudreaux, reported seeing something unusual southwest of the field. I stated that I had seen an unusual light and suggested calling him to check. We called the tower on the "squawk" box, and Mr. Boudreaux, said the light was what he had been watching about 15 minutes or so and that through the field glasses it appeared to have bluish streaks like a jet effect out from the right. He stated that it went out while I was in the pattern.

During the conversation he said it could be seen again (1935-1940). We went to the door to observe.

3. From the ground the light appeared to move westward. It was further west and lower than I saw it in the air, also the light was similar to that of a lantern light in that it was glimmering. The light varied yellowish to orange and appeared to be descending and burning out. It moved very slowly and finally disappeared. The latter observation may be that in its westward movement it appeared to be fading out and descending, however the light was not nearly as bright on the second observation.

[USAF-SIGN1-262](#)

Ltr. Subj: Report of Unusual Circumstance (13 Jan 48) cont'd

At first it was very white and did not appear to be moving though when it flashed on and off it appeared as in a fast descent. With the naked eye I could at no time make out any shape other than the light being oval shaped as though looking directly at a large spot light.

4. This object was too large and too sharp a light to be a reflection from the ground. It was not a heavenly body of any type in that the sky was solid overcast in the Lockbourne area and the object's movement outweighs such a thought. I heard no noise in connection with the object. I estimated at the first observation that it was 4-5 miles southwest of the base. At the second appearance it was 6-7 miles west and moved westerly in a hovering manner but moving away. The winds at this time were west-southwest averaging 6 miles per hour.

Charles E. McGee
Captain USAF
Ass't Opns Officer

Transcripts available for Incident 32, Lt. C.W. Thomas statement

[USAF-SIGN1-275](#) (also MAXW-PBB3-390)

Lt. C. W. Thomas and Lt. Sims were making a regular cross country flight and reported in to Columbus Airways who asked them if they saw any unusual object in the sky. This report was relayed to Lockbourne - See Eisele's report - Incident 30c.

[USAF-SIGN1-276](#)

Lt. C. W. Thomas and Lt Sims (??-0226) were making a regular cross country flight. They reported in to Columbus Airways who asked them if they saw any unusual object in the sky. They could see a large bright light off to the west. They estimated it to be below them, or about 3000 ft. It seemed stationery. The light was amber and looked like a large star or planet. It was about 15 miles away from them. The night was dark and overcast.

Part 2 - 7: Deyarmond Says Case "Unexplained"

June 3rd, 2006; the beginning of another day into the re-investigation of the Mantell Incident. Just the night before, we had been talking about the Venus answer that the Air Force was trying to use to explain everything that happened in the region, except for the encounter by Mantell and maybe some of his wingmen. But now the evidence for something else in the area was starting to mount.

Dan Wilson:

Between 7:20 and 7:55 P.M., Control Tower operators and four members of the alert crew at Clinton County Air Base, observed a bright object leaving a gaseous green mist. The object gained and lost altitude at terrific bursts of speed.

<http://nicap.org/docs/mantell/clinton480107dir.htm>

MAXW-PBB3-408-429 (For detailed transcripts see Part 2-8,9, & 10)

Brad Sparks:

I know some docs _say_ that but I read all of the actual witness statements from Clinton County AAF/AFB and some report they saw it beginning at 7:00 PM rather than 7:20 and some say it disappeared at 8:00 PM rather than 7:55 (they all reported in EST so the CST times for consistency would be given as 6:00 to 7:00 PM CST), and they have drawings showing a cone shaped object, as they describe.

Vladimir Rubtsov, RIAP:

Dear Mr. Thouanel, (you said Mantell case is a mystery, a real one. Nobody knows what happened. Even today) Completely agree! As far back as the late 1970 I happened to discuss this case with some competent people in the Borisoglebsk Air Force Flight School (Russia) and all of them believed that Mantell case could not be easily "explained away".

Brad Sparks:

Mantell chased the object for 90 miles at up to 360 mph (he specifically radioed that was his speed before the final climb). Secondly how come he didn't catch up with it going 6 miles a minute, it would take less than 5 minutes??? Instead he chases it for 1/2 HOUR?? I would only add one more comment: Maximum possible range to see a 100 ft Skyhook is 50-60 miles otherwise it is smaller than the MAR subtended angle of about 1 arcminute. And that 50-60 miles is assuming very generously that ALL 100 feet of the Skyhook is lit up by sunlight in the daytime of course (NOT visible at all at NIGHT) which I doubt very much. Looking at the 1994 CAUS article photos of the Jan 6, 1948, launch NOT from Camp Ripley (Moore lied even about that) but launched from 50 miles away at Milaca, Minn., it looks like maybe the 100 foot length includes about 50 feet of cabling to the instrument package and about 50 feet of balloon. IF that is correct (it needs to be checked out) and the Skyhook balloon envelope was only about 50 feet in size then it could not have been seen farther than 25-30 miles away.

Fran Ridge:

That's been the whole haunting part of the incident to me all along. Steve Curtiss is a friend of mine, a local pilot. F-51's can really cruise.

Brad Sparks:

It is now a serious question in my mind as to how anyone could have even seen the alleged Skyhook and perceive shape details unless it was within about 10 MILES of the observer. It looks like the balloon sac was only half of the 100 feet cited, or only 50 feet in size. Mantell could not have seen such a Skyhook from 90 miles away, couldn't chase it for 1/2 hour at speeds of 200-360 mph (3-6 miles per minute).

Mary Castner:

The one thing I do see is on the 7th in Nashville we have a wind speed of 20 and then 10, 10...not sure how this relates to altitude or if it does, but it does pick up faster later (or higher?) so this may account for that apparent STATIONARY report for a time so in two hours it would have covered 20 miles. If spotted first in Maysville then Ft. Knox area..., but again I get temp, direction, speed, but geo_hgt and press_mb I am lost and don't know how it interrelated.

Brad Sparks:

Since the soundings from Nashville at 3 PM on Jan 7, 1948, cut off at 11,000 ft, I looked at 3 PM on the days before and after to see what the general pattern was and to see if they got higher altitude readings. (I should not have to explain why 3 AM soundings are IRRELEVANT to what was going on with the winds around Mantell's crash at 3 PM on Jan 7, as night weather is different from late afternoon for meteorology reasons I don't need to go into. Of course 3 AM soundings will be relevant farther back up a Skyhook path to Minn. but not at NASHVILLE where Seyfert sighted a balloon-like object at 4:30-4:45 PM.)

http://www.nicap.org/mantell/winds_aloft.htm

Jean Waskiewicz:

Brad, I have attached the pages from Loren's 1948 History that pertain to this incident.

Brad Sparks:

So there were 1:00 and 1:10 PM sightings then at 1:20. Godman/Ft Knox itself had sightings reported to Godman Tower from MP's. Obviously Loren's notes show he got all this from BB files so they must be in there somewhere. Also he has LOTS of errors including MISQUOTING Seyfert to drop out the "first" seen moving SSE and omits "then W."

Dick Hall:

These are some of the reports (I saw a few that turned up in Allen Hynek's personal files several years ago) that convince me something more than a Skyhook balloon was there. Skyhooks simply don't zoom up and down at high speed. Maybe there was a Skyhook present that caused some of the sightings (even that has not been clearly established, I don't think), but if so, Brad Sparks has done a pretty good analysis disputing that interpretation for the Mantell object. It is quite possible that a Skyhook intermittently visible could have been present and caused some sightings. Wouldn't be the first time in UFO history that witnesses confused two separate objects. I recall a MUFON case where police had a legitimate UFO sighting, then began to confuse a distant USAF aircraft for the UFO they had seen earlier. Those things happen.

Joel Carpenter:

Document shows concern over similar crash in 1964 (Oregon).

[MAXW-PBB3-707](#)

Brad Sparks:

Yes indeed. And I suspect, my inference reading between the lines, that the FAA was bothered that in the Oregon case the body was a mess but with Mantell it was mostly intact. Also the Mantell Accident Summary says there was no evidence of any sliding along the ground. It came down absolutely 90 degrees vertically. That's surprising.

Brad Sparks:

Great maps!

http://nicap.org/mantell/mantell_overlay2.jpg (*)

Right off the bat I can see that Flight B on 1-6-48 went slightly W of S at about a heading of 190 degs, reaching its maximum altitude of 80,000 ft in 3 hours -- thus we can forget about the Skyhook being at 100,000 ft over Kentucky. Its MAXIMUM height was only 80,000 ft. I don't know where the 100,000 ft came from but the actual tracking shows it is WRONG.

http://nicap.org/mantell/mantell_sparks_maps.htm

Dan Wilson:

These November 1948 documents below show that even nine months AFTER the Mantell incident, it was listed as unexplained.

http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell_notvenus.htm

[USAF-SIGN7-26](#) (*)

[USAF-SIGN7-27](#) (*)

[USAF-SIGN7-28](#) (*)

are pages from a restricted Routing and Record Sheet document, signed by A. B. Deyarmond, Asst. Deputy for Technical Analysis, AMC, part of which is presented here from frame 28:

"ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

"SUBJECT: Godman Field Air Force Base Sightings - 7 Jan 1948 and 19 Aug 1948

"From MCIAXO-3 TO MCIAO

"1. Re Sighting of 7 Jan 1948 : Reference is made to your conversation with Capt. Sneider on 19 October 1948 concerning your desire for a check on the position and visibility of Venus on 7 Jan 1948 between the hours 1330 and 1350 as compared to the position of an unidentified aerial object.

"4. The evidence obtained from MCREXE44 conclusively proves that this object was not the planet Venus."

Part 2 - 8 - Incident 30: The Clinton County Incidents

Incident 30

Captain Charles McGee Statement

[USAF-SIGN1-247](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[USAF-SIGN1-248](#)

Very bright white light southwest of the field. The light did not cast a beam and seemed the size of a flood light. From the ground the light appeared to move westward. It was further west and lower than I saw it in the air, also the light was similar to that of a lantern light in that it was glimmering. The light varied yellowish to orange and appeared to be descending and burning out. The latter observation may be that in its westward movement it appeared to be fading out and descending however the light was not nearly as bright on the second observation. At first it was very white and did not appear to be moving though when it flashed on and off it appeared as in a fast descent. With the naked eye I could at no time make out any shape other than the light being oval shaped as though looking at a large spot light. It was not a heavenly body of any type in that the sky was solid overcast in the Lockbourne area and the object's movement outweighs such a thought. I heard no noise in connection with the object. I estimated at the first observation that it was 4-5 miles southwest of the base. At the second appearance it was 6-7 miles west and moved westerly in a hovering manner but moving away.

[USAF-SIGN1-261](#)

AIRDROME OPERATIONS
LOCKBOURNE ARMY AIR BASE
Columbus 17, Ohio

CH?/wew

ADGP/319.1 14 January 1948

SUBJECT: Report of Unusual Circumstance.
TO: Commanding Officer, 332d Fighter Wing, Lockbourne Army Air Base, Columbus 17, Ohio.

1. At approximately 1925 EST on the 7 January 1948 I turned to runway 23 for an overhead approach at traffic altitude (1500 ft). Just prior to break-away saw a very bright white light southwest of the Field. I began my 360° approach. It struck me that the light was very unusual and it was not on the ground so I looked in its direction at again from my base leg position, It appeared the same and as though it were about 3000 feet in the air. While on my base leg the light suddenly disappeared. The light did not cast a beam and seemed the size of a flood light. While on my approach it flashed on and off again immediately. I landed and taxied to the ramp thinking that it may have been a reflection from the ground or the like.

2. Before flying I had heard part of an interphone conversation from Letterson Center to Olmstead Center relative to a circular object seen over Tennessee. I returned to the Operations Building. While there the airways operator, Mr. Eisele, said the tower operator, Mr. Boudreaux, reported seeing something unusual southwest of the field. I stated that I had seen an unusual light and suggested calling him to check. We called the tower on the "squawk" box, and

Mr. Boudreaux, said the light was what he had been watching about 15 minutes or so and that through the field glasses it appeared to have bluish streaks like a jet effect out from the right. He stated that it went out while I was in the pattern.

During the conversation he said it could be seen again (1935-1940). We went to the door to observe.

3. From the ground the light appeared to move westward. It was further west and lower than I saw it in the air, also the light was similar to that of a lantern light in that it was glimmering. The light varied yellowish to orange and appeared to be descending and burning out. It moved very slowly and finally disappeared. The latter observation may be that in its westward movement it appeared to be fading out and descending, however the light was not nearly as bright on the second observation.

[USAF-SIGN1-262](#)

Ltr, Subj: Report of Unusual Circumstance (13 Jan 48) cont'd

At first it was very white and did not appear to be moving though when it flashed on and off it appeared as in a fast descent. With the naked eye I could at no time make out any shape other than the light being oval shaped as though looking directly at a large spot light.

4. This object was too large and too sharp a light to be a reflection from the ground. It was not a heavenly body of any type in that the sky was solid overcast in the Lockbourne area and the object's movement outweighs such a thought. I heard no noise in connection with the object. I estimated at the first observation that it was 4-5 miles southwest of the base. At the second appearance it was 6-7 miles west and moved westerly in a hovering manner but moving away. The winds at this time were west-southwest averaging 6 miles per hour.

Charles E. McGee
Captain USAF
Ass't Opns Officer

Incident 30a

Albert R. Pickering Statement

[USAF-SIGN8-217](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[USAF-SIGN8-218](#)

When first sighted around 1925 Eastern Standard Time, the object appeared to hover in one position for quite some time, moving very little. It disappeared once for about a minute (presumably entering overcast). After emerging below the overcast it circled one place for the duration of three 360° turns, then moved to another position and circled some more. Turns required approximately 30 to 40 seconds each - diameter estimated about 2 miles.

In moving from one place to another a tail (approximately the same color - amber - as the object) appeared which seemed to be about 5 times the length of the object. The shape of the object was either round or oval and appeared about the size of a C-47 plane. Just before disappearing it came very near the ground, stayed about 10", then climbed back to its original position at a very fast rate of speed, leveled off, and disappeared into the overcast (10,000 ft) heading 120" (120°). Its speed was greater than 500 MPH in level flight. Visible for some 30 minutes. No noise or sound could be heard. The color of the object itself was an amber light but the intensity was not sufficient to obscure the outline of the configuration which was approximately round. During the up and down movement no maneuvering took place. Motions like that of an elevator - climbing and descending vertically. The exhaust trail was noticeable only during forward speed. At one time the object appeared to touch the ground.

NOTE: Appeared approximately 3 to 5 miles away from Lockbourne in immediate vicinity of Commercial Point (Reports from Clinton Cty Airport, Godman Fld & from pilot of plane in vicinity of Columbus indicate the distance to be much greater)

NOTE ON RELIABILITY: See incidents 30, 30b and 30c - corroborating accounts

[USAF-SIGN1-263](#)

DETACHMENT 733rd AF BASE UNIT
103rd AACS SQUADRON
LOCKBOURNE ARMY AIR BASE
COLUMBUS 17, OHIO

SUBJECT: Report of Unusual Circumstance.

TO: Commanding Officer, 332d Fighter Wing, Lockbourne Army Air Base, Columbus 17, Ohio

On Wednesday January 7, 1948 at about 1925 Eastern time I observed in the sky an object which I could not identify. It appeared to hover in one position for quite some time, moving very little. It disappeared once for about a minute and I assumed it entered the overcast, which was about 10,000 feet. After descending again below the overcast it circled one place for the duration of three 360 degree turns, then moved to another position to circle some more. Turns required approximately 30 to 40 seconds each, diameter estimated about two miles.

In moving from one place to another a tail was visible or approximate five times the length of the object. Not knowing how close or far the object was from me at the time, I could not estimate the size very accurately, but it appeared as large or larger than one of our C 47 planes, and of a different shape. Either round or oval shaped. Just before leaving it came to very near the ground, staying down for about ten seconds, then climbed at a very fast rate back to its original altitude, 10,000 feet, leveling off and disappearing into the overcast heading 120°. Its speed was greater than 500 mph in level flight. It was visible to me for a period of twenty minutes. No noise or sound could be detected. The color was amber light but not sufficiently bright to cover or obscure the outline of the configuration which was approximately round. During up and down movement no maneuvering took place. Motions was same as an elevator, climbing and descending vertically. Exhaust trail was noticeable only during forward speed. It appeared as a thin mist approximately same color (amber) as the object. Length about 5 times length of object.

During descent it appeared to touch the ground or was very close to touching it. It was approximately 3 to 5 miles away from Lockbourne Air Base in immediate vicinity of COMMERCIAL POINT. It positively was not a star, comet or any astronomical body to the best of my knowledge of such things. I also rule out the possibility of it being a balloon, flare, dirigible, military or private aircraft.

[USAF-SIGN1-264](#)

Ltr, Subj: Report of Unusual Circumstance, 14 Jan 48 (Cont'd)

I am 26 years old and in good health and have excellent vision. I have been actively engaged in aviation for 6 years. I have a private pilot license and spent 3 years 10 months in the U.S. Army Air Corps as a Sergeant link trainer instructor, instrument flight observer.

The statements made herein are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and may be used for any official purpose as deemed necessary.

ALBERT R. PICKERING
VHF/DF Operator
CAF

Incident 30b

Alex A. Boudreaux Statement

[USAF-SIGN8-219](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[USAF-SIGN8-220](#)

RESTRICTED

Saw what he thought was a star but then he noticed the sky was overcast so it couldn't have been a star. It was a glowing object with a cone-shaped streak to the right. It glowed from white to amber. He says he first noticed it over the Lockbourne Power Plant; just southwest of here. The object was moving southwest and it changed from amber to red and then disappeared. Mr. Boudreaux, said the light was what he had been watching about 15 minutes or so and that through the field glasses it appeared to have a bluish streaks like a jet effect out from the right. He stated that it went out while Capt. McGee was in the pattern. During the conversation he said it could be seen again (1935-1940).

[USAF-SIGN1-260](#)

DETACHMENT 733rd AF BASE UNIT
103rd AACS SQUADRON
LOCKBOURNE ARMY AIR BASE
COLUMBUS 17, OHIO

SUBJECT: Report of Unusual Circumstance.
TO: Commanding Officer, 332d Fighter Wing, Lockbourne Army Air Base, Columbus 17, Ohio

On Wednesday January 7th between 1915 and 1930, there appeared in the sky a bright glowing object which I could not identify. At first I assumed it to be a star but the sky being overcast, I knew definitely that it was not a star nor an aircraft because the only aircraft flying in the local area was landing at the time. It was not a aircraft flare nor a balloon because it appeared to be enormous in size. I then observed it through binoculars. It appeared to be cone-shaped, blunt on top and tapering off toward the bottom. I could not distinguish the attitude in which the object appeared to be. It was going from a bright white to an amber color with a small streak trailing. It was at a distance between 5 and 7 miles from the control tower at an altitude of approximately 2000 to 3000 feet bobbing up and down and moving in a south-southwesterly direction at a speed exceeding 500 miles per hour. Also the wind at the time was blowing from east to west and if it had been a balloon or lighter-than-aircraft it would have drifted in the direction the wind was blowing. There was no sound or unusual noise. Its performance was very unusual and the light emitting from it seemed to fade out at times. Just before it disappeared beyond the horizon the light changed to a sort of red color. The same object was later sighted in the vicinity of Clinton County Air Field by the operators on duty in the control tower.

I have actually engaged in aviation as an Air Traffic Control Tower Operator and a Private Pilot for a period of 5 years and thus for in all my experience, I have never encountered an optical illusion or any physical defect that would disqualify my possessions of such ratings.

ALEX A. BOUDREAUX
Air Traffic Controller
CAF-6

Incident 30c

Franklin Eisele Statement

[USAF-SIGN8-221](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[USAF-SIGN8-222](#)

RESTRICTED

Object first seen 15° above horizon in the West-Southwest of Lockbourne emitting a ruddy red light which changed to an amber-yellow at intervals not exceeding 1 to 2 seconds. Its size and magnitude were greater than that of any star - a good comparison of the size and magnitude would be a runway light at full intensity viewed from a distance of 500 ft. Shape - circular with the exception of a thin wisp of tail extending towards the horizon, the tail being 5 times the diameter of the object in length. For approximately 10 minutes it remained motionless, thereupon it descended to the horizon in about 4", hovered on the horizon in 3", then ascended to its original position in about 3", the course being elliptical, counter clockwise. It then faded and lowered toward the horizon disappearing at 1955. No sound was heard from the object at any time.

Note: Object appeared about 5 miles from Lockbourne, however info received f/Godman Fld and Clinton County Tower plus a relayed report from a pilot

over Columbus, Ohio, indicated that they all had observed a similar phenomenon in the same general direction and position at the same time.

RELIABILITY: Witness spent 37 mos in AF in communications work including C. W. and Control Tower Operation. Holds valid CAA Certificate for Control Tower Operator and Aircraft Communications and has worked at Lockbourne in this type of work for over 1-1/2 yrs. Enthusiast of astronomy.

CORROBORATED ACCOUNT: See also Incidents 30, 30a and 30b

[USAF-SIGN1-258](#)

DETACHMENT 733rd AF BASE UNIT
103rd AACCS SQUADRON
LOCKBOURNE ARMY AIR BASE
COLUMBUS 17, OHIO

SUBJECT: Report of Unusual Circumstance.
TO: Commanding Officer, 332d Fighter Wing, Lockbourne Army Air Base, Columbus 17, Ohio

At approximately 1940 hours January 7, the Control Tower Operator advised me that he had been observing a strange light in the Southwest for sometime. However by the time I reached the entrance steps in front of the Operations Building the light had disappeared. I had not returned to my position for more than 2 minutes when the tower operator advised the light had again appeared. I returned to the operations steps and this time I saw the object.

It was 15 degrees above the horizon to the West Southwest of Lockbourne, emitting a ruddy red light changing to an amber-yellow at intervals not exceeding 1 to 2 seconds. Its size and magnitude was greater than that of any star. A good comparison of size and magnitude would be with one of the runway lights turned on at full intensity as viewed from a distance of 500 feet.

Its shape appeared to be circular with the exception of a thin wisp of tail extending towards the horizon the tails length being 5 diameters of the object long. From the time I first saw the object to approximately 1950 hours, it appeared to remain motionless in the sky. At this time the object descended to the horizon in an interval of about 4 seconds, hovered on the horizon for about 3 seconds, and then ascended to its original position in an interval of 3 seconds. Its course was elliptical, counter clockwise. It then faded and lowered towards the horizon and disappeared at 1955 hours. There was no sound audible from the object at any time.

Its distance appeared to be about 5 miles from Lockbourne. However, information received from Clinton County Tower that they too observed a similar or the same object in the same general direction and position at the same time as our observations at Lockbourne. If the object were the same the distance would be much greater than 5 miles, and velocity well to the excess of 500 miles per hour. The object actually looked to be traveling at a speed around 500 miles per hour.

[USAF-SIGN1-259](#)

Flight Service also advised that Godman Field observed a similar phenomenon at the same time, and that the object disappeared at 2006 hours at Godman.

Clinton advised the object they observed disappeared about 2000 hours. It is not know to me what time either Clinton or Godman first observed the object or objects. The information from Clinton and Flight Service was received by direct line telephone communication from Clinton and Flight Service at Patterson. Our Weather Department was reporting a high overcast and not one heavenly body was visible. The object apparently being under the overcast, and its erratic movement proves that it was not an astronomical phenomenon . Air Force 9944, a C-45, relayed a position report to the Lockbourne Airways, over Columbus at 1953 hours at 5000 feet, on a round robin flight from Wright Field to Washington and return. I asked him if he had seen any strange light to the West Southwest of his position and he reported that he observed a bright light off his right wing, appearing like an oversized beacon.

I have been a member of the American Museum of Natural History which is closely associated with the Hayden Planetarium of New York City for 6 years, and have always been somewhat of an enthusiast of Astronomy.

I spent 37 months in the Air Force in communications work including Command Control Tower Operation. I now hold a valid CAA Certificate for Control Tower Operator and Aircraft Communications and have worked at Lockbourne in this type of work for better than 1 ½ years.

I am of sound mind and health, and am of 25 years of age. I have described the incident exactly the way I saw it, also as to what I heard on the interphones.

FRANK M. EISELE
Airways Operator
CAF-7

[USAF-SIGN1-265](#)

DET 103rd AACS
LOCKBOURNE A. B. COLUMBUS, OHIO

13 JANUARY 1948

SUBJECT: Report on Unusual Circumstance

Inc #30c

TO: CO 332nd FIGHTER WING LOCKBOURNE A B

At approximately 1940 hrs. Jan. 7th the Control Tower operator advised he observed an extremely strange bright light in the south west. However by the time I reached the operation steps at the entrance the light faded out. About two minutes later the Tower advised that the phenomenon was visible again. This time I saw the object at about 15 degrees above the horizon to the west south west of Lockbourne. The object was extremely bright, more so then any star, I would say about as large as and as bright as one of the runway lights at full intensity as viewed from the Control Tower. It appeared to have a tapering tail about 5 diameters long and predominantly was of a ruddy red color changing to a amber-yellow at different intervals.

The position of the object in the sky and the fact that we were reporting a high overcast at the time added to the mystery.

Up until approximately 1950 hrs the object appeared to be motionless, at this time, however, it descended to the horizon in an interval of about 3 or 4 second, hovering there for 3 or 4 seconds and then ascended to its' original position in an interval of about 3 seconds. It then rapidly began to fade and lower in the sky and disappeared about 1955 hrs.

AF9944 xntd a position report to me at 1953 hrs over Columbus at 5,000 ft on round robin out of Wright Field to Washington and return, and reported a mysterious bright light to the west south west of his position, appearing like an oversized beacon

Further information on reports from other stations observing the phenomenon can be obtained from flight service at Patterson.

Franklin Eisele
S. Kaminski, E.M.

Major Campbell Report

[USAF-SIGN1-255](#)

Report of Foreign Object in Sky
Major Campbell: 332d Fighter Group.

No information came out of critiques while the Fighter Group was at Godman Field to indicate the appearance of any foreign objects in the sky. Pilots were questioned as to whether they had seen anything unusual while flying in this vicinity, or had contacted anyone at Godman Field, and replied in the negative. Maj. Campbell, personally, has not noticed anything unusual.

Capt. Watson investigated and received the following information:

Mr. Boudreaux, Tower Operator. He says he saw what he thought was a star but then he noticed the sky was overcast so it couldn't have been a star. It was a glowing object with a cone-shaped streak to the right. It glowed from white to amber. He says he first noticed it over Lockbourne Power Plant; just southwest of here. The object was moving southwest and it changed from amber to red and then disappeared. This happened between 1915 and 1930 EST on 7 January. The only thing he did was to talk to Capt. McGee about it and Mr. Eisele, the DF Operator.

Mr. Eisele, DF Operator. He says he saw it too before he and Mr. Boudreaux got together. Both observed it at the same time but didn't talk it over until after the thing had appeared and said each was looking at it without knowing it. He saw a strange light that faded out and came back again. This light was west southwest of the field about 15° above the horizon. The light was much brighter than a star and appeared to be hanging motionless in the sky. It changed from ruddy red to amber and then to yellow and then back to red. It dipped to the horizon and back again several times. It also made several circles and it appeared to have a streak to the right of it.

Capt. McGee, Assistant Operations Officer: He saw the same thing about 1925 EST. He was flying at the time. He noticed a bright and unusual light southwest of Lockbourne and at first it looked like a spotlight but then noticing it there was no beam from the light at its source. As he turned on final approach to land he noticed that the light disappeared as if it had turned out. After he landed he gave it no further concern until he walked into Operations and the tower operator asked him if he had seen the light. Immediately after this conversation the Tower Operator called him outside the building to look again because the light had reappeared. The light appeared further west and much lower in the sky. The color had changed from a white color to an orange color. It continued to flicker and move westward and appeared to go out.

[USAF-SIGN1-256](#)

Around 1630 7 January, the P-51s in Kentucky were facing the object, whatever it was supposed to be. About 1635 one of them cracked up and conclusions were drawn by the man in the Lockbourne tower. This P-51 was stationed at Mitchel Field and Flight Service at Patterson Field was giving Flight Service at Middletown a summary of what had taken place during the afternoon. It seems that the conversation picked up again between Patterson Flight Service and Olmstead Flight Service around 1945 and at this time Mr. Eisele and Mr. Boudreaux told Flight Service at Patterson Field what they had seen a few minutes earlier. i.e., around 1915 - 1930, with regard to this light and also at the same time Clinton County broke in on the conversation and told them they had seen the same thing, and by some manner of means Godman Field got in on the conversation and told Flight Service they were observing the same phenomena - this happened at 1945.

The crack-up referred to was just something that was heard about over the interphone, but definite information regarding the light was given to Patterson Field Flight Service at 1945, 7 January.

Part 2 - 9 - Incident 33: The Fort Knox Sightings

T/Sgt. Quinton Blackwell Statement

[NARA-PBB2-860](#)

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
AIRWAYS AND AIR COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE, ATC
DETACHMENT 733-5 AF BASE UNIT (103D AACS SQ)

Godman Field, Fort Knox, Ky

9 January 1948

STATEMENT OF T SGT QUINTON A BLACKWELL

I, T Sgt Quinton A Blackwell, AF18162475, was on duty as chief operator in the Control Tower at Godman Field, Ky., on the afternoon of 7 January 1948. Up until 1315 or 1320 matters were routine. At approximately that time I received a telephone call from Sgt Cook, Col Hix's office, stating that according to Ft Knox Military Police and "E" Town state police, a large circular object from 250 to 300 ft in diameter over Mansville, Ky. and requested I check with Army Flight Service to see if any unusual type aircraft was in the vicinity. Flight Service advised negative on the aircraft and took the other info, requesting our CO verify the story. Shortly afterward Flight Service gave Godman Tower positions on the object over Irvington, Ky. then Owensboro, Ky. of about the same size and description. About 1345 or 1350 I sighted an object in the sky to the South of Godman Field. As I wanted verification, I called my Detachment Commander, 1st Lt Orner, to the Tower. After he had sighted the object, he called for the Operations Officer, Capt. Carter, over the teletalk box from the Traffic Desk. He came up stairs immediately, and looked at the object through the field glasses in the Tower. He then called for the CO, Col Hix. He came to the tower about 1420 (appx) and sighted the object immediately. About 1430 to 1440 a flight of four P-51s approached Goldman Field

from the South, enroute from Marietta, Ga. to Standiford Field, Ky. As they passed over the tower I called them on "B" channel, VHF and asked the flight leader, NG 869, if he had enough gas and if so, would he mind trying to identify an object in the sky to the South of Godman Field. He replied in the affirmative and made a right turn around with two planes and proceeded South from Godman Field. The fourth plane proceeded on to Standiford Field alone. The three ship formation proceeded South on a heading of 210°, climbing steadily. About 1445 the flight leader, NG 869, reported seeing the object "ahead and above, I'm still climbing". To which a wing man retorted, "What the Hell are we looking for"? The leader reported at 15,000 ft that "The object is directly ahead of and above me now, moving about half my speed". When asked for a description he replied, "It appears metallic object of tremendous size". At 15,000 ft, the flight leader reported, "I'm still climbing, the object is above and ahead of me moving at about my speed or faster, I'm trying to close in for a better look. This last contact was at about 1515. About 5 min. afterward, the other two ships in the flight turned back. As they passed over Godman NG 800 reported "It appears like the reflection of sunlight on an airplane canopy". Shortly afterward, the same pilot and plane took off from Standiford and resumed the search. He went to 33,000 ft. one hundred miles South and did not sight anything. I left the Control Tower shortly afterward.

The foregoing statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

/a/Quinton A. Blackwell
QUINTON A. BLACKWELL
T Sgt AF18162475
Det 733D AFBU

[USAF-SIGN1-279](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[USAF-SIGN1-280](#)

At approximately 1320 Sgt. Cook from the CO's office notified the observer (T/Sgt Quinton A. Blackwell) that according to Ft Knox Military Police & "E" Town State Police, a large circular object about 250 to 300 ft in diameter was over Mansville, Ky. Advised him to check with Army Flight Svc. They advised negative but shortly thereafter reported object over Irvington, Ky, then Owensboro, Ky. Object first sighted by Blackwell about 1345 to 1350 over south Godman Fld.

Verification:

1st Lt Orner (Detachment Commander)
Capt Carter (Operations Officer)
Col Hix (CO) sighted it about 1420

At approximately 1430 to 1440, four P-51's approached Godman f/south enroute f/Marietta, Ga. to Standiford Fld, Ky. Blackwell asked Flight Leader NG 869 to attempt to identify object. Accompanied by two other planes he proceeded south f/Godman. Fourth plane proceeded to Standiford Fld alone.

About 1445, flight leader (NG 869) reported sighting object "ahead and above - still climbing" At 15,000 ft he reported "Object directly ahead and above and moving about half my speed." Again "it appears metallic of tremendous size." Still later "I'm still climbing - object is above and ahead moving about

my speed or faster - I'm trying to close in for better look." This was about 1515. Five minutes later the other two ships turned back. NG 800 reported "it appeared like the reflection of sunlight on an airplane canopy" Shortly afterward this same pilot (NG 800) resumed search going to 33,000 ft, 100 miles south but did not sight anything.

Lt. Paul Orner Statement

[NARA-PBB2-865](#)

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
AIRWAYS AND AIR COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE, ATC
DETACHMENT 733-5 AF BASE UNIT (103D AACS SQ)

Godman Field, Fort Knox, Ky

9 January 1948

STATEMENT OF LT PAUL I. ORNER

Following is an account of the sighting of unknown objects from the Control Tower on 7 January 48 at Godman Field.

On the above date at approximately 1400 CST a report came in to the Control Tower through M Sgt Cook of a report of an unidentified object flying at terrific speed in the vicinity of Maysville. This call was cancelled minutes later by the Military Police at Fort Knox who had instructions from the Kentucky State Police.

Very soon thereafter several reports of the same nature came from Flight Service saying this object was over Irvington and Owensboro, Kentucky. At the same time an object was reported by T Sgt Blackwell, Chief Control Tower operator on duty. I was in the office of the Commanding Officer checking the call from the Fort Knox Military Police at this time. When the call was cancelled I was returning to the Control Tower to see the object sighted by them. I immediately went to the Control Tower and saw a small white object in the southwest sky. This object appeared stationary. I was unable to tell if it was an object radiating its own light or giving off reflected light. Through binoculars it partially appeared as a parachute does with bright sun shining on the top of the silk but there also seemed to be some red light around the lower of it.

The Commanding Officer, Operations Officer, S-2 and Executive Officer were called immediately. Several minutes after the object was sighted a flight of four (4) P-51's came over the field from the south. I instructed T Sgt Blackwell to call flight leader and ask if they had seen any evidence of this object. The flight leader answered negative and I suggested to the Operations Officer that we ask them if they had enough gas to go look for this object. The Tower operator was instructed to call the flight leader and he answered "yes" to this question. One (1) P-51 had permission from the flight leader to break formation and continue where he landed several minutes later on their original flight plan. The flight leader and two (2) other planes flew a course of 210° and in about five (5) minutes sighted the object. At first the flight leader reported it high and about one-half his speed at "12 o'clock". Shortly thereafter the flight leader reported it at about his speed and later said he was closing in to take a good look. This was the last message from NG869, the flight leader. NG800 shortly thereafter reported NG869 disappeared. From pilots reports in the formation NG869 was high and ahead of the wing man at about 1515 CST to 1530 CST when he disappeared. NG800 said he was breaking off with other wing man to return to Standiford Field due to lack of gas. This was about 1523 CST to 1530 CST. From messages transmitted by the formation it is estimated the flight leader was at 18 to 20 thousand feet and the wing man at

approximately 15 thousand feet wide formation when the flight leader NG869 disappeared. NG800 and other wing man returned to Standiford Field.

[NARA-PBB2-866](#)

NG800 gassed up and got more oxygen and flew a second mission on the same heading of 210° to a position of about 100 miles south of Godman Field to an altitude of 33 thousand feet and did not sight the object. At about 1645 CST when NG800 reported not seeing the object I left the Control Tower.

At about 1735 CST I returned to the Control Tower and a bright light different than a star at a position of about 240° azimuth and 8° elevation from the Control Tower. This was a round object. It seemed to have a dark spot in the center and the object moved north and disappeared from the horizon at a point 250° from the Tower. The unusual fact about this object was the fact that it remained visible and glowed through the haze near the Earth when no other stars were visible and did not disappear until it went below the level of the earth in a manner similar to the sun or moon setting. This object was viewed and tracked with the Weather Station theodolite from the hangar roof.

[MAXW-PBB3-682](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[MAXW-PBB3-683](#)

Unknown object first reported by Military Police at Ft. Knox, approx 1400 CST, vicinity of Mansville. Later over Irvington & Owensboro, Ky. Sighted, Godman, by Blackwell, Chf Control Tower. Lt Orner then left office of CO, proceeding to Control Tower where he sighted a small white object in the southwest sky. It appeared stationary. Could not determine if object radiated or reflected light. Thru binocs it appeared partially as parachute with bright sun reflecting from top of the silk, however, there seemed to be some red light around the lower part of it. Three P-51's alerted to pursue object. Took a course of around 210°. Approx 5" later object sighted. NG 869 (flight leader) reported it high and traveling about ½ his speed at 12 o'clock. Later he stated he was "closing in to take a good look". This was his last message. NG800 then reported NG 869 had disappeared. At the time of his disappearance he was reported high and ahead of wing man at approx 18,000 to 20,000 ft and wing man at approx 15,000 ft. Wing man (NG800) returned for fuel and resumed pursuit going to altitude of 33,000 ft but did not sight object. At about 1645 Lt Orner left tower.

Later, Lt Orner, returned to Control Tower (about 1735 CST) and perceived bright light at a position of about 240° azimuth and 8° elevation. It was a round object and did not resemble a star. Although there was a ----x haze the object remained visible and did not disappear until it went below the level of the earth in a manner similar to the sun or moon setting. This object was viewed and tracked with the Weather Station theodolite from the hangar roof.

RELIABILITY: Verified by Commanding Officer, Operations Officer, S-2 and Executive Officer. However, these officers were apparently present when second sighting took place.

PFC Stanley Oliver Statement

[USAF-SIGN1-374](#)

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
AIRWAYS AND AIR COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE, ATC
DETACHMENT 733-5 AF BASE UNIT (103D AACS SQ)
Godman Field, Fort Knox, Ky

9 January 1948

STATEMENT OF PFC STANLEY OLIVER

I, Pfc Stanley Oliver, was on duty in the Control Tower at Godman Field on the afternoon of 7 January 1948. When first heard of the object in the sky about 1320 CST, we received a phone call from Colonel Hix's office that a large object was sighted at Mansville, Kentucky, the supposed object was supposed to be about 250 feet to 300 feet in diameter at 1330 CST or more.

Sgt Blackwell sighted an object to the southwest of Godman Field and he asked me if I saw it. I saw the object but thought I was imagining I saw it and Sgt Blackwell told me to look again. This time I was really sure I saw an object and then we called Lt Orner, who came to the Control Tower and he too saw the object. Lt Orner then called Captain Carter who, after coming to the Control Tower, also saw this object. Captain Carter called Colonel Hix who came to the Control Tower and he too saw the object. We all then attempted to figure out just what it could be and to me it had the resemblance of an ice cream cone topped with red.

At or about 1445 CST we sighted five (5) P-51 aircraft coming on from the southwest and as they came over the Control Tower someone suggested contacting the aircraft. Sgt Blackwell contacted them on "B" channel (VHF) and aircraft acknowledged his call. Someone suggested they try to overtake the object and we requested the planes to try and the flight leader stated he would. The call sign of this ship was NG869. They turned around and stared toward the southwest again. One pilot in the formation told the flight leader that he would like to continue on to Louisville with the flight leader giving his permission to do so. We kept in contact with the flight leader for about twenty-five (25) minutes. The last contact we had with the flight leader was when one of his wingmen called and said "what the hell are we looking for". Flight leader stated had the object in sight and he was going up to see what it was. He said at present he was at 15,000 feet and was still climbing. Those were the last words I believe we heard from him. Other pilots in the formation tried to contact him but to no avail.

In about another ten or fifteen minutes another P-51 took off from Standiford Field to look for the object. He gave me a call and asked if we still had the object in sight. He was told that at present the object was behind a cloud formation but he said he would try and locate it and in the meantime he tried contacting his flight leader but was unable to do so. He then reported he was unable to see the object and was coming back in when he came over the Control Tower.

I received a call from Standiford Operations that the plane had crashed and the pilot was killed at Franklin, Kentucky. He then sighted

[USAF-SIGN1-375](#)

STATEMENT OF PFC STANLEY OLIVER (Cont'd)

the object again and to my belief the object was a great distance from Godman Field and it was so far I couldn't tell if it was moving or not.

[MAXW-PBB3-684](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[MAXW-PBB3-685](#)

Pfc Stanley Oliver was on duty at the Control Tower at Godman Fld when Col Hix's office informed the tower that an unidentified object (supposedly some 250 ft to 300 ft in diameter) was sighted over Mansville, Ky. This was approx 1330 CST. Pfc Oliver saw the object southwest of Godman Fld. To him it resembled an ice cream cone topped with red. Could not ascertain if it were moving or not.

RELIABILITY: Witnesses: Col. Hix, (CO), Capt. Carter, Lt Orner & M/Sgt Blackwell

NOTE: The report of alerting the P-51 aircraft contained in Pfc Oliver's statement and the witnesses correlates material contained in the other reports.

Capt. James Duesler Statement

[MAXW-PBB3-719](#)

HEADQUARTERS

315 AF BASE UNIT (RES TNG)

GODMAN FIELD, FORT KNOX, KENTUCKY

A/hmg

9 January 1948

At approx 1420, 7 Jan 48, I accompanied Lt. Col. E. G. Wood to the Godman Field Control Tower to observe "an object hanging high in the sky south of Godman".

Shortly after reaching the tower, Col Guy F. Hix, the Commanding Officer, was summoned; it was at that time that I first sighted the bright silver object.

Approximately five minutes after Col. Hix came into the tower, a flight of four P-51's flew over Godman. An officer in the tower requested that the Tower Operator call this flight and ask the Flight Leader to investigate this object if he had sufficient fuel. The Flight Leader (Capt. Thomas F. Mantell) answered that he would, and requested a bearing to this object. At that time one member of the flight informed the leader that it was time for him to land and broke off from the formation. This A/C was heard requesting landing instructions from his home field, Standiford, in Louisville.

In the meantime the remaining three P-51's were climbing on the course given to them by Godman Tower towards this object that still appeared stationary. The Tower then advised the Flight Leader to correct his course 5 degrees to the left; the Flight Leader acknowledged this correction and also reported his position at 7,500 feet and climbing. Immediately following the Flight Leaders transmission, another member of the flight asked "where in the hell are we going?" In a few minutes the Flight Leader called out an object "twelve o'clock high". Asked to describe this object, he said that it was bright and that it was climbing away from him. When asked about its speed, the Flight Leader stated it was going about half his speed, approximately 180 M.P.H.

Those of us in the Tower lost sight of the flight, but could still see this object. Shortly after the last transmission, the Flight Leader said he was at 15,000 ft, and still climbing after “it”, but that he judged its speed to be the same as his. At that time a member of the Flight called to the leader and requested that he “level off”, but we heard no reply from the leader. That was the last message received from any member of the flight by Godman.

/a/James F. Duesler, Jr.
JAMES F. DUESLER, JR.
Captain, USAF

[NARA-PBB2-832](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[NARA-PBB2-833](#)

At approx 1420 7 Jan 48, Duesler accompanied by Lt Col E. G. Wood went to Godman Control Tower to observe an unidentified aerial object. Shortly after their arrival Col Hix, the Commanding Officer was summoned. At about this time Duesler first sighted a bright silver object. Then Col Hix arrived. Shortly thereafter a flight of four P-51's flew over Godman. Leader was contacted to pursue object. He assented and three P-51's climbed on the course, the fourth P-51 returning to base. Flight leader called to observe that “object was twelve o'clock high.” Asked to describe it, he stated “it is bright and climbing away from me.” He stated at first that it was going about 180 MPH. Then Control Tower lost sight of the flight but could still see the object. (In connection with this, Lt Col E. Garrison Wood, who witnessed the sighting stated that while it appeared about 1/10 the size of a full moon, if the thing were a great distance away, as compared to the diminishing size of the P-51's flying toward it, it would seem that it was at least several hundred feet in diameter.) Shortly after NG 861, the flight leader, stated that he was “at 15,000 ft and still climbing” He stated that he judged the speed to be the same as his or approx 360 MPH. One of his planes then asked him to level off but no reply was heard from the flight leader. That was the last message received from any member of the flight.

After dark, another or the same object appeared in approx 234° from Godman at 6° elevation. This body moved to the west (259°) and then down. The shape was fluid but generally round with no tail, the color changing from white, to blue, to red to yellow and had a black spot in the center at all times.

At 1600 CST it was obscured by clouds.

NOTE: Later, an astronomer was contacted who attempted to account for this phenomena as either Venus or a comet.

SEE ALSO: Report of civilians and state police and corroborated version of this incident.

[NARA-PBB2-834](#)

Pfc Stanley Oliver was on duty at the Control Tower at Godman Fld when Col Hix's office informed the tower that an unidentified object (Supposedly some 250 ft to 300 ft in diameter) was sighted over Mansville, Ky. This was approx at 1330 CST. Xx Pfc Oliver saw the object southwest of Godman Fld. To him it resembled an ice cream cone topped with red. Could not ascertain if it were moving or not.

RELIABILITY: Witnesses: Col. Hix, (CO), Capt. Carter, Lt. Orner & M/Sgt Blackwell

NOTE: The report of alerting the P-51 aircraft contained in Pfc Oliver's statement and the witnesses correlates material in the other reports.

Capt. Cary Carter Statement

[MAXW-PBB3-718](#)

HEADQUARTERS

315 AF BASE UNIT (RES TNG)

GODMAN FIELD, FORT KNOX, KENTUCKY

A/hmg

9 January 1948

The undersigned was on duty at Godman Field 7 Jan 48 as Operations Officer.

At approximately 1400 hours and 7 minutes, 7 Jan 48 I received a call from Lt. Orner, AACS Detachment Commander, that the tower had spotted an unidentified object and requested that I take a look. Lt. Orner pointed out the object to the southwest, which was easily discernible with the naked eye. The object appeared round and white (whiter than the clouds that passed in front of it) and could be seen through cirrus clouds. After looking through field glasses for approximately 3 or 4 minutes I called Co. Hix's office, advising that office of the object's presence. Lt. Col Wood and Capt. Duesler came to the tower immediately. Col. Hix followed them.

About this time a flight of four P-51 aircraft were noticed approaching from the south. I asked Tec. Sgt. Blackwell, Tower Operator to contact the planes and see if they would take a look at the object for us. The planes were contacted and stated they had sufficient gas to take a look. One of the planes proceeded on to Standiford, the other planes were given a heading of 230°. One of the planes said he spotted the object at 1200 o'clock and was climbing toward it. One of the planes then said, "This is 15,000 ft., let's level out". One of the planes, at this point (apparently the plane who saw the object) estimated its speed (the object's) at 180 M.P.H. A few seconds later he stated the object was going up and forward as fast as he was. He stated that he was going to 20,000 feet, and if no closer was going to abandon the chase. This was the last radio contact I heard. It was impossible to identify which plane was doing the talking in the above report. Later we heard that one plane had landed at Standiford to get fuel and oxygen to resume the search.

The undersigned reported to Flight Service a description, position of the object while the planes searched for it.

/a/Cary W. Carter

CARY W. CARTER

Captain, USAF

[USAF-SIGN8-234](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[USAF-SIGN8-235](#)

At approx 1407, 7 Jan 48, Capt. Carter was called by Lt. Orner, AACS Detachment Commander, to come to Tower to witness an unidentified aerial object.

Object appeared round and white (whiter than clouds that passed in front of it) and could be seen thru cirrus clouds.

After observing it thru field glasses for some 3 - 4 minutes, he called Col Hix's office. Col Hix, Lt Col Wood & Capt Duesler came to the tower shortly thereafter.

Capt Carter then suggested that a group of P-51 aircraft in the vicinity be contacted to pursue the object. T/Sgt Blackwell, Tower Operator, contacted the flight leader to take a look. Three planes proceeded on a heading of approx 230°. One of the planes (Mantell's) spotted it at 1200 o'clock position. Another plane relayed "This is 15,000 ft, let's level out" First speed was relayed by Mantell (180 MPH) Later, "object going up and forward as fast as I am" - or 360 MPH. Mantell then stated he was going to 20,000 ft and if no closer would abandon chase. Last radio contact heard by Capt. Carter.

NOTE: Apparently, Mantell blacked out at 20,000 ft or proceeded on since the object apparently appeared closer (if such were the case) and then crashed thru lack of oxygen.

Does not seem to tally with report that the phenomena was "Venus or a comet"

Col. Guy F. Hix Statement

[MAXW-PBB3-720](#)

HEADQUARTERS

315TH AF BASE UNIT (RES TNG)

GODMAN FIELD, FORT KNOX, KENTUCKY

A/hmg

9 January 1948

At approximately 1300 hours a call came to this Headquarters from State Police, reporting a flying object near Elizabethtown. Another report came in from Madisonville about ten minutes later. A third call came in from Lexington, Kentucky. (All towns are south of Godman Field).

We alerted the Tower to be on the lookout for flying objects. At 1445 hrs the Tower notified me that an object had been sighted at about 215°. I went to the Tower and observed the object until 1550 hrs., when it disappeared behind the clouds.

The object observed could be plainly seen with the naked eye, and appeared to be about one-quarter the size of a full moon, white in color. Through eight-power binoculars, the object seemed to have a red border at the bottom, at times, and a red border at the top at times. It remained stationary for 1½ hours.

When I arrived at the Tower, Tech. Sgt. Quinton Blackwell had contacted there P-51 airplanes over the field and suggested that they have a look if they had

sufficient fuel. When I arrived they were within sight of the Tower, heading on a course of 215°.

I heard one of the pilots report that he saw the object straight ahead and estimated the speed of 180 M.P.H. The pilot stated that the object was very large and very bright.

/a/ Guy F. Hix
GUY F. HIX
Colonel, USAF
Commanding

[MAXW-PBB3-690](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[MAXW-PBB3-691](#)

At approx 1300 hrs State Police, reported a flying object near Elizabethtown. Ten minutes later sighted near Madisonville. A third call reported it over Lexington. (All south of Godman) Tower then alerted. Tower sighted object at 1445 and notified Col Hix who went immediately to tower where he observed the object thru 8-power binocs. Object also lined up with sighting bar. Three P-51 planes were already pursuing the thing on a course of 215°. (One pilot reported the thing to be traveling at 180 MPH). Col Hix reported the object appeared to the south near the sun. "It was very white and looked like an umbrella," he stated. "I thought it was a celestial body but I can't account for the fact it didn't move." "I just don't know what it was." Appeared about ¼ size of full moon and white in color. Thru binocs it appeared to have a red border at the bottom at times and a red border at the top at times. It remained stationary (seemingly) for 1-1/2 hours.

RELIABILITY: CO of Godman Fld. Obj chased by National Guard planes and followed from the ground by State Highway patrolman. See corroborating accounts.

Captain Thomas F. Mantell - Statement from reported radio conversations

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[USAF-SIGN8-238](#)

Info taken from reports of radio conversation between Control at Godman and NG 869 essentially as follows:

Col. Hix's account. NG 869: "Object traveling at 180 MPH - half my speed"

Lt. Orner's account. NG 869: "high and traveling about ½ my speed at 12 o'clock position"

Later: "Closing in to take a good look"

No further word heard by Orner

T/Sgt. Quinton A. Blackwell: NG 869: At 1445. "Object traveling at 180 MPH
Directly ahead of & above me now and moving at about ½ my speed."

Later: "I'm trying to close in for a better look"

At 15,000 ft: "Object directly ahead of and above me now and moving about ½ my speed. It appears metallic of tremendous size. I'm trying to close in for better look"

No other word heard by Blackwell from NG 869.

Capt. Cary W. Carter: NG 869: "Object going up and forward as fast as he was" - approx 360 MPH

"going to 20,000 ft and if no closer will abandon chase"

No further contact heard by Capt. Carter - "apparently last word ever received from NG 869."

Madisonville Statement

[NARA-PBB2-825](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[NARA-PBB2-826](#)

NOTE: For some reason this information is the same as from Incident 33f - Mantell (JW)

Part 2 - 10 - Incident 48: The Alert Crew Sightings

[USAF-SIGN1-513](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[USAF-SIGN1-514](#)

A sky phenomena which had the appearance of a flaming red cone trailing a gaseous green mist appeared in the southwest skies of Wilmington, Ohio, between 7:20 and 7:55 P.M. Jan 7, 48.

The sky phenomena hung suspended in the air at intervals and then gained and lost altitude at what appeared to be terrific bursts of speed. The intense brightness of the phenomena pierced thru a heavy layer of clouds passing intermittently over the area and obscured other celestial phenomena.

CONFIDENTIAL

T/Sgt. LeRoy Ziegler Statement

[USAF-SIGN1-515](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[USAF-SIGN1-516](#)

Object appeared to be moving up and down and from side to side. At the time the object was covered by a cloud but the light could be seen thru the cloud. It was the same color as a star only very much brighter sometimes changing to a more reddish hue then turning white or yellow. At first it did not appear to be traveling at any speed. Then it seemed to go up and down and sometimes change off and go from side to side at what seemed to be a very great speed. It seemed pretty high in the air - too high to be any kind of a light from the ground. There was no beam. No sound could be heard. A faint exhaust trail was discernible when it moved up or down or from side to side. Finally it began to move away toward the SW at very great speed and disappeared over the horizon at about 20:00.

CONFIDENTIAL

[USAF-SIGN1-523](#)

TO: WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

Inc 48A

ON THE EVENING OF 7, JANUARY 1948 AT APPROXIMATELY 19:25 O'CLOCK THE UNDERSIGNED WITNESSED A VERY BRIGHT LIGHT

IN THE SKY, IN THE SOUTH WEST DIRECTION OF C. C. A. F. THE OPERATIONS CLERK AND MYSELF FIRST WITNESSED IT AND CALLED THE TOWER AND HAD THEM LOOK AT IT THROUGH THEIR FIELD GLASSES. THEY SAID IT WAS MOVING BUT COULD NOT MAKE OUT WHAT IT WAS. I WENT UP TO THE TOWER AND LOOKED AT IT THROUGH FIELD GLASSES AND IT APPEARED TO BE MOVING UP AND DOWN AND FROM SIDE TO SIDE. AT ONE TIME CLOUDS CAME BETWEEN THE OBJECT AND THE BASE BUT THE LIGHT COULD STILL BE SEEN THROUGH IT. AT APPROXIMATELY 19:45 THE OBJECT BEGAN TO MOVE AWAY TOWARD THE SOUTH WEST AND DISAPPEARED OVER THE HORIZON AT ABOUT 20:00.

T/Sgt. LeRoy Ziegler A.S. K. 17014131

USAF-SIGN1-524

Unidentified Object Seen by me at Clinton County Air Field

Inc 48a

- * Sighting: Approximately southwest of the Air Field
- * Location: The exact distance from the field is unknown but it was pretty high up in the air southwest of the field.
- * Time: I do not know what time the object appeared but I first saw it about 19:20 o'clock.
- * Weather: The weather at the time was cold and clear with a few widely scattered clouds.
- * Reported by: Myself
- * Number of Objects Reported: 1
- * Shape: The shape of the object seemed to be circular or like a very bright star in the sky only larger.
- * Size: It would be very hard to say what size it was but if comparing it to the lights on an airplane, it must have been very large.
- * Color: It had the same color as a star only very much brighter and would sometimes get a little more red then turn to a white or yellow color.
- * Speed: At the time it was spotted it did not seem to be traveling at any speed neither coming toward us or going away.
- * Maneuvers: The object seemed to go up and down and sometimes change off and go from side to side at what seemed to be a very great speed.
- * Altitude: The object seemed to be pretty high in the air. It was too high to be any kind of light from the ground and did not have a beam on it as thought it was being shined from the ground.
- * Heading: At the time it was spotted it did not seem to be heading in any direction but after watching it for awhile it started southwest at what seemed to be a very high speed.
- * Sound: I did not hear any sound at all from it.
- * Exhaust trail: It seemed to leave only a very faint exhaust trail when moving up and down or from side to side.
- * Effect on Clouds: A cloud came between the object and myself only once that I know of. I thought the object was gone but the soldier looking at it through the field glasses as the time said it was still there and that a cloud had come between us and the object. After the cloud passed we could see it just as good as we could before.

T/Sgt. LeRoy Ziegler A.S.W. 17614131

CONFIDENTIAL

THE OBJECT SHOWN THRU THE CLOUDS WHILE THE STARS DID NOT.

IT DISAPPEARED ABOUT 1955EST. IT DISAPPEARED ABOUT XXXXX WEST SOUTH WEST OF THE FIELD. THIS STATEMENT IS TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY JUDGEMENT AND KNOWLEDGE.

CPL. JAMES H. HUDSON 13220875

[USAF-SIGN1-526](#)

STATE OF OHIO }
COUNTY OF CLINTON}

CONFIDENTIAL

Before me, the undersigned authority for administering oaths of this kind, personally appeared one James H. Hudson, Cpl, ASN 13220873 who, being first duly sworn by me, deposes and says:

Subject: Unidentified Flying Object.
Time: January 7, 1948, 1920 EST
Station: Clinton County Army Air Field, Wilmington, Ohio
Location: Wilmington, Ohio
Weather: The weather at the time was light scattered coulis (clouds), with a haze towards the South West.

Statement: I, James H. Hudson, was on duty in the Control Tower at the time the object was sighted. It was called to our attention by the dispatcher in Operations. He asked us to see if it was an aircraft flare. We then looked at it with the field glasses. At the time first sighted, the object was white, then it turned red. There was only one object. The real shape of it could not be distinguished from this station 'til the object descended. Then it did, the object took a form of a cone or up-side-down triangle. (See Sketch "A"). When it climbed, it was right side up (See Sketch "B").

The above is to my observation and opinion the size of the object, I could not determine, but it was much larger than any star. On it's climb and descent it appeared to have a green mist following it (See Sketch "C"). The speed I could not determine in miles per hour for it hovered at what appeared to be one spot, then when it moved, it moved with great speed. It's maneuvers are as follows, from the tower (See Sketch "D").

Then it headed due South West at great speed and disappeared, at 1955 EST. The distance from the field when first sighted, estimated fifteen to twenty miles. There was no sound. The trail, maybe from exhaust, was green from the field glasses. The glasses have coated lens which may change the color some. At one time, during the time seen, a cloud passed under it and the light shown through. Example: Say you take a black wool cloth and pass it under a light bulb, you see no direct light, but you can still see that there is a light there behind it. (Continued on Page 2)

Further the deponent sayeth not.

JAMES H. HUDSON

cpl 13220873

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 20th day of January, 1948

[USAF-SIGN1-527](#)

PAGE II

STATE OF OHIO }
COUNTY OF CLINTON}

CONFIDENTIAL

Before me, the undersigned authority for administering oaths of this kind, personally appeared one James H. Hudson, Cpl, ASN 13220873 who, being first duly sworn by me, deposes and says:

The following information came over Plan 62:

This observation was made in Kentucky at the scene of the P-51 crash with 8" telescope:

1. Height, 4 miles.
2. Width, 43 feet.
3. Height of the object, 100 feet.
4. Speed at the time, 10 mph.
5. Shape, Cone.
6. Color, red with green tail.

This observation was taken at Godman Field, Kentucky, with a theolite:

1854 CST.
Elevation, 2.4 Azimuth 254.6
1856 CST.
Elevation, 2.0 Azimuth 253.9
1902 CST
Elevation, 1.2 Azimuth 253.0
1906 CST
Disappeared

The following is my opinion: The object is not a comet or star, but was man made. It was not a balloon, comet, star, aircraft of known type. The light did not come from an aircraft's running lights. The whole object appeared to be surrounded with burning gas or something that gave a light.

Further the deponent sayeth not.

JAMES H. HUDSON
cpl 13220873

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 20th day of January, 1948

George W. Hohanness
Captain, USAF
(Unintelligible)

S/Sgt. John P. Haag Statement

[USAF-SIGN1-519](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[USAF-SIGN1-520](#)

Witness observed very bright light in the sky southwest of Clinton County AF Base which appeared to be the complete wing of an aircraft on fire. When viewed thru field glasses from the Control Tower the object would gain and lose altitude very rapidly xxxxxx with barely any discernible forward or backward motion. At times it changed colors (from red to green, etc). At one time it disappeared behind the overcast but its light penetrated thru the overcast. At approximately 19:45 o'clock it began to move away from the field on a heading of 210° and disappeared over the horizon at approximately 19:55. (1st acct)

At the time of the sighting the weather was clear over the Base, with a South West wind which was moderate. There was an overcast in the SE which appeared to be a layer approximately 1000 feet thick. The height of this overcast was approximately 5,000 ft. Object seemed to be about 5 miles from the field at an altitude of from 15,000 to 20,000 ft. The object which appeared stationary at first resembled the complete wing of an airplane on fire. No beam of light was projected. After observing it with the naked eye for some five minutes, witness went to control tower and looked thru field glasses and then decided that it was not a comet or a falling star to his knowledge of astronomy. With the aid of the glasses the object appeared to go from an altitude of 15,000 to 10,000 feet without any noticeable forward or backward motion, and then back up to its original altitude very rapidly. This occurred some 3 or 4 times. When it moved a red light would dominate and change to a green light and then back to its original color. It then started to recede on a heading of 210° going behind the overcast. However, the light was discernible thru the overcast. It then moved very rapidly away, stopping momentarily for 3 or 4 minute intervals and then disappearing over the horizon at 19:55. No sound was heard. No photographs were taken (From a signed statement second account)

CONFIDENTIAL

[USAF-SIGN1-528](#)

To: Whom it may concern.

Inc 48c

On the evening of 7, January 1948 at approximately 19:30 o'clock the undersigned witnessed a very bright light in the sky, in the South West direction of C. C. A. F. which appeared to be the complete wing of an aircraft on fire with the naked eye. Then the following observation with the aid of field glasses from the control tower was made, the object would gain and lose altitude very rapidly without much noticed forward or backward motion and at times changing colors of red and green, at one time it disappeared behind the overcast but its light penetrated through the overcast. At approximately 19:45 o'clock the object began to move away from the field at a heading of 210 degrees and disappeared over the horizon at approximately 19:55.

S/Sgt. John P. Haag A.F. 17003481

[USAF-SIGN1-529](#)

STATE OF OHIO }
COUNTY OF CLINTON }

CONFIDENTIAL

Before me, the undersigned authority for administering oaths of this kind, personally appeared one John P. Haag, S/Sgt, AF 17003481 who, being first duly sworn by me, deposes and says: The unidentified flying object was sighted in a South-West position at Clinton County Army Air Base at a heading of approximately 210° on 7 January 1948, first being visible to this person at 19:35 o'clock when it was pointed out to me. The weather at the time was clear over the Base, with a South-West wind which was moderate. There seemed to be an overcast in the South-West which was a layer approximately 1000 feet thick. The height of this overcast was approximately 5000 feet. This one and only object which was seen with the naked eye seemed to be about five miles from the field at an estimated altitude of 15,000 to 20,000 feet. The object seemed to remain stationary as first seen, with a light which resembled a complete wing of an airplane on fire. There was no beam of light projected. Then, for a period of five minutes I just took occasional glances at it as I went up (to) the the Control Tower and observed the object through field glasses, which I then decided was not a comet or falling star, to my knowledge of astronomy. With the aid of field glasses, the object appeared to go from an altitude of 15,000 feet to 10,000 feet without any noticed forward or backward motion, and then back up to its original altitude very rapidly, about three or four times. It seemed that when the object moved, a red light would dominate and change to a green light and then back to it's original color. It then began moving at a heading of 210° and went behind the overcast and the light was seen through the overcast. The object moved very fast away; it stopped momentarily for three or four minutes and disappeared over the horizon at 19:55. No sound was heard from this object or no photographs taken.

Further the deponent sayeth not.

JOHN P. HAAG
S/Sgt. A.F. 17003481

Sworn to and subscribed before me this (unintelligible) day of January, 1948

Mr. Ralph L. Stirr Statement

[USAF-SIGN1-521](#)

CHECK-LIST - UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

[USAF-SIGN1-522](#)

Object seemed to be some sort of flare. Witness thought it was some aircraft in trouble. Requested the tower to take a look at it to determine if it were a flare. It appeared, with the naked eye, to be a very bright light the color of ordinary fire which lost and regained altitude in the manner of a parachute flare riding on thermals. The intensity of the light varied. This was attributed to clouds passing xxxxxx below; however, the light was readily discernible thru the clouds. The sky was clear to scattered. When the object was compared to the stars there was a decided difference. Stars were of the usual white; this object was yellow or flame color. When first seen it appeared to be about 4,000 ft but disappearing over the horizon would make it much higher. The movement was very slow in appearance and it left no trails or tails like a meteor or comet. Place of disappearance was approximately due west from position of observer.

CONFIDENTIAL

[USAF-SIGN1-534](#)

STATEMENT

Inc 48d

This is a statement of a sky phenomena observed by me on 7 January 1948, between the approximate hours of 1920 to 1950.

It appeared to be some sort of flare. My first reaction to the sight was the belief that an aircraft was in trouble, and had shot a flare to attract attention. I then requested the tower to take a look at the object through glasses so they could attempt to determine whether or not it was a flare.

With the naked eye it appeared to be a very bright light with the color of ordinary fire. I was not able to maintain a watch continuously, due to my duties, and see the whole pattern of movement. I did observe it long enough at intervals to note that it lost and regained altitude in the manner that a parachute flare would when riding on thermals. The intensity of the light varied. This can be attributed to clouds passing in front of the light, however, I was able to see the light when clouds obscured it.

The sky condition at the time was what I would say was clear to scattered. Stars directly above me were compared to the light of the object and there was a decided difference. The stars were of the usual white and the object was yellow or flare color.

The altitude evidently was very high. The object when first seen appeared to be in the neighborhood of four thousand feet, but disappearing over the horizon would make it much higher. It described an imaginary arc from the point first seen to the horizon. The movement was very slow in appearance and left no trails or tails like a meteor or comet. Place of disappearance was approximately due west from my position.

Signed _____
Ralph L. Stirr (civilian)

Part 2-11: "...Was Not The Planet Venus"

June 4, 2006

Tom DeMary:

Venus was not simply in the sky; it set at 19:58 EST in the WSW as seen from Wilmington on 7 Jan 1948, about as close in time and space to the disappearance of the UFO over the horizon as might ever be reported.

Loren Gross:

You may put my version of the Mantell case on the web site. It may help sort things out. Include all footnotes.

One of our most esteemed colleagues is one we mentioned earlier in this report, and he is Michael Swords. Mike is a very busy person who chooses not to get involved with, what we consider almost necessary, email. I communicate with him by phone or normal U. S. mail. Eight years ago (2000) Michael Swords put out his paper that was printed in the Journal of UFO Studies, entitled, [Project SIGN & the Estimate in the Situation](#). In this report he mentioned something that we were late in discovering:

"After the crash and investigation, the USAF (not Project Sign) said that Mantell had been chasing the planet Venus. No one involved with the investigation at Sign believed that, and in November 1948 they were still puzzling over this. Deyarmond wrote that this clearly was *not* Venus, and the case was unexplained."

Our investigation and chronology continues.

Brad Sparks:

The more I look into the Mantell case and the allegations of a Skyhook balloon or Venus as causes, the more problematic it gets. First though, I find it strange that the AF's official position for many years was that Mantell was killed chasing Venus, yet the AF (and Ruppelt) concealed the fact that its files contained analyses by top intelligence officers at AMC Project Sign flatly denying the Venus explanation in unusually strong language, based on Godman Field Commander, Col. Guy F. Hix's azimuth data, and a THEODOLITE TRACKING from Godman Field of the same or similar object two hours after Mantell's crash. I have never seen these documents or statements or THEODOLITE TRACKING ever pointed out by anyone before (Ruppelt concealed them), so here we are finding out about a coverup of the Mantell case, now in 2006, 58 years after the fact:

(See [USAF-SIGN7-28](#) posted by Dan Wilson on June 3rd):

An AMC memo of 8 Nov 48 by C. A. Griffith, Chief of Operations Section, AMC Intell Dept (written by Sign's Project Officer Capt Robert R. Sneider) states sharply:

"4. The evidence obtained from MCREXE44 conclusively proves that this object was not the planet Venus."

Conclusively. Have you ever seen an AF document make such a strong statement in a pro-UFO direction??? And this was AFTER the Project Sign TOP SECRET Estimate of the Situation had already been rejected by the Air Staff in August and Oct 1948, when the Project Sign staff was demoralized as a result.

Then Albert Deyarmond, Asst Deputy for Technical Analysis in the AMC Intell Dept, comments on this analysis, based again on the (covered up) THEODOLITE TRACKING and azimuth data, two days later with his own conclusion that the Mantell case was "UNEXPLAINED":

[MAXW-PBB3-704 \(*\)](#)

"10 Nov 48

"It is apparent from the data given above, that the object sighted at Godman Air Force Base on 7 January 1948 was not the planet Venus. Therefore, this sighting must be considered as unexplained."

I don't know about you but I feel this document is something of a bombshell, virtually the EQUIVALENT of the TS Estimate of the Situation, it is just short of stating "extraterrestrial." And as we ought to know, in the Navy document I found that quotes the suppressed Project Sign Interim Status Report of 30 Nov 1948 (the actual Ghost of the Estimate, not the AIR 203 study which said nothing about ETH), they were still asserting in that Interim Report the ETH or "inter-planetary" as a possible explanation for flying discs.

I also want to convey how amazed I am to find so many AF brass inside the Control Tower at Godman Field during the Mantell incident. I have never heard this before. This was not some case of a bunch of dumbcluck hillbilly enlisted men and low-ranking green officers. The base CO was there, Col. Hix, along with Lt Col. E. G. Wood probably his deputy, Base Operations Officer Capt Cary Carter, Capt James Duesler, and more, this is just off the top of my head. Also there was a Control Tower shift change at 3 PM in the middle of the Mantell chase, so an entirely new set of Tower personnel were then exposed to the whole incident, effectively doubling the number of personnel involved.

This reminds me that back in 1975 I interviewed Gen. Garland and was surprised to hear him say "I knew Tommy Mantell" and he said he thought highly of him (if I can find my notes I can check the exact quotes I think I made) Clearly Mantell was not a hick barnyard pilot in some hillbilly Kentucky ANG but was known to important AF brass as having a high reputation long before his death.

And although Ruppelt lies and covers up a lot in this case, as he does in so many others, he does let slip (as he sometimes does in other cases) one intriguing comment of special human interest (p. 37):

"A long-time friend of Mantell's went on record as saying that he'd flown with him several years and knew him personally. He couldn't conceive of Mantell's even thinking about disregarding his lack of oxygen. Mantell was one of the most cautious pilots he knew.

"The only thing I can think," he commented, "was that he was after something that he believed to be more important than his life or his family."

Keep that ultimate sacrifice in mind before you dismiss this case as just a stupid IFO and dumb pilot error in flying too high without oxygen. There are many troublesome aspects of this case that call for a fair hearing at last be given to Mantell. Maybe it will turn out that it was an IFO and was hypoxia/pilot error. But let's finally review ALL of the available FACTS and DOCUMENTS FIRST before doing so shall we?

Yes Venus set as would be seen from Clinton County AFB, Wilmington, Ohio, the time I get by US Naval Observatory online calculations at 7:56 PM EST (19:56 rather than 19:58) or 6:56 PM CST the time zone used for most of the Godman Field reporting. The Clinton County AFB Control Tower was about 3 miles southeast of Wilmington so a more pinpoint calculation based on its exact coordinates might account for the couple minutes' difference:

Clinton County AFB, Wilmington, Ohio
Control Tower 39 25 47 N, 83 47 32 W elev about 1055 ft

However, at about the same time as the 6-7 PM (CST) sightings from Clinton County AFB, the same or similar sighting was made from Lockbourne AFB, Columbus, Ohio, where a key witness in the Control Tower was an AMATEUR ASTRONOMER with 6 years' affiliation with the Hayden Planetarium/American Museum of Natural History.

True, witnesses can see Venus or stars on the horizon changing colors, twinkling, seeming to move up-down, side-to-side, back-and-forth, without actually going anywhere, due to autokinesis effects of involuntary eyeball movements viewing largely featureless backgrounds like the sky where the eye cannot hold its focus perfectly still.

But the amateur astronomer witness in the Lockbourne Control Tower states that he saw the light in the WSW at about 15 degs elevation, a very specific figure, at roughly 6:45 PM (CST), TWO HOURS AFTER SUNSET, and that it was red, changing to amber-yellow for 1-2 secs at a time, and INTENSELY BRIGHT "greater than that of any star" and comparable to a RUNWAY LANDING LIGHT AT "FULL INTENSITY" at 500 feet away. Assuming a runway light is 2 feet in diameter (someone could check on that) the angular size would be over 1/3 Full Moon, much much larger than a star or planet or pinpoint.

It appeared to be circular with "a thin wisp of tail extending towards the horizon" and its length about 5 object diameters. Obviously very specific and hard to imagine anyone with astronomy background can extrapolate 5 times a pinpoint, it had to have an extended angular diameter. Presumably this "tail" was about 2 Full Moons in length.

Then at the very specific time of 6:50 PM this object suddenly dropped to the horizon in about 4 seconds, hovered there for 3 seconds, then climbed back to its previous position (about 15 degs elevation) in 3 seconds, but not in a straight line, but in an elliptical course counterclockwise. That does not sound like autokinesis of a star or planet Venus. He estimated its speed in this rapid maneuver as about 500 mph and that it appeared to be about 5 miles away from Lockbourne. Allowing for human error in estimating the 15 deg elevation (witnesses usually overestimate) so that it was say 5-10 degs elevation, in fact, that is roughly correct for a 5-mile distance moving 5-10 degs in 4 secs (400-800 mph).

Then it lowered to the horizon and faded out of sight at 6:55 PM. Yes this was the setting time of Venus to within a minute or so, and it was in the same direction (WSW). Extraordinary coincidence.

This just screams out "astronomical"!!!! But before you decide to dismiss this as Venus just consider a few more troubling observations by the amateur astronomer in the Lockbourne Control Tower (and the sightings by the 6 Tower and base personnel at Clinton Co. AFB at the

same time). And keep in mind this is a PARTIAL analysis based on only a small part of the scattered files on this case in the BB files (it is very time-consuming pulling this all together, a detailed Chronology minute by minute is desperately needed and it needs to watch for numerous typos and other errors in the AF files and not just blindly accept what they read in black and white):

He reported that there was "a high overcast and not one heavenly body was visible." How then could Venus have been visible? He concluded "The object apparently being under the overcast, and its erratic movement proves that it was not an astronomical phenomenon."

So then we have to postulate that the overcast was not overcast but a haze that Venus could shine through. But that does not explain the Clinton Co. AFB observations which in fair agreement with Lockbourne describe a vertically elongated lighted object, specifically in a triangular or ice-cream cone shape and colored red in parts. The Clinton Co. AFB witnesses say the object was so bright that when a cloud drifted in front of it the light shined right through, even though the cloud blotted out the stars (from there the weather was not overcast but scattered clouds). They made several drawings of this Skyhook-balloon shape, which Ruppelt redrew again to show how they were so similar to a Skyhook which he drew right next to them. Yet it was 2 HOURS AFTER SUNSET and a Skyhook could not possibly be seen.

The covered-up THEODOLITE TRACKING from Godman Field raises potentially insuperable problems for a Skyhook theory and of course it totally excludes Venus (which was 40-50 degs away), which could hardly be seen in daylight anyway.

The THEODOLITE TRACKING was made by 1st Lt Paul I. Orner, Airways and Air Communications Service, ATC (Air Transport Command), Detachment 733-5, Air Force Base Unit (103rd MCS Sq), Godman Field, he was the Detachment Commander.

Lt Orner was in the Control Tower during the Mantell chase and he records a number of key facts, including the fact that Mantell's wingman Lt Clements refueled and went back up to search for the UFO and for Mantell, but with oxygen, went 100 miles out, (up to 33,000 ft) which would be over past Franklin where Mantell had crashed (but no one had heard the report yet) and just over the Kentucky/Tenn border. Yet he saw absolutely nothing, he saw no object, as he reported to the Tower at about 4:45 PM. If it was a Skyhook balloon why didn't Clements see it?

Why didn't Mantell and his 3 wingmen see the Skyhook on their way in to the Louisville/Godman area? In fact the Mantell flight was SPECIFICALLY ASKED by Godman Tower when they approached Godman if they had seen the object on their way in!!! This isn't just assumption based on a hope, but a specific query put to them while they were still in flight!

Godman base Commander Col. Hix was phoned about the object sighted by the Tower at about 2:15 PM and he arrived at the Tower at about 2:20 PM to see for himself. Sure enough he saw the stationary white object at about azimuth 215 degs (bet. SW and SSW) about 1/4 Full Moon in angular size. When viewed through the 8x binoculars Col Hix could sometimes see RED COLOR bordering the top or the bottom. Skyhooks in mid-afternoon sunlight are WHITE NOT RED. Only sunset lighting gives them a fiery red coloration. Col Hix and the Tower personnel lost sight of the object at 3:50 PM when it went behind a cloud, and it had remained "stationary for 1-1/2 hours" according to Hix's statement. They did not know yet that Capt Mantell had already crashed at about 3:18 PM. About this time (maybe 3:45), Lt Clements had refueled and went up in his F-51D to look for Mantell and the UFO and he was told by the Tower that the object had disappeared behind a cloud but gave him the last known heading, apparently 220 degs (I'm still trying to verify and correct the bad typos in AF's poorly retyped copies of key witness statements like Clements' and many others). Then they told him the adjust heading by 5 degs to the left, apparently to the 215 azimuth at which the Tower had watched the UFO for 1-1/2 hours. (Mantell had reportedly followed a 210 heading but all these figures need to be carefully checked.)

Lt Orner also saw the small white object stationary object in the SW sky from the Tower with Col Hix and the many other AF officers and personnel. Orner said that through binoculars it looked like a white parachute with bright sunlight reflecting off the top. Sounds like a SKYHOOK balloon!!! EXCEPT that he too saw "RED LIGHT" on the lower part of it.

This is Lt. Orner's report of his THEODOLITE TRACKING of the UFO from Godman Field which began at about 5:35 PM (CST), or 1/2 HOUR AFTER SUNSET for a high-altitude Skyhook balloon (almost an hour after sunset on the ground):

"At about 1735 CST I returned to the Control Tower and [saw] a bright light different than a star at a position of about 240° azimuth and 8° elevation from the Control Tower. This was a round object. It seemed to have a dark spot in the center and the object moved north and disappeared from the horizon at a point 250° from the Tower. The unusual fact about this object was the fact that it remained visible and glowed through the haze near the Earth when no other stars were visible and did not disappear until it went below the level of the Earth in a manner similar to the sun or moon setting. This object was viewed and tracked with the Weather Station theodolite from the hangar roof."

We now know that the 1-6-48 Skyhook launch from Milaca, Minn., (NOT Camp Ripley 43 miles away, that was g.d. lie) reached its MAXIMUM HEIGHT of 80,000 ft in 3 hours of launch, or presumably at about 11 AM on the 6th. It could therefore not go any higher. Thus the nonsense about 100,000 ft is sheer falsehood. It had gone almost DUE SOUTH from Minnesota, slightly to the W, at about 190 degs. It did not get tracked heading SE towards Kentucky so it is anyone's guess where it actually went, unless there are lots of news reports charting its course along the way. There are no upper winds data in 1948 from 80,000 ft so no way to check using meteorological records.

That means that when Lt Orner tracked the object by Godman's theodolite at 5:35 PM CST at 240° azimuth and 8° elevation, if it was a Skyhook balloon at 80,000 ft it had to be about 100 miles away to the WSW, which would be the vicinity of HOPKINSVILLE, Kentucky. YES THAT HOPKINSVILLE from the 1955 incident. It would NOT be anywhere near Nashville, Tenn., where famed astronomer Carl Seyfert sighted from 4:30 to 4:45 PM CST what he called a balloon with cable to a suspended basket (the Skyhook pictures of 1-6-48 do not show a "basket" or any other large object hanging beneath, only relatively tiny payloads).

Even worse, when Lt Orner lost track of the UFO in the theodolite it was at the horizon (0 degs elevation) still farther north at 250 degs azimuth. An 80,000 ft balloon would have to be at about 350 MILES away at that point over southern Missouri!!! Even more discrepant with Seyfert's sighting in Nashville, which would also be about 350 miles away. AND IT IS IN PITCH DARKNESS!!!! The Skyhook could not have been seen!!!

Finally there is a question about the SIZE of the Skyhook launched on 1-6-48, which affects whether Godman or Mantell could even have seen the balloon. Claims of 100 ft size are belied by the tracking report which states that the dozen or so balloons launched there from late 1947 to early 1949 were 70 ft and 72.8 ft balloons, not 100 ft. Also unclear and being checked is whether this 70-72.8 ft size applies to the entire package or just the gas bag that is lit up by reflected sunlight. Photos of the 1-6-48 launch show that about half its length was the essentially invisible cabling to the relatively tiny payloads and half the gas bag, which might mean the envelope was only about 35 ft in size.

Simple physics and human physiological optics shows that the Minimum Angle of Resolution of about 1 arcminute (for normal 20/20 vision) would limit the maximum distance a 35 ft Skyhook balloon gas bag could be seen is only about 23 MILES!!! One could not see ANY details, it would be a mere PINPOINT at that maximum possible distance for Skyhook visibility. That would raise the question of how on earth Mantell could see a Skyhook from 90 miles away in order to chase it 90 miles to his death.

Dan Wilson:

After the fantastic ball made a high speed, six mile circle of the entire airbase, it returned to its original position over the runway where it drifted around awhile and then dipped down touching a grass strip that was a cleared extension of the runway. Pickering was warned not to discuss the UFO incident with anyone. USAF-SIGN8-217 & 218 were represented earlier in THIS chapter, Part 2_11 (and provided as evidence at the end of this chapter/part) in the redacted one-page version of those two docs in document [MAXW-PBB3-704 \(*\)](#)
<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/lockbourne480107dir.htm>

[USAF-SIGN8-217](#)

[USAF-SIGN8-218](#)

Frame 217 is the questionnaire for Incident 30a, Albert R. Pickering. Frame 218 is a more detailed statement presented below. .

Frame 218 transcription:

When first sighted around 1925 Eastern Standard Time, the object appeared to hover in one position for quite some time, moving very little. It disappeared once for about a minute (presumably entering overcast). After emerging below the overcast it circled one place for the duration of three 360° turns, then moved to another position and circled some more. Turns required approximately 30 to 40 seconds each - diameter estimated about 2 miles.

In moving from one place to another a tail (approximately the same color - amber - as the object) appeared which seemed to be about 5 times the length of the object. The shape of the object was either round or oval and appeared about the size of a C-47 plane. Just before disappearing it came very near the ground, stayed about 10", then climbed back to its original position at a very fast rate of speed, leveled off, and disappeared into the overcast (10,000 ft) heading 120" (120°). Its speed was greater than 500 MPH in level flight. Visible for some 30 minutes. No noise or sound could be heard. The color of the object itself was an amber light but the intensity was not sufficient to obscure the outline of the configuration which was approximately round. During the up and down movement no maneuvering took place. Motions like that of an elevator - climbing and descending vertically. The exhaust trail was noticeable only during forward speed. At one time the object appeared to touch the ground.

NOTE: Appeared approximately 3 to 5 miles away from Lockbourne in immediate vicinity of Commercial Point (Reports from Clinton Cy Airport, Godman Fld & from pilot of plane in vicinity of Columbus indicate the distance to be much greater)

NOTE ON RELIABILITY: See incidents 30, 30b and 30c - corroborating accounts

[USAF-SIGN1-263](#)

DETACHMENT 733rd AF BASE UNIT
103rd AACS SQUADRON
LOCKBOURNE ARMY AIR BASE
COLUMBUS 17, OHIO

SUBJECT: Report of Unusual Circumstance.
TO: Commanding Officer
332d Fighter Wing
Lockbourne Army Air Base
Columbus 17, Ohio

On Wednesday January 7, 1948 at about 1925 Eastern time I observed in the sky an object which I could not identify. It appeared to hover in one position for quite some time, moving very little. It disappeared once for about a minute and I assumed it entered the overcast, which was about 10,000 feet. After descending again below the overcast it circled one place for the duration of three 360 degree turns, then moved to another position to circle some more. Turns required approximately 30 to 40 seconds each, diameter estimated about two miles.

In moving from one place to another a tail was visible or approximate five times the length of the object. Not knowing how close or far the object was from me at the time, I could not estimate the size very accurately, but it appeared as large or larger than one of our C 47 planes, and of a different shape. Either round or oval shaped. Just before leaving it came to very near the ground, staying down for about ten seconds, then climbed at a very fast rate back to its original altitude, 10,000 feet, leveling off and disappearing into the overcast heading 120°. Its speed was greater than 500 mph in level flight. It was visible to me for a period of twenty minutes. No noise or sound could be detected. The color was amber light but not sufficiently bright to cover or obscure the outline of the configuration which was approximately round. During up and down movement no maneuvering took place. Motions was same as an elevator, climbing and descending vertically. Exhaust trail was noticeable only during forward speed. It appeared as a thin mist approximately same color (amber) as the object. Length about 5 times length of object.

During descent it appeared to touch the ground or was very close to touching it. It was approximately 3 to 5 miles away from Lockbourne Air Base in immediate vicinity of COMMERCIAL POINT. It positively was not a star, comet or any astronomical body to the best of my knowledge of such things. I also rule out the possibility of it being a balloon, flare, dirigible, military or private aircraft.

[USAF-SIGN1-264](#)

Ltr, Subj: Report of Unusual Circumstance, 14 Jan 48 (Cont'd)

I am 26 years old and in good health and have excellent vision. I have been actively engaged in aviation for 6 years. I have a private pilot license and spent 3 years 10 months in the U.S. Army Air Corps as a Sergeant link trainer instructor, instrument flight observer.

The statements made herein are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and may be used for any official purpose as deemed necessary.

ALBERT R. PICKERING
VHF/DF Operator
CAF

Brad Sparks:

I can't even digest all of this!!! Wow wow WOWWWW!!! Where is the part about how the UFO "dipped down touching a grass strip that was a

cleared extension of the runway"??? And Pickering being warned not to talk? I am on overload and can't find things. Too much data. Three turns of 360 degs each 30-40 secs in a diameter of about 2 miles is 600-700 mph at 7 g's centripetal acceleration!!!! (Pickering had estimated 500+ mph.) And almost landed at one point! If more distant than the 3-5 miles estimated then all these velocity and acceleration figures scale up accordingly.

Fran Ridge:

See Loedding "issued instructions that no report...would be made until further instructions were given." (Our findings May 28, 2006)

Comments: Stated on page 2 Part 2: Mr. Loedding a civilian investigator from Wright Field, arrived at Godman Field on January 9, 1948 and made a thorough investigation. Part 3. After obtaining statements and full information on the matter, he (Loedding) issued instructions that no report on the subject would be made until further instructions were given.

Part 2-12: Pickering Re-Interviewed

June 5, 2006

Dan Wilson:

Pickering re-interviewed by Bill Jones, April 12, 1977. Taken from UFO's: A History 1948 - Loren Gross

http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/pickerings_interview_jones.htm.

On April 12, 1977, Ohio UFO researcher William E. Jones, interviewed Pickering about his sighting. The story that emerged was slightly different, and if the details were accurate, then the Air Force explanation of Venus was wholly unsatisfactory. Pickering told Jones:

This night the overcast was 1200 feet. I remember this just as though it was yesterday. I know what the weather was - 1200 feet, heavy overcast, with a 10 mile-per-hour southwest wind. It was dark. Inside the shack, I never turned the lights on because the illumination of all the dials, meters, and everything was sufficient for just sitting in there listening to the radio.

The only time I'd turn the lights on would be when an aircraft would be in trouble and call me for an emergency. Then I'd turn the light on so I could be sure to given him the right reading. So I was laying there on my back just looking out the window. Practically right over my head - it was at a 30 degree angle from vertical - down through the overcast came this great big, round, red object. The instant I glimpsed it - I was looking in that direction - I thought it was an aircraft falling in flames. So I jumped off of the box and started to reach for the mike of the telephone, and I see that it isn't an aircraft. I know by the time 2 seconds has passed that it is no aircraft. The tower called me even before I had a chance to call him and said, "What the hell is that out there over your station?" I told him I don't know. I said it's just a great big round red ball.

I tell him to call airways... He calls the airways operator and him and the captain, the meteorologist that night - they come to the door and they look at it.

It stops just as it comes through the overcast and hovers there in the air. There's no sound that you can hear at all. It don't stand perfectly stationary. It maneuvers around and goes a hundred feet or kinda circles. It just is maneuvering around in the air without any great distance. After it's been there for about five minutes - and all the time I'm trying to contact another aircraft on the radio and so is the tower. We've got different frequencies so we're trying to call an aircraft to take a pass through there and tell us what it is.

Well, it starts from an absolute perfectly stationary position and makes a circle of the entire base. Now, the north/south runway is 1 mile long and there's at least 3/4-mile from the end of the runway to the limits of the base at the north. And there's about a quarter mile of so, maybe, to the south. So this makes this object make a circle of better than 6 miles, since it's 2 miles in diameter, it has to be more than 6 miles.

It does that, and we timed it (I did). It accelerated to a speed of an (sic) excess of a thousand miles an hour. It comes back and stops instantly. It don't slow down... and coast to a stop. It stopped like it run into a wall.

(Q) How many times did it circle the base?

Just once. Just one big circle. When it comes back it's still right over my head. It has drifted to the Southwest.

(Q) So you're at the south end of the runway?

Yeah. I'm on the east side of the runway about - I'll say - two maybe 300 ft. This object has drifted. When it came back, it stopped... It wasn't really drifting. It just had moved southwest. Not that's against the wind, since the wind was from the Southwest. When it got down nearly to the edge of the base, just a little past the end of the runway, it descended to the ground vertically. It just came to the ground and stayed at the ground 10 maybe 15 seconds. [It] rose vertically back up to just under the overcast.

We had gotten in contact with an airplane, by that time, that was coming from Wright Field. He said he couldn't see anything. He was too far out yet.

Well, this is an assumption, but I think the object itself detected this airplane approaching Lockbourne because, just before the airplane arrived at Lockbourne, it went back up into the overcast and disappeared.

(Q) You never saw it again?

No!

It didn't change color. Other than the fact... if it did get dimmer it was wisps of clouds that was going between me and it. I didn't see the thing get dimmer and brighter as some people have described them.

I eliminate first... you couldn't have seen the full moon had it been out. It can't be the moon or the planet Venus, or some other astronomical objects that they're talking about... It can't be a balloon because a balloon would not drift against the wind. It can't be a light because, if it has been a light when it made the circle of the base, it would have elongated as it got out away from me. It didn't change shape other than the fact I attribute to an optical illusion. It went so fast it looked like - you know your eye retains an image for an instant... it went fast enough that your eye retained a little of that image behind it.

There was no exhaust.

My estimate as to the size of it I base on the fact that I know how high it was. I know how far it was away from me - 1200 feet. If I hadn't had the weather report in front of me and it had been a clear night, I couldn't have told you how big it was. But, since I know it was 1200 ft., plus a very little, since it was at a 30-degree angle, it wouldn't be much more than 1200. Then I can tell you reasonably close to how big it was. It was bigger than a one-car garage and it wasn't as big as my two-car garage.

The object when it came down to the ground was even closer than 1200 ft. I would estimate it was a little less than half that because if you take a 30-degree angle from here to the ceiling is 8 ft. If you drop a string from that 30-degree angle, it's going to hit out here, not quite half 8 ft. So it was a good bit closer to me when it came to the ground than when I first sighted it. But I went out and looked to see if the grass was burned, mashed, or if there was prints where it landed, and there wasn't.

It is at this point, if this statement as provided to Jones is accurate, that the Venus explanation is eliminated. Pickering gave the impression here that the object had circled all around the field, that it had not only been in the southwestern sky, and that there was a solid overcast that came down to 1200 feet.

The discrepancy is that Pickering's original statement gives the impression that the UFO had circled an area, to the southwest, and that it had stayed in the southwest. He also suggested that the sky during the day had been overcast, but the overcast had been at 10,000 feet and not 1200.

If the earlier statement is true, and if the Air Force report that the overcast had begun to break up is true, then Venus, as the culprit, is still viable. Nobody that I know of - maybe the Army did, or the Air Force - [took] radioactive measurements, but not while I was there...

They flew us to Wright Field three different times for interviews when this Project Blue Book was on. They wouldn't tell us anything...

(Q) How many witnesses were there, then?

There would be four, total. The Captain [identified from records as Charles E. McGee], which was the meteorologist. And Frank Isley [Eisille], which was in airways that night... the fella that was in the tower [Alex A. Boudreaux]. In fact, I've forgotten the names of nearly all of them... that's been almost 30 years ago.

(Q) Who did you talk to at Wright Field?

I don't remember whether it was Ruppelt or not, now. [In January 1948, it wouldn't have been Ruppelt] In fact, we talked to at least five different individuals, all officers... You'd talk with one awhile and go out. Then you would sit there... and another would come in and talk with you...

It's rather simple as far as I'm concerned. I saw it. It came down through the overcast. It made those, if you want to call them erratic maneuvers in the air. Didn't seem to be erratic from the standpoint of intelligence. It looked to me like the thing was intelligently controlled... it wasn't a haphazard performance it put on...

(Q) How long did it take to go around the base?

I forget the seconds it took, but the thing you do... you count [like you learn to count as a pilot to time a turn]... We calculated at the time that it wasn't less... than 1000 mph.

(Q) What time did this happen?

It was about 10 after 7 in the evening. Five to 10 after when it first appeared. And it was visible for a little better than twenty minutes.

(Q) was it light at that time or was it dark?

It was dark.

(Q) Completely dark?

Yeah! After 7:00 in the winter time it's dark.

(Q) You say it was exactly the day of the Mantell case. So you know what day it was... You're sure it was the night of the day Mantell had his accident?

Yeah!

(Q) How could you pin that down?

Because we heard Mantell's death. All of it was on our communications.

(Q) That night?

That day, after it happened.

(Q) So you heard it... on the same day?

Yeah!

(Q) So you had that on your mind, I take it?

I didn't have it in mind at the time I seen this. I mean, I wasn't thinking about it. I figured after the event that it [was] possibly the same object that he was chasing...

(Q) Could you describe the object a little more?

Perfectly round. Just as round as a basketball. Perfect sphere.

(Q) It was a sphere and not a disc seen...

If it was a disc, it always kept either the bottom or top side to us, and was sitting on edge. Now, I couldn't say for sure that it wasn't, but it would have to of have been sitting on edge with its flat side facing me at all times. It certainly wouldn't do that with its maneuvering around and its complete circle of the whole base and coming down to the ground...

(Q) [Did it illuminate the ground when it came down?]

I don't know whether it did or not because I was at the same level as it and it being down at that distance, I didn't see any illumination on the ground. Had I been higher... maybe I could have seen some illumination on the ground...

(Q) Did the object... pass behind any other object?

No! It landed between me and a fence. There was a fence at the edge of the base. I couldn't see the fence [between me and the object. So it must have been between me and the fence.]

(Q) Could you describe the motion it made before it went around the base or after it came back?

The motion itself was like it wanted to mozzey [sic] around. [Drift a little in different directions, like it wanted to stay in that general area.]

(Q) No pattern that you could discern?

No pattern at all... this was a slow movement backwards and forwards.

(Q) From the time you first saw it, did it immediately begin these movements?

It stopped there dead... between 1 and 2 minutes. Then it started maneuvering around... they were curved lines... It stayed in an area less than a city block... [Then it went around the base.]

(Q) How long did it make the maneuvers [before going around the base], timewise [sic]?

If it was in sight for 20 minutes, it was visible stationary at the start for say 2 minutes, it made these maneuvers around for awhile. Stopped stationary again for a couple more minutes. So, it took it some time for it to come to the ground. Time to go back up. It was stationary after it went back up. So you would have to just guess. I didn't time it...

(Q) How long did it stay there...

Well, I'd guess 3 or 4 minutes before it came down to the ground. It stopped and stayed stationary and may have moved 20 to 50 ft at that time because it didn't necessarily look like it was screwed into position. When it did come down, it just started descending vertically... just perfectly straight like an elevator. I would definitely say 15 seconds would cover the length of time it was on the ground. And maybe 10 would... then rose vertically the same way.

When it went up into the overcast, the overcast - bottom side of it - was evidently thin in places because I saw it as it was going up into the overcast for say 3 lengths... I could see it that long. See it disappear gradually into the overcast even though it went up at a rate [pause] it went into the overcast. When it went into the overcast, I could see the overcast between me and it.

(Q) Did it reflect light on the overcast?

No! That was a little bit peculiar because had it been shining a light out from itself, as bright as it looked to me, it looked like that it would be illuminating something around it. All I could do was see it through the overcast...

It went up and stopped below the overcast and stayed there maybe 2 or 3 minutes and then went up into the overcast. And all this time I'm on the radio, telephone in one hand and microphone in the other... trying all frequencies... trying to contact an aircraft. that the only one we contacted, coming from Wright Field. He said he couldn't see anything because he was too far out...

(Q) Did you turn in a written report on this?

We signed a typewritten report that they made over there. We didn't write it ourselves.

(Q) Was it classified at any time?

It was classified... we was warned not to talk about it...

(Q) Do you remember the contents of the report circulated about Mantell that day?

The reports was that he ran out of oxygen. He exceeded the safe altitude and didn't have oxygen aboard and he was at [15,000 ft]...

Part of his transmission was - now this I won't say for sure - he either said it's gigantic and it's metallic or it's monstrous and metallic. But I think he said it's gigantic and metallic.

(Q) Was this in the report your read there that day?

I didn't read 'em. I heard part of 'em.

(Q) They were coming over the radio?

Yeah! Coming over the telephone and radio. There was an hour or so of discussion about it was over and when they found the wreckage, they determined 2 or 3 days after this that he had become unconscious and the airplane disintegrated in the air because it dived.

A P-51 don't disintegrate that easy, I don't think, in the air...

(Q) Was this normal radio transmission you were picking up of the search?

They was relaying it, evidently, from the tower in Kentucky, from the people in contact with him, through our tower at Columbus. How this was accomplished, I don't know. We had direct lines, at the time, everyplace. I could punch a button and call Cincinnati, direct line telephone.

(Q) Was this normal procedure for them to pipe in this sort of information over the...

No, we didn't do it very often, but... it was possible to do it. I think it was such an unusual situation was the reason they did it. We had written reports of the conversation that we got to read. I don't remember now the exact wording of this here conclusion of the board of inquiry when they have an airplane loss... but I know the conclusion was that at 15,000 ft he ran out of oxygen. The last words he said, "I'm closing in on the object. It's gigantic and it's metallic." Now, that's the last words he transmitted that we heard.

(Q) Did you actually hear his transmission?

Yeah!

... It [the object] was low when he first observed it. And it started climbing and he started climbing.

(Q) Were you there when this started?

Yeah! This was sometimes [sic] in the afternoon, I think... I was on duty. It must have been in the afternoon.

...There was confusion. Couple trying to talk at the same time. Probably excitement in their voices. After it was over, there was still some discussion going on. This direct line to Cincinnati, I talked to 'em down there and they was talking to Kentucky. None of this am I clear on. None of that stuck in my mind [like my own sighting].

(Q) How long after... did you see the object?

It was that night. I just about forgotten all about it [Mantell]. In fact, that wasn't even on my mind. When I was laying there I was just listening to the radio and looking out the window... I kept an AM radio on all the time [but turned down so as not to drown out the official radio].

...He [Mantell] had crashed before the conversations terminated, because there were other aircraft flying. He was ordered not - I didn't hear this [but learned through channels later on] - to ease in with it. To break-off [sic] at 10,000 ft.

He said he was at 15,000 ft and closing. It's gigantic. It's metallic. It was the last words he said.

(Q) You heard that?

Yeah! I don't know whether it was "gigantic" or "monstrous". I'm 99 percent sure it was "gigantic" - the word he used.

(Q) Were you aware at that time [of the skyhook balloon launchings, some of which were reportedly used for aerial photographic reconnaissance of Russia?]

Had he been an idiot, he might not have been able to tell a balloon. But a combat pilot with as many hours as he had... [it doesn't happen.]

(Q) Do you know what the shape of the object was that Mantell reported?

It was supposed to be the same as the one I saw. A perfect sphere. It was - he didn't say it that I heard it - [I learned it later.] They have tapes, I think, of his entire conversation.

Part 2-13: "Appeared to Touch the Ground"

June 5, 2006

Dan Wilson:

Pickering re-interviewed by Bill Jones, April 12, 1977. Taken from UFO's: A History 1948 - Loren Gross. (Text in previous chapter)

http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/pickerings_interview_jones.htm.

The Pickering interview was just presented in full in previous chapter, Part 2-12.

Brad Sparks:

Where is the part about how the UFO "dipped down touching a grass strip that was a cleared extension of the runway"?

Fran Ridge:

The UFOH 1948 is where that came from, but two docs I found say "came very near". Doc USAF-SIGN8-217 is the Pickering questionnaire, followed by the page in question, frame 218, which can be found at the end of this "chapter".

<http://nicap.org/docs/mantell/lockbourne480107dir.htm>

[USAF-SIGN8-218 \(*\)](#)

In fact, this is one Wendy Connors found a long time ago

<http://nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantdoc4aorig.htm>

Brad Sparks:

I thought your other postings already answered this, it was a 1977 APRO interview of Pickering. That Jan 14, 1948, doc states it "appeared to touch the ground or was very close to touching it," which confirms the 1977 interview.

Fran Ridge:

I don't know (without looking) about the interview, but FTR we will have to go with the two docs that say "very near the ground". Don't you think?

Brad Sparks:

No. I wasn't challenging it, just wondering. The Jan 14, 1948, report fully confirms it, that it "appeared to touch the ground" or came very close (an apparent caution about saying too much that would sound too unbelievable).

Fran Ridge:

Dan, Since earlier documents (two of them) say "very near the ground" it would seem that the 1977 interview might reflect either Pickering's thoughts that year or an error in the interview notes. But as Brad pointed out, Pickering probably was afraid to put into the 1948 report (remember landing cases were rare in 1948) what he really saw, especially when he was warned not to even talk about the incident.

Brad Sparks:

Yes but the Jan 14, 1948, report DOES say it "appeared to touch the ground" or come close to it, so the impression was not invented only decades later in 1977 for APRO, it was reported all along just not elaborated on because of understandable sensitivities.

Tom DeMary:

The "Wendy" document is at the Blue Book site. In the 1977 interview Pickering also claims that the object made a circle around the entire air base, something not claimed in anyone's (including Pickering's) 1948 Blue Book statements. That seems more than "a little off" to me. The 1977 interview is included in K. Randle's Mantell article at UFO updates.

[USAF-SIGN1-263 \(*\)](#)

Brad Sparks:

Well I beg to differ. Pickering's 1948 account specifically places the object maneuvering over Commercial Point 3-5 miles to the WSW of Lockbourne and disappearing into the high overcast at 120 degs (ESE) at the end of 20 minutes of maneuvers which had included a landing or near-landing. This makes a circling of the base consistent with appearing on both sides of Lockbourne, east and west. Can't make it out to be in one direction only so as to make it Venus -- which was not in the ESE at 120 degs azimuth. Thanks for locating the BB Archive doc refs as it led me to the unsanitized name of the Lockbourne amateur astronomer Control Tower operator I previously discussed who turns out to be Frank M. Eisele. This is now bringing to memory that maybe McDonald investigated this case and maybe interviewed Eisele and others (it's a vague memory, not sure).

Fran Ridge:

I won't put this (transcript) on CE and SHG yet. Want you to read it first, then I'll post it. Be ready to respond to http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107_WFIE.htm

Brad Sparks:

Well in a way it's laughable. Mantell chased the object for 90 miles from Godman to Franklin. A 100-foot Skyhook isn't even visible to the naked eye from 90 miles distance. That's an angular size of 0.7 arcminute and Minimum Angle of Resolution is about 1 arcminute. Sorry doesn't wash, it's a violation of the laws of physics and physiological optics. Kevin seems to think that Mantell could climb vertically straight up to a Skyhook at 100,000 ft (notice even Moore does not say the Skyhook went that high). Does he not realize that the F-51D had a maximum climb angle of only 17 degrees? It couldn't go straight up like some later jets could. Also the 10 minutes at 20,000 ft without oxygen reminds me of a comment that was reported of Mantell's radio conversation in AF files where Mantell said he would fly that way for 10 minutes then break off. That could mean Mantell knew exactly how long he had and was well aware of what he was doing. Also the oxygen mask blocking the clear reception of voice reminds me that the last transmission was garbled and could not be understood.

Drew Speier:

I may do a follow-up report on the Mantell case in July.

Kevin Randle:

Read the transcript and I think there are a couple of points that need to be made for the sake of accuracy. Thomas Mantell was not an "ace." He was a transport pilot who received the Distinguished Flying Cross for action during the Normandy Invasion, but he did not shoot down five enemy aircraft (the requirement to be an ace). That is not to say he wasn't brave, as the DFC proves, just that he didn't fly fighters during the war.

Fran Ridge:

Kevin, I wasn't aware of that, so when WFIE did the story I didn't make any comments. I was more concerned about the fact that they wanted to use the story because it was somewhat "local", and I did strongly suggest that we had about 1500 unknowns and that the Mantell case was not listed AS an unknown. It still isn't, but there are far too many problems with the evidence gleaned from BB docs recently to write it off as a Skyhook. I suspect that it will remain a mystery, if nothing else.

Fran Ridge:

There were about 100 launchings of Skyhooks per year, about two a week. Skyhooks were written about (highly publicized) and discussed in unclassified documents. But, there is no launch date and location that even comes close to producing a Skyhook over Godman at that time. There WAS, but that has been changed twice and apparently turns out to be completely wrong. I'm open to new evidence and won't be upset if it indeed turns out to be a balloon explanation, but now is the time to place these events where they properly belong for the record.

Kevin Randle:

Thomas Mantell died in a tragic mistake of misidentification complicated by his violation of regulations. It is a sad tale but it is time to retire this from the UFO lore.

Mary Castner:

Boy did I stir up a mess. Just a FYI we will be posting the Skyhook tracking chart as well as some other data by the weekend I hope. So stay tuned.

Fran Ridge:

Mary, by the time this is all over we will have the case presented where it rightfully belongs, Skyhook or no Skyhook. Too many loose ends and problems as Brad has skillfully pointed out. But not for long. Then on to bigger and better things. I think you are doing all of us a favor. Anxious to see your report.

Part 2 - 14: The Press Reports

Weather Balloon Observed Here

Source: Edwardsville (IL) Intelligencer January 7, 1948 (page 1)

Original Article Image: http://www.nicap.org/images/1948_1_7_Intellegencer.jpg

Several residents of Edwardsville recalled last year's news accounts of "flying saucers" early this morning when they observed what proved to be a small balloon flying at an exceedingly high altitude southeast of this city.

It was a tiny balloon released at 4 o'clock this morning at St. Louis-Lambert airfield. The balloon, it was reported this morning, is of a design to remain in the air for about three and a half hours under normal conditions. It was first observed here about 7:20 o'clock, remaining almost stationary, and was still visible at 7:50 o'clock when light clouds passed between it and the earth.

At the low elevations in Edwardsville the wind was blowing almost directly from the south. The course of the balloon indicated that the wind at the altitude at which it was flying was almost directly from the west. Presumably the wind was at a very low speed at the high altitude.

It is possible that the balloon was somewhere in the vicinity of Troy when observed here and the distance of travel in nearly four hours was less than 40 miles. The material from which the balloon is made was painted a silver color, probably aluminum and glittered brightly as the early morning rays of the sun were cast upon it.

Men in the yards of the Illinois Terminal railroad were among the first to observe the balloon. They told B. G. Ebert, relief station agent, and he became interested. Ebert decided in a few minutes that the object was not an astronomical phenomenon and was traveling very slowly.

He took a position where the balloon could be watched between wires along the railroad. Without the use of glasses he was certain the object was moving. The Intelligencer was advised and a few business men were told to see the balloon.

According to reports at the airfield the gas bag is about two and a half feet in diameter. The balloon is designed to reach altitudes of 10,000 to 15,000 feet. Wind checks and other information are obtained through use of the balloons and equipment carried.

Balloon? Flying Saucer? Celestial Body?

Well It's Anybody's Guess

Source: Clarksville (TN) Leaf-Chronicle January 8, 1948 (Afternoon Edition)

Original Article Image: http://www.nicap.org/images/1948_1_8_Clarksvilleleaf_Ch.jpg

Clarksville citizens got their first real glimpse of what may have been a "flying saucer," based on reports that circulated through two states yesterday and

today.

Most reports received by the Leaf-Chronicle indicated that an object about 15 inches in diameter appeared in the northern skies and seemed to be moving very slowly in a southern direction. Seen first at about 2 o'clock yesterday afternoon, the object was described by observers as being "silver colored and appeared to be hovering above the city." It was egg-shaped on some occasions and later was described as appearing to be joined to another object.

Knapp Flying Service told the Leaf-Chronicle today that the object passed over the airport yesterday afternoon and the first impression of personnel there was that it might have been at an altitude of about 4,000 feet. However, it was explained that its exact altitude could not be determined since it was not known just what sized an object it was.

OVER COURTHOUSE

By the time it reached the center of Clarksville, the object seemed hovered above the courthouse for about half an hour, but appeared to be moving south by inches. It was at this time that it appeared to be the largest, and many observers expressed the opinion that it may have been a balloon of some type. Others thought it may have been a kite, although no trace could be made of any that may have been put into the air. At one point, observers said the object seemed to be swaying and that something was attached to it.

The object first appeared in the north about the size of a grapefruit, and as it traveled toward Clarksville, it appeared grew larger. After seemingly hovering about the city for about 1½ hours, it appeared to get smaller and began moving south. As it vanished, observers said it looked to about the size of the north star and had a faint glow, and the last trace of it was at about 4 o'clock, when it was said to have disappeared behind some clouds.

An epitome of various reports from Nashville, Louisville, Madisonville and Bowling Green, from where the object was seen, indicated the object must have been closer to the earth at Clarksville than at any other place.

Byron Likins, co-owner of the Bowling Green Flying Service at Bowling Green, Ky., told the Leaf-Chronicle today that the object appeared over Bowling Green yesterday afternoon about 4 o'clock. He said the object was about the size of a silver dollar and that it was moving south. He stated that no weather balloons would have lingered as long as that object did since they explode soon after reaching a high altitude. Mr. Likins said he was certain it must have been a celestial body of some kind and based his opinion on the theory that if it were not, one would have landed somewhere in the United States. He told the story of how a National Guard flying unit set out to chase the object and how they reported back that the object was "high above them and traveling too fast for them to catch it." They were flying at 20,000 feet, he said.

Additional Story in same paper:

NASHVILLE, Jan. 8 (UP)

A "flying saucer" which puzzled many Nashvillians yesterday was reported by an astronomer today to be a balloon – but no one could say whose balloon it was.

The round object, seen by numerous persons above the sun on the western horizon, sent astronomers scurrying to their telescopes and brought many calls to the Nashville Tennessean.

Dr. Carl K. Seyfert of Vanderbilt University said observation through a telescope showed a rope dangling from the bright glass-like object. The U.S. weather bureau here agreed with him that it was a balloon but said it was not one of the bureau's.

At Fort Knox in Kentucky National Guard planes yesterday chased an object in the sky to a height of 20,000 feet but observers said it was still above them.

Several reports of what were thought to be "flying saucers" have been received at various points in western Kentucky and Tennessee during the last 24 hours but in at least one instance the celestial object has been definitely identified as a weather observation balloon.

First report came from Fort Knox, that a disc, similar to those reported in large numbers last summer, had been seen by Col. Guy F. Hix, commander of Godman Field.

An object seen at Nashville was identified by Dr. Carl K. Seyfert of Vanderbilt University as a balloon from which a rope was dangling. The U.S. weather bureau at Nashville agreed it was a balloon but said none had been sent up there.

At Hopkinsville, flyers Jimmy Garret and Bill Crenshaw followed a flying object and reported to the Kentucky New Era newspaper office that they identified it as a weather balloon. At Madisonville, Hugh Clark and Thomas Gant observed what they believed was the same balloon from a plane.

At the Madisonville weather bureau it was reported that Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., had sent up 21 weather observation balloons. It was surmised that those seen in Kentucky and Tennessee might have been some of those sent up by Northwestern.

Comet Over City Is Just Balloon

Source: Nashville (TN) Tennessean January 8, 1948 (page unknown)

Original Article Image: http://nicap.org/images/1948_1_8_NashvilleT.jpg

The brilliant object seen late yesterday afternoon in the western sky directly above the sun was a balloon, according to Nashville astronomers and weathermen.

The object, which puzzled local citizens and sent Nashville astronomers hurrying to their telescopes, was termed a balloon catching the sunlight by Dr. Carl K. Seyfert, astronomer at Vanderbilt university, after thorough examination. Weather bureau officials agreed with Seyfert's diagnosis, but said it was not one of their balloons, while an observer from the WSM radio tower also expressed the opinion it was a balloon.

Telephone calls to The Nashville Tennessean described the phenomenon as a round object which seemed to be made of glass. One man said it looked like a gold star and a woman said she had been watching it all afternoon and thought it was a glass disc.

"Maybe another flying saucer," she said.

Several of the witnesses were of the opinion that the object, which gave off an extremely bright light, was composed of a glass-like substance. Others believed they had sighted a daylight comet.

Seyfert said he at first believed it to be the planet Venus, which often is bright enough to be seen in daylight, and later also thought it was a comet. Observation through the telescope, however, showed a rope hanging from the object, which was bulbous at the top and narrowed to a fine point, and knots or small objects which might be weather instruments attached to the rope.

Weather bureau officials said they send only a single balloon into the sky each morning about 8:30 or 9 a.m., which rises to a height of 60,000 feet, then bursts and drops the instruments to the ground. Weather balloons are not customarily pear-shaped and do not ordinarily remain at a uniform level, they said.

L. E. Rawls, who saw the object through a telescope from the WSM tower on Franklin road, said his telescope magnified it 100 times and there was no question as to its being a balloon.

Rawls estimated the height to be about 6000 feet, but Seyfert said he thought it to be about five miles high.

Latimer J. Wilson, local astronomer, expressed himself as undecided as to its true nature. He said it was shaped like an electric light bulb and seemed to be transparent. He said it turned yellow about 4:50 p.m., red at 5:05 p.m. and completely disappeared by 5:12 p.m.

Other observers reported it was moving toward the south and southeast when last sighted, shortly after dark last night.

Old superstitions were aroused, in addition to the revival of last summer's talk of flying saucers, and many persons preferred to cling to metaphysical and mystical interpretations, rather than accept the "balloon" verdict.

"Strange!" exclaimed some of the older folk, and when no satisfactory explanation for the balloon's being there could be found, they added: "I thought so!"

Strange Phenomena Seen in Sky Here

Source: Wilmington (OH) News-Journal January 8, 1948 (page unknown)

Airman Killed Chasing Reported Flying Saucer

Original Article Image: http://nicap.org/images/1948_1_8_NewsJournal.jpg

Louisville, Ky., Jan 8 – (AP)

The Kentucky National Guard headquarters revealed here today that Capt. Thomas F. Mantell, Jr., 25, was killed in a plane explosion near Franklin, Ky., yesterday while chasing what was believed to be a "flying saucer."

Mantell was one of three Kentucky National Guard officers sent yesterday to investigate a reported “flying saucer” in the air near Fort Knox. The object also was reported visible at Hopkinsville, Ky., Nashville, Tenn., and other points in the two states.

Mantell was flying a P-51 National Guard plane which witnesses said apparently exploded in the air and crashed near Franklin.

“SAUCER” ESCAPES

Fort Knox, Ky., Jan 8 – (AP)

A “flying saucer” reportedly was seen here yesterday and Col. Guy F. Hix, commander of Godman Field, sent three airplanes after it, but the “saucer” got away.

Colonel Hix said the saucer became visible here about 2 P.M.

“It was to the south and near the sun, very white and looked like an umbrella,” he elaborated.

Three National Guard planes were circling overhead at the time, so the colonel said he radioed the craft to give chase. But a few minutes later the pilots radioed back the saucer was too high and going too fast for them to catch.

The Army officer said he watched the saucer through binoculars and that from an observation tower it appeared motionless.

I thought it was a celestial body, but I can’t account for the fact it didn’t move. I just don’t know what it was.”

Dr. Walter L. Moore, of the University of Louisville, said the planet Venus was near the sun at the time the saucer was reported seen.

Control Tower Operators at CCAB Watch Maneuvers

A sky phenomena, described by observers at the Clinton County Air Base as having the appearance of a flaming red cone trailing a gaseous green mist, appeared in the southwest skies of Wilmington Wednesday night between 7:20 and 7:55 P.M.

S/Sgt. Gale F. Walter and Cpl. James Hudson, control tower operators at the air field, saw this phenomena at 7:20 P.M. and observed its maneuvers in the sky until 7:55 P.M. when it reportedly disappeared over the horizon. The sky phenomena hung suspended in the air at the intervals and then gained and lost altitude at what appeared to be terrific bursts of speed. The intense brightness of the sky phenomena pierced through a heavy layer of clouds passing intermittently over the area and obscuring other celestial phenomena.

M/Sgt. Irvin H. Lewis, S/Sgt. John P. Haag, Sgt. Harold E. Olvis and T/Sgt. Leroy Ziegler, four members of the alert crew, joined the control tower operators in observing the sky phenomena for approximately 35 minutes.

Kentucky Flier Killed Chasing ‘Saucer’

Source: Nashville (TN) Banner January 8, 1948 (page 1 and 2)

Louisville, Ky., Jan 8 - (UP)

Original Article Image: http://nicap.org/images/1948_1_8_Banner.jpg

The Kentucky Air National Guard reported today that Capt. Thomas F. Mantell, Louisville, who died yesterday when his P-51 crashed at Franklin, Ky., was one of three pilots searching for a strange object seen in the sky.

The guard said Captain Mantell and three other pilots left Atlanta, Ga., yesterday at 1:45 p.m. (CST) on a routine flight to Louisville. Their planes were checked prior to flight, and all were in perfect condition. All were flying P-51's.

When they got near Fort Knox, they were messaged by radio that Col. Guy F. Hix, commanding officer at Godman Field, had seen a strange “thing” in the sky. One pilot landed at Louisville as scheduled, but the other three gave chase.

The guard said two of the pilots went to about 15,000 feet and were unable to get near the object, so they returned and landed. Nothing was heard from Captain Mantell and there were no radio messages before he crashed, the guards said.

The guard said it was “anybody’s guess” what happened after the other two landed.

Mrs. Joe Phillips, on whose farm the plane crashed, said she heard it roar low over her house and went to a window in time to see it fall apart in the air, at about tree-top height. It struck the ground about 300 yards from the house.

Barbara Mayes, 14, who was waiting for a bus at Spring Lake School, near the scene, said she heard the plane explode in the air.

The two pilots who landed said the “thing” was still above them and moving too fast for them when they were at 15,000 feet. Colonel Hix watched it through powerful binoculars until clouds obscured it.

Colonel Hix, who said he was not aware Captain Mantell was one of the pilots searching for the “thing” described it as being about one-half the size of a full moon. “It was absolutely white, except for a streamer of red that appeared to be revolving.

The colonel said the streamer of red appeared first at the top and then at the bottom of the object, which did not seem to be moving.

Colonel Hix and personnel at Godman Field sighted the object at 2:30 p.m., and watched it until it disappeared behind clouds at 4 p.m. (CST).

A University of Kentucky physics professor was to come to Godman Field this afternoon and use high powered equipment to trace the chart of the object, if it reappears, Colonel Hix said.

Colonel Hix said it was his guess that the object either was a celestial object, although it did not appear to be moving, or a large balloon.

Numerous telephone calls were received by Army and State Highway Patrol officials, although descriptions varied widely.

Captain Mantell, 25, flew many missions over Europe in World War II and held the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Glenn Mayes, who witnessed the plane crash said he was in his front yard, about 300 yards from the spot where the plane plunged to the ground, said he first heard the plane and then "saw a vapor trail" before he spotted the aircraft.

Mayes estimated that the plane was up 20,000 feet when it suddenly went into a dive, plunging about half-way to the earth before it began disintegrating.

He said smoke rose from the engine after the crash, but that the wreckage did not burn.

Captain Mantell's body was at Booker Funeral Home at Franklin this morning, and was expected to be removed to Louisville this afternoon.

Among his survivors are his wife Mrs. Margaret Mantell and two children.

An airborne object at a high altitude which yesterday afternoon caused speculation about comets and "flying saucers" throughout Middle Tennessee and Central Kentucky was definitely a balloon, according to consensus of observers.

There remained a difference of opinion, however, as to the type of balloon and a mystery as to its origin.

The object, which was described as "pear shaped" and like a "suspended light bulb," was sighted over a wide area on a line extending from Columbia, Tenn., to Louisville, Ky. Its altitude, checked twice by pursuing airplanes, was reported at 11,000 feet at Hopkinsville, Ky., and above 20,000 at Louisville.

Two Hopkinsville aviators, Jimmy Garnett and Bill Crenshaw, investigated the object by plane and identified it as a "free weather balloon" (no instruments attached to it). Telescope observers here and at Franklin, Columbia and Clarksville also identified the object as a balloon.

At Madisonville, Ky., where Hugh Clark and Thomas Gant observed what they believed was the same balloon from a plane, the Weather Bureau surmised that it might have been one of 21 weather observation balloons sent up by Northwestern University at Evanston, Ill.

Latimer J. Wilson, local astronomer, agreed that the object was a balloon but stated that it was unlike any weather balloon he had ever seen and that it appeared to be "made of glass."

Meanwhile the local Weather Bureau reported no balloons missing.

Chase for Flying Disk Blamed In Crash Death



Lt. B. A. Hammond

“Woozy” at 22,000 feet



Lt. A. W. Clements

Only he had oxygen.

Mantell Going Straight Into Sun, Buddies In Air Guard Say; Believe He Blacked Out

Source: Louisville (Ky) Courier Journal January 9, 1948 (page 1 and back page of same section)

Original Article Image: http://nicap.org/images/1948_1_9_CourierJournal_2.jpg

Capt. Thomas F. Mantell, Jr., 25, was “climbing into the sun” after what he thought was a flying disk shortly before he was killed in a plane crash near Franklin, Ky., Wednesday.

So reported two of Mantell’s buddies in the Kentucky Air Guard, who were in the air with him at the time. The Air Guard yesterday said Mantell, World War II hero, who lived at 6301 Third, died because he flew too high while chasing an aerial object.

Capt. R. L. Tyler, Louisville operations officer for the Air Guard at Standiford Field, said investigation convinced him Mantell had “blacked out” from lack

of oxygen at 36,000 feet. Tyler theorized the plane went into a dive and began to disintegrate at 15,000 feet.

Quit at 22,500 Feet.

Two other Air Guard officers who were flying in formation with Mantell in P-51 single-seater pursuit ships told of the high altitude disk-chasing mission.

Both said they “peeled off” at 22,500 feet with Mantell “still climbing into the sun.”

National Guard headquarters here said Mantell and his companions were asked by the Fort Knox radio to “look for” an object resembling a “flying saucer” reported sighted southwest of Godman Field.

Only One Had Oxygen Gear.

Only one of the trio, Lt. A. W. Clements, 2123 Ratcliffe, had oxygen equipment. Captain Tyler said oxygen had not been issued generally to the guardsmen because they were training at comparatively low levels.

The three, along with Lt. Robert Hendricks, were returning from a routine flight to Atlanta. Clements said Mantell apparently picked up the Godman Field radio signal as they neared Fort Knox and changed his course. Clements and Lt. B. A. Hammond, 3117 Sonora, followed. Hendricks, however, flew on to Standiford Field.

Mantell and Clements were linked by radio, but Hammond’s communications set was tuned to a different frequency.

It Looked “Like a Star.”

Clements said Mantell informed him they were to look for something “but didn’t seem to know exactly what it was.” Soon, Clements related, Mantell shouted through the loud speaker, “Look, there it is at 12 o’clock.” Clements said this meant it was “right over our nose.”

Clements gazed straight ahead and saw a “bright shining object that looked like a star.” He and Mantell started after it.

Hammond, who had received no word of the flying saucer, was bewildered.

“At first I thought we were lost,” he said. “Then we started climbing and I assumed we were looking for Louisville.” Hammond was depending on Mantell and Clements for navigation and went on up with them to avoid losing his bearings.

“I felt a little shaky at 15,000 feet,” he declared, “because I realized we were supposed to take oxygen at 12,000.

“By the time I hit 22,000 I was seeing double. I pulled alongside Clements and indicated with gestures that I didn’t have an oxygen mask. In fact I circled my finger around my head to show him I was getting woozy. He understood the situation and we turned back.”

Neither saw Mantell crash. His plane ripped down out of the sky some 80 or 90 miles from where they changed course after learning of the disk, Clements estimated.

Tyler blamed Mantell’s head-long dash after the “saucer” on the fact that Mantell’s World War II experience largely was limited to low-altitude flying. From the stories of Hammond and Clements, Tyler surmised Mantell was “climbing at full force at 23,000 feet.” Mantell probably lost consciousness

seconds later, Tyler said.

Eyewitnesses had reported seeing Mantell's plane arc high in the air and Tyler said this indicated Mantell, an expert pilot, was unconscious at the time.

Clements, 25 and Hammond, 23, both World War II veterans, landed at Standiford Field. Clements, who won the Distinguished Flying Cross in North Africa and Italy, refueled and took off in search of the "disk" again but failed to spot it.

Believed Object Was Star.

Recalling the appearance of the object, Clements remarked, "The more I think about it the more I'm convinced it was a star or some other type of celestial body."

Some reports indicated the object may have been a weather balloon. An object seen near Nashville was identified as a balloon from which a rope was dangling. Two pilots at Hopkinsville, Ky., also said that they followed a flying object and believed it was a balloon. At the Madisonville weather station it was reported that Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., had sent up 21 weather-observation balloons.

Spyglasses Search Through the Southwest Sky

But Great What-Was-It Keeps Out of Sight

Source: Louisville (KY) Courier-Journal January 9, 1948 (page unknown)

One Flier Reports Something Like a Star; Colonel Hix Still Isn't Sure It Was Venus



Original Article Image: http://nicap.org/images/1948_1_9_CourierJournal.jpg

COL. GUY F. HIX, commander of Godman Field, shows Sgt. Quinton A. Blackwell the line along which to focus the Binoculars to find the spot where a mysterious object was seen in the sky Wednesday afternoon.

That gleaming object seen in the southwest sky from Fort Knox Wednesday did not show up at all yesterday as Godman Field officers kept telescopes and powerful binoculars trained skyward from dawn to dusk.

Only report bearing on the celestial phenomenon came from 1st Lt. Ray J. West. He said that while flying yesterday afternoon he saw an object that “looked like a star” about where the mysterious object was seen the previous day. Lieutenant West said he was flying at 7,000 feet over Godman Field and spotted the star-like object just above the horizon.

Captain C. W. Carter, operations officer, said that no planes had been sent up to determine whether the object was still visible yesterday.

Col. Guy F. Hix, commander of Godman Field, was not convinced yesterday afternoon that it was the planet Venus that he watched for 2 hours through 8-power binoculars. “If it were a celestial body,” he reasoned, “surely it would have moved sometime during the afternoon.”

“The object we saw, which was very white and resembled an upside-down open parachute, remained in practically the same spot from 2 p.m., when it was first sighted, to sundown at 5:18 p.m.,” Colonel Hix explained.

Dr. Walter Lee Moore, University of Louisville astronomer, had said that under “very exceptional atmospheric conditions,” the planet (Venus) might now be visible to the naked eye during the day.

Colonel Hix said he received about 35 calls Wednesday afternoon and night from various persons throughout the state who reported seeing the object. The calls came all the way from near Lebanon, in Marion County, to Morganfield, in Union, he said. No calls were received yesterday, he added.

Some persons reported the object just 150 feet above ground while others estimated the distance as high as four miles, Colonel Hix said. Descriptions varied, but most of those calling said the object was cone-shaped, he added.

Sgt. Quinton A. Blackwell, on duty in the Godman Field control tower Wednesday afternoon, was the first to see the shiny object. He described it as a silver disk, about the size of a silver dollar. “It gleamed like the reflection from some shiny, metallic surface,” he said.

Reported From Ohio.

Officers of the Clinton County Army Air base near Wilmington, Ohio, also reported seeing a “flaming red cone trailing a gaseous green mist” there Wednesday night, according to an Associated Press dispatch.

The phenomenon appeared in the southwest skies at 6:20 p.m., about an hour after the strange object was seen last at Godman Field. It was visible for about 35 minutes and then disappeared over the horizon, the report stated.

Colonel Hix will make a report on the phenomenon to the air Defense Command headquarters in New York when all the information is collected.

One Touch Of Venus: Pilots Chase ‘Disk’ (Or Planet)

But They Fail To Catch ‘Saucer’ Seen At Knox

Source: Louisville (KY) Courier-Journal January 9, 1948 (page unknown)

Original Article Image: http://nicap.org/images/1948_1_8_CourierJournal.jpg

A bright and shiny object lured three Kentucky Guard Reserve pilots high in the sky yesterday.

The chase started when a glistening object was sighted in the southwest sky. It was easily visible at Fort Knox. Officers at the post radioed to three planes flying overhead to see if they could catch the object which they thought might be one of the flying disks reported seen last year.

Focused On Venus.

But when Dr. Walter Lee Moore, University of Louisville astronomer, focused his telescope by measurements given him by Godman Field officers it was trained straight on the planet Venus.

Dr. Moore said Venus was near the sun at this time and added that “very exceptional atmospheric conditions” could have made it visible to the naked eye during the day.

“If they chased Venus in airplanes,” said Dr. Moore, “they certainly had a long way to go.”

The disk first was reported visible about 2 p.m. by Col. Guy F. Hix, commander of Godman Field, who said he watched it for about 2 hours from the airport’s observation tower.

Looked ‘Like Umbrella.’

“It was to the south and near the sun,” he said, “very white and looking like an umbrella.”

Colonel Hix said he radioed the three planes, which had come from Louisville and were circling overhead, to go after the object.

“About 20 minutes later they radioed back and were 20,000 feet high and the saucer was still above them. The pilots said the saucer was too high and going too fast for them to catch.”

The colonel added the pilots reported the saucer was traveling west at about 180 miles per hour. But, the colonel said, from the observation tower it appeared motionless.

Says It Didn’t Move.

Colonel Hix said he and his executive officer, Lt. Col. Garrison Wood, and other officers carefully watched the disk through 8-power binoculars, sighting along an upright.

“I thought it was a celestial body,” he said, “but I can’t account for the fact it didn’t move. I just don’t know what it was.”

Meanwhile Fort Knox authorities were receiving telephone calls from persons in near-by towns who also reported seeing the saucer and asking what it was all about.

And State Highway patrol headquarters at Elizabethtown were receiving reports from cruisers, whose occupants told of seeing the object.

Seen At Madisonville, Too.

Sgt. John T. Worful, Elizabethtown, said a cruiser had radioed from Madisonville that a saucer had been seen there.

“It was reported to look like an ice-cream cone with a little fire at the bottom,” Worful said. “It appeared to be about 45 feet across the top and 100 feet long through a small telescope,” he said.

“Several officers were watching for it,” said Worful. “We’ve got orders to watch out for those thing and report them to Patterson Field, Ohio, and Godman Field.”

New 'Flying Saucers' Excite Kentucky Neighboring States

Source: Lexington (Ky) Herald January 9, 1948 (page unknown)

By Associated Press

Original Article Image: http://nicap.org/images/1948_1_9_LexingtonHarald.jpg

Several areas of Kentucky and adjoining states were excited yesterday over reports of a "flying saucer" which led to the death of one National Guard flier and fruitless chases by several other pilots.

The National Guard headquarters at Louisville said Capt. Thomas F. Mantell, Jr., 25, was killed late Wednesday while chasing what was reported as a "flying saucer" near Franklin, Ky.

Two other members of the Kentucky National Guard, also asked to make a flying investigation of reported "flying saucers" in the area near Fort Knox returned to their Louisville base.

Two Hopkinsville pilots, James Garret and William Crenshaw, said they chased a flying object which they believed to be a balloon.

Astronomers at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn., reported they saw some object in the sky Wednesday afternoon which they believed to be a balloon but the Nashville Weather Bureau said it knew of no balloons in that vicinity.

In Southern Ohio, meanwhile, observers reported seeing a flaming red cone near the Army Air Base at Wilmington. Army spokesmen said they had no information on the object or its origin.

Col. Guy F. Hix, commanding officer at Godman Field, adjoining Fort Knox, said he observed the "flying saucer" for some time. He said three National Guard planes were contacted by radio and instructed to investigate.

"We lost contact in about 20 minutes," Col. Hix said. "Two of the planes later called back and reported no success."

Capt. Mantel, an air hero during the Allied invasion of Normandy, was the third pilot. His mother, Mrs. Thomas F. Mantell, Sr., said in Louisville, she was informed her son flew too high in his pursuit of the object and lost consciousness.

Glen Mayes, who lives near Franklin, said he saw the Mantell plane flying at an extremely high altitude shortly before it apparently exploded in the air.

"The plane circled three times like the pilot didn't know where he was going," Mayes said, "and then started into a dive from about 20,000 feet. About halfway down there was a terrific explosion."

Parts of the plane were scattered over an area two miles wide, Mayes said. None of the craft burned.

Capt. Mantell entered the Army Air Forces shortly after his graduation from high school and participated in the Normandy invasion and many other European operations during the war.

Since leaving active duty a year ago, he has been associated with the Kentucky Air National Guard.

http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell_sparks_PopScience.htm

If You Saw 'em You Were Right

They Were Saucers

NEW YORK, (AP) -- A navy official confirmed today that "flying saucers" really existed, but actually were huge plastic balloons used in high altitude cosmic ray studies.

Dr. Uner Liddel, chief of the nuclear physics branch of the Office of Naval Research, made this disclosure in an article in the current magazine.

Liddel, in Washington, discussed the story further when newsmen queried him.

The Navy balloons, Liddel declared, were 100 feet in diameter and sometimes rose to a height of 19 miles. He added that winds might sweep them along at 200 miles an hour.

Sun did it

At dusk, the slanting rays of the sun lighted up the balloons' bottoms, giving them the saucer like appearances, Liddel said.

He added that many of the disks were sighted as the sun set. Liddel said the existence of the big balloons was kept secret because the project was connected with atomic developments.

Liddel, who was in charge of the balloons tests, said they carried instruments to record the results of collisions between cosmic rays and atoms in the earth's atmosphere.

No Longer Secret

He added that secrecy was "no longer necessary."

Liddel said he was convinced that a "saucer" photographed at 77,000 feet altitude over Minnesota was a Skyhook.

The physicist said 2,000 reports of "flying saucers" were checked, and those considered "whimsical" were eliminated. Of the "reliable" reports, he said, "there is not a single observation which is not attributable to the cosmic balloons."

These balloons, called Skyhooks by the Navy, were first used in 1947, about the time the disk were first sighted. Liddell said reports of "flying saucers"

increased or decreased in proportion to the number of balloons sent aloft.

Air Force Reveals Saucer Pursuit Report

Source: Lima (OH) News August 21, 1952 (page 7)

Source Image: <http://www.nicap.org/images/LimaNews21Aug52.jpg>

WASHINGTON (INS) - The Air Force has made public for the first time a P-51 fighter pilot's graphic description of a "flying object" which he was chasing over Kentucky just before he was killed.

Hitherto secret details of a radio conversation involving Capt. Thomas F. Mantell and four airmen at Godman Air Base, Fort Knox, Ky., were released after an exhaustive inquiry by the Air Force.

On Jan 7, 1948, the 25-year old pilot, a World War II air hero, and three other P-51 pilots, sighted a mysterious object during a routine training flight. Three pilots, including Mantell, gave chase.

Mantell then radioed his description to the Godman control tower. Authorities said that no official transcript was made. However, the testimony of the men in the tower was pieced together. This is their account:

T-Sgt. Quinton A. Blackwell: "About 1445 (2:45 p.m.) the flight leader reported sighting the object ahead and above - still climbing. At 15,000 feet he reported the 'object directly ahead and above and moving about half my speed. It appears metallic and of tremendous size. I'm still climbing. Object is above and ahead moving about my speed or faster. I'm trying to close in for a better look.'

"THIS WAS about 1515. Five minutes later the two other aircraft turned back. Flight leader reported 'it appeared like the reflection of sunlight on an airplane canopy'."

Lt. Paul I. Orner said Mantell's closing-in message was his last. Capt. J. F. Dassler (Duessler), Jr., leader of the P-51 group, said Mantell, in answer to a request to describe the object, reported it was "bright and climbing away from me ... moving at about 350 miles per hour. One of his planes asked him to level off but no reply was heard."

Capt. Cary W. Carter, operations officer at Godman Air Force Base, said he heard Mantell say later the "object is going up and forward as fast as I am." Mantell then declared he was climbing to 20,000 feet and if he failed to close in on the "saucer" he would abandon the chase. That was his last radio message.

A 14-year old school girl who was waiting for a bus at the time, said she heard Mantell's plane explode in the air. The wife of a farmer said she heard it roar low over her house and went to a window in time to see it fall apart in the air, at about tree-top height.

Part 2-15: Plan 62

June 6, 2006

Dan Wilson:

Prof. Shapley, Director of Harvard Observatory said that a new comet should be visible in the northern hemisphere on the southwestern horizon on about January 1, 1948. Information pertaining to the appearance of a flaming red cone in the skies of Wilmington, Ohio, on January 7, 1948, at between 7:20 and 7:55 P.M.

<http://nicap.org/docs/mantell/wilmington480107pr.htm>

USAF-SIGN1-530-533

Brad Sparks:

Without the centralized directories you put on NICAP and the BB Archive, access to scattered BB docs this would be hopeless and nothing could be accomplished.

Dan Wilson:

Corporal Hudson at Clinton AFB monitors Godman Control Tower theodolite tracking. Page II. The following information came over Plan 62. This observation was made at Godman control tower in Kentucky with an 8" telescope, cone-shaped object 43 feet by 100 feet, red with green tail, height, 4 miles. Observation made at Godman Field from 1854 to 1906 CST with a theodolite of a triangle-shaped object at 2.4 elevation, 254.6 Azimuth. Object last seen at 1.2 elevation, 253.0 Azimuth.

<http://nicap.org/docs/mantell/godman480107tscope.htm>

[USAF-SIGN1-526](#)

(See Case 48b in Alert Crew Statement prior to this section)

June 7, 2006

Fran Ridge:

Brad, first of all, what is Plan 62?

Brad Sparks:

I think it is the intercom system between Godman, Standiford, Lockbourne, Clinton County, etc., which was patched together the afternoon of Jan 7, 1948, to keep everyone up to the minute on events. People mention hearing about sightings at the other bases as it happened. Here are the figures based on US Naval Observatory calculations. <snip> The problem with this being Venus is that the azimuths are off by 7-8 degs and the elevation

by 7 degs at first, but more troubling is that the object WENT SOUTH from 6:54 to 7:02 PM, instead of Venus which WENT NORTH. A setting celestial body cannot do this. However the nearly simultaneous disappearance of Venus and the object is troubling too. <snip> And of course it could not possibly be a Skyhook balloon which would be invisible in the darkness.

http://www.nicap.org/mantell/mantell_sparks_venus.htm

Fran Ridge:

Air Force History Office research by Dan Wilson shows that Plan 62 was already in place 14 months before the Mantell incident.:

Dan Wilson located this information:

"Plan 62 - Military Flight Service Communications System (1946--1952) - (was) designed to provide a permanent integrated network of Army Air Forces (AAF) centers connected via AT&T long line circuits to furnish all common purpose aeronautical communications services pertaining to aircraft dispatch, movement and visual flight control within the continental U.S. Plan 62 ensured that military authorities knew the whereabouts of every military aircraft operating in the U.S. at all times. Official operations began 1 Nov 46.

"Military personnel were stationed at Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) Air Route Traffic Control Centers throughout the U.S. prior to development of this system, which consolidated military communications (AACS), weather (AWS) and flight services (ATC) operations at nine regional flight service centers - Olmsted Field, Pa.; Wright Field, Ohio; Maxwell Field, Ala.; MacDill Field, Fla.; Fort Worth AAB, Tex.; Lowry Field, Colo.; Hamilton Field, Ca.; March Field, Ca.; and McChord Field, Wash.

"These centers were connected via interphone to regional CAA facilities, which retained control of all aircraft operating under instrument flight rule (IFR) conditions. Flying under visual conditions, pilots reported their positions to the military centers every 30 minutes and received necessary advisories; under IFR conditions, they first reported to the CAA centers, then to the military centers.

"By the end of 1947, the regional centers were connected via interphone to every AAF facility and certain Navy, Guard and Reserve stations within their regions - a total of 190 stations. By the end of 1948, MFCSC assumed responsibility for VFR flight plans and associated actions for 65 additional Navy, Marine and Coast Guard airfields. However, upgraded equipment and revised procedures allowed the Air Force to consolidate operations at several bases, thereby removing many of these additional stations by the close of 1950. Further equipment upgrades and procedural changes resulted in AACS transferring responsibility for MFCSC to the Military Air Transport Service (MATs) in September 1952 - there is no mention of MFCSC or Plan 62 in the histories after 1952."

Tom DeMary:

What about visibility, brightness? Note latest Airways Op report.

Brad Sparks:

We are all still compiling data. One place that had Orner's report was incomplete. Some of the rest of his data was recorded at another air base listening in on Godman's reporting of it, heard by Cpl Hudson on the "Plan 62" intercom/interphone system though he was at Clinton Co. AFB.

Fran Ridge:

This is not new, Brad, I know, but I keep going back to it. And it is one of the reasons I never "bought" the Skyhook explanation in the first place, let alone Venus. (KY State Police reports of object, circular in appearance approximately 250 - 300' in diameter, moving

westward at "a pretty good clip."

[MAXW-PBB3-710](#)

Brad Sparks:

Well we don't seem to have direct witness names and statements from Ky St Police. No one else reports "250-300 ft" or "pretty rapid clip." We need that corroborated from others if we can't get names and statements from Ky St Police. Everyone else talks about slow moving until Pickering at Lockbourne that night. This is not a tight case. It's a lot of loose ends which have to be put together. The fact that private pilots tried to chase some object besides Mantell is a surprising new turn of events to be finding out about only in 2006.

Dan Wilson:

Cpl. James Hudson At Godman Tower, Jan. 7, 1948

[USAF-SIGN1-526](#)

Brad Sparks:

This caption by Dan is wrong, he misreads Hudson's account as Hudson being at Godman and doesn't understand that Hudson was in Ohio at Clinton County AFB listening in one Godman reporting its theodolite readings. Hudson wasn't at Godman.

Fran Ridge:

Tom caught that, but hell I wasn't sure what the doc said either. So Hudson wasn't a witness, just heard reports

Brad Sparks:

Hudson WAS a witness AT Clinton Co. AFB, Wilmington, Ohio, along with at least 5 others at CC AFB, I think. He HEARD over the intercom the details of Godman's theodolite trackings done by Lt Orner. If it wasn't for Hudson we wouldn't have all those exact figures (or else Orner's numbers are all somewhere we haven't found yet). There is one place with a few of Orner's theodolite numbers but not all of them

Jean Waskiewicz:

I just checked and this reference is on page 34 in the published version. In the copy of the (Ruppelt' original) manuscript that I have this section is on pages 8 & 9 and (Maj. Jerre) Boggs is not lined through. I have attached both original scans in jpg format to show Boggs has not been lined out. Is it possible that there may be a different version of the manuscript out there somewhere? (Page 8 & 9)

http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/Chapter_Three_Final.pdf

Fran Ridge:

Here is the 19-page manuscript version of the Mantell incident, highlighted for pertinent lines.

<http://nicap.org/docs/mantell/RuppManusCh3hlight.htm>

Normal version with no highlighting

<http://nicap.org/docs/mantell/RuppManusCh3.htm>

Let's digest this BEFORE we post!

Brad Sparks:

There are some errors here.

http://www.nicap.org/mantell/mantell_sparks_ruppmanuscript.htm

Dan Wilson:

SUBJECT: Report of Unusual Circumstance, 1940 hours, January 7, 1948

Observation of strange light to the Southwest of Lockbourne. The object was 15 degrees above the horizon. It then descended to the horizon and then ascended to its original position. Its course was elliptical, counter clock wise. The witness was Airways Operator CAF-7. (Brad Sparks: This is the Lockbourne Control Tower operator who was an amateur astronomer, Frank M. Eisele, whose unsanitized report is elsewhere on BB Archives.)

<http://nicap.org/docs/mantell/lockbourne480107Bdir.htm>

[NARA-PBB2-511](#)

June 8, 2006

Mary Castner:

Still working on the Mantell files for uploading. I am sure everyone will argue about that too. Was Venus involved or wasn't it...seems a mute point as people definitely saw a unusual balloon bulb shaped/cone/parachute/pear, with rope and payload or without probably depending on distance away. Just for the record a Skyhook automatically dropped it's payload by parachute if it descended to 30,000 ft. Then again I suppose everyone will argue about that too:)) There is enough errors in the reports that there is no 100% certainty that a direction or other reading is accurate. I personally go by the visual description which is clearly that of a Skyhook and one was definitely launched from Camp Ripley, MN launching site, 1/6/48.

June 9, 2006

Tom DeMary:

I look forward to more documents. The Sign/Blue Book documents do have errors, and seem to lack any precise information about the relative position in the sky of the object that Mantell pursued. Articles from local Kentucky newspapers might sort out some of the confusion. The visual descriptions of the Godman Field personnel and those of the Elizabethtown police (Elizabethtown was the flight corridor) point to "Skyhook" - I agree. All of the reports of the night time sightings (from 1948) are consistent with misperceptions of Venus. (I consider the 1977 base-circling revision of Pickering dubious, in conflict with his own 1948 testimony, and in conflict with that of the three other witnesses at Lockbourne).

Brad Sparks:

Pickering's 1977 testimony does not conflict with his 1948 testimony -- in Jan 1948 he reported the object disappeared to the EAST at 120 degs azimuth (about ESE). Venus was to the WSW (about 240 degs) at that time in the early evening. We've been over this before.

I could have jumped on this sooner if my computer had not crashed, but you can go back over my postings with the 215 degree azimuth determined by Godman Tower and used to send Mantell and his two wingmen after it. Complete with Godman Tower CORRECTING Mantell's heading slightly, by 5 degs to get him exactly onto the 215 heading. Sounds to me like a lot of very "precise" positional data from

Godman Field.

The BB files thus do have "precise" info on the position in the sky of the object that Mantell pursued. Godman base commander Col Guy F. Hix stated that it was at azimuth 215 degs (about SSW), and as I said the BB files show that Godman Tower even corrected Mantell's flight heading with it. News clips report that Col. Hix used a bracket to align his sighting of the object, which helped him determine that the object did not move for a long time, over an 1 hour. Even Venus moved 17 degs in 1 hour and the Skyhook balloon was moving at about 20-30 mph supposedly to the SE, so at 100+ miles away (when it was too far away to be visible from Godman), when it was south of Nashville, it would have moved about 10 degs in 1 hour. If it was close enough to be visible, like within 50 miles depending on the size of its visible sunlit area (parts not brightly sunlit are not visible at great distances) then this movement in 1 hour is about 20 degs.

Venus was at 33-35 degs elevation from 2:15 to 3 PM CST that day, from Godman Tower's location (37 54.4 N, 85 58.0 W). The Skyhook balloon at 80,000 ft (15 miles high) when south of Nashville, would have been extremely low on the horizon from Godman Tower (and from Mantell's plane too at first) at about 6 degs elevation. If the UFO was at 45 degs elevation, no matter how much reasonable witness error by Col Hix you postulate, you are not going to be able to make the Skyhook fit. Venus is not even visible in bright sunlight to the naked eye, and if it was just barely visible it is absurd that anyone would take it seriously.

Brad Sparks:

Yes the map records the 1-6-48 Skyhook launch among a dozen Skyhooks from late 1947 to early 1949. But they were NOT launched from Camp Ripley, that's another Moore lie, but launched from Milaca, Minn., 43 miles away. Moore was NOT personally present contrary to his phony-baloney "strong memories" of launching the 1-6-48 Skyhook. The Skyhook went straight SOUTH on almost a straight line, to azimuth 190 degs (slightly W of S), which is NOT the SE heading needed to get to Kentucky. But since the tracking was lost after only 3 hours when it got to max altitude 80,000 ft, 63 miles from launch, it could have been blown by winds almost anywhere at some time after 3 hours and we would only know by reported visual sightings in newspapers since no one was getting weather data from higher than about 30,000 ft on a routine daily basis so we can't just check the upper winds.

The news reports from Nashville, Tenn., are pretty clearly that of a large Skyhook-like balloon headed SE, and many people sighted it with telescopes, including a 100x telescope from a radio station, descriptions include a "glassy" look which is like the translucent plastic used, "pear" shape with a "lumpy" cable (the photos of the 1-6-48 launch show NO "basket" below but a long cable with "lumps" for instruments). The clincher is the amateur astronomer in or near Nashville who reported the exact times the balloon changed color from white sunlight to yellow at 4:50 PM to red sunset lighting at 5:05 PM to disappearance in earth's shadow at 5:12 PM. This fits a balloon at 80,000 ft, and not 60,000 or 100,000 ft. And that was the 1-6-48 Skyhook's altitude -- 80,000 ft. That would mean astronomer Seyfert was wrong in estimating the balloon was at 25,000 ft (also when the Skyhook descended below 30,000 ft the cable would detach the instruments but that did not happen so it must not have gotten below 30,000 ft yet).

However everyone sighted the balloon to the SOUTH of Nashville at about 4:30 PM heading SE, "directly above the sun" (or higher than about 15 degs elevation) while observers in Columbia, Tenn., sighted the balloon to their NORTH at about 4 PM thus bracketing its location as between Nashville and Columbia, and thus about 150 miles away from Godman Field at the closest. At Columbia a local Navy spokesman saw and identified the balloon as a special high-altitude "Naval weather balloon" that tended to disintegrate at high altitudes. So much for Skyhook being a top secret in 1948. ("Skyhook" itself was not a classified codename but was the PR nickname used in publicity releases.)

It simply defies the laws of physics for a 70-foot Skyhook only partially lit by the sun to be visible by the naked eye from 150 miles away from Godman Field. Even Ruppelt admitted that a 100 ft Skyhook was visible only about 50-60 miles (one of the few bits of technical data

Ruppelt actually got right, among the laughable blunders, probably because someone else did the research not him). A 70 ft Skyhook could not have been visible farther than about 45 miles away.

Part 2-16: Skyhook 160 Miles From Mantell

June 10, 2006

Brad Sparks:

As I said at the start of the present controversy I don't know if this is a UFO or an IFO. But if it is a Skyhook balloon it is not very well documented. If it is a UFO it is not very well documented. But a little more background on Mantell might be pertinent from his "closest friend" Capt Richard L. Tyler, Operations Officer at Standiford Field, Louisville, who was also the official Accident Investigator.

http://www.nicap.org/mantell/mantell_sparks_june10.htm

Mantell was co-owner of a flight school, the Elkins-Mantell Flying School, Louisville, thus a flight instructor. He had been a flight instructor during WWII and trained Chinese pilots. He flew over Normandy on D-Day (and won the Distinguished Flying Cross according to news reports). He had a total of about 3,000 flight hours as of the time of his crash, 2,300 hours military flight time. About 70 hours of flight time in the F-51 (P-51) since Mantell started flying it about May 1947.

Tyler states that he believed that Mantell had "seen something more than a star or balloon" and that Mantell "did respect the airplane and the dangers of anoxia." He concluded that:

"If some outside force did not cause his death, I think he passed out too quickly to change his line of flight."

That's a pretty dramatic internal AF/ANG investigator statement we never heard before in all of the 58 years of this case. Why is that?

From all of the evidence I have seen to date and I am still reviewing new material every day (including deciphering nearly illegible docs) a Skyhook-type balloon, probably the one launched by General Mills from Milaca, Minn. (NOT from Camp Ripley 43 miles away) on 1-6-48, the day before, which would have had to travel first S then SE at an average speed of about 25 mph over the course of 1-1/2 days to reach W Kentucky and then N-Central Tennessee.

News reports of sightings made by telescopes, etc., pinpoint the Skyhook's location between Nashville and Columbia, 40 miles SSW of Nashville at about 4-4:30 PM (CST). Astronomer Carl Seyfert in Nashville sighted the balloon to the South (SSE). Observers in Columbia sighted it to the North. Thus the Skyhook's location is neatly bracketed midway between Nashville and Columbia, let's say 20 miles from each city.

That would mean the Skyhook was about 140 miles from Godman Field, which had the UFO in sight from about 2:15 to 3:50 PM at azimuth 215 degs until it disappeared behind a cloud. Mantell crashed 90 miles or so from Godman while chasing the UFO, at about 3:18 PM about 4 miles

south of Franklin near the KY-Tenn border.

PROBLEM: A 70-foot Skyhook balloon is smaller than the smallest resolution ability of the human eye beyond about 45 miles distance (when it is 1 arcminute in subtended angular size, the definition of 20/20 visual acuity). The observers in Nashville and Columbia were roughly 20 miles away and that seems feasible, though no details would be visible to the naked eye at that distance (many people used telescopes and binoculars, the ones describing a balloon shape, a "glassy" appearance like sunlight on a nearly transparent Skyhook balloon plastic, a cable with "lumps" which were the instruments, etc.).

If you do not believe this I suggest you do an experiment: A 70-foot object at 45 miles is the same as a 5-foot automobile at about 3 miles distance. Try driving on a LONG STRAIGHT FREEWAY where you can mark your distance with your odometer against a distant overpass or landmark you can identify. Try to see how far away you can see a car traveling in your direction in the distance. Mentally mark it against the landmark nearest the car then note your odometer reading. Drive to your landmark and measure the distance. I seriously doubt any of you can even see a 5-foot wide car even from 1 mile away let alone 3 miles away. And certainly you cannot possibly see a 5-foot wide car from 9 MILES AWAY which is the actual equivalent of the seventy-foot Skyhook supposedly seen from Godman Field at about 140 miles.

QUESTION: How could the Skyhook balloon have been seen by numerous naked eye observers at Godman Field when it was about 3 times too far away, about 140 miles distant?

Even at that distance the Skyhook would only be a pinpoint in the sky, with no resolvable shape or detail.

QUESTION: How could Mantell and his wingmen Clements and Hammond have seen the Skyhook from about 70 miles away when they saw the bright object (UFO) as they flew near the vicinity of Bowling Green, Ky.? Again the maximum possible distance the Skyhook could have been seen was about 45 miles.

Mantell's wingman Lt Albert Clements returned to base, refueled and reloaded his oxygen, and went back up to find the UFO and his flight leader Mantell at 4:05 PM. Clements went up to 33,000 feet and headed out 100 miles from Godman right over Franklin, Ky., and Mantell's crash site without knowing it (not reported yet and/or report hadn't reached the right people yet) and went beyond, crossing the border into Tennessee at 4:25-30 PM according to Capt Tyler's report. At that same time Dr Seyfert in Nashville was watching the Skyhook balloon to the south of him, roughly 20 miles away (while others in Columbia to the south saw it from the other direction to their north). The Skyhook would then have been only roughly 40 miles from Lt Clements who searching.

QUESTION: Why didn't Lt Clements see the Skyhook from about 40 miles away when Skyhooks purportedly (according to pro-Skyhook partisans) should have been visible from 140 miles? Isn't it because 40 miles is right at the borderline of the 45-mile visibility limit? Does that not further reinforce the fact and prove that a seventy-foot Skyhook could not be seen at 40-45 miles but could be seen from around 20 miles away?

An amateur astronomer, as reported in Nashville papers, sighted the balloon and noticed that it turned yellow at 4:50 PM then red in the reddish light of sunset at 5:05 PM then disappeared in the earth's shadow at 5:12 PM. A balloon would have had to be at about 80,000 feet (15 miles) altitude in order to catch the last rays of the setting sun while the ground around Nashville was already 1/2 hour in twilight darkness after sunset.

This 80,000 feet was in fact the tracked maximum altitude reached by the 1-6-48 Skyhook launch, and not the 60,000 or 100,000 feet altitudes postulated by Moore and others who should have known better. This helps establish that it was in fact the 1-6-48 Skyhook Flight B. That would mean the Skyhook was not descending or leaking yet and it eliminates any attempted self-serving scenarios where the balloon comes down to 50,000

feet in order to force fit sighting details. As of 5:12 PM the Skyhook was still at maximum height 80,000 feet southeast of Nashville.

Tom DeMary:

Certainly the Godman Field observers could not tell what they were looking at 100 miles+ range (unaided vision), but they *might* see the reflected sunlight from what is effectively a very large mirror.

Brad Sparks:

The Skyhook balloons were made of transparent plastic like household Saran wrap or dry cleaning bags only tougher. They were not mirrors! The sun would barely have a fractional percentage of sheen off the plastic. There is simply no way that a 70-foot transparent balloon which looked transparent to witnesses could be visible at all beyond about 45 miles, which is 1 arcminute angular size. No one ever reported seeing any "mirror" like flashes of reflected sunlight off the Skyhook. The only light ever described was steady, not flickering, not shimmering, not flashing. The fact that Lt Clements could not see the Skyhook when he came back to look and was about 40 miles away proves that 40-45 miles was about the limit of visibility of the Skyhook. (Many years later mammoth Skyhooks 250-feet in size were launched but obviously don't count because 3-4 times larger.)

Dick Hall:

After reading Brad Sparks's analysis today, I think it is time for me to recount my sighting of a Moby Dick balloon about 1956 in New Orleans. I made lots of notes at the time, but am not sure where they are now. So this is based on memory alone.

http://www.nicap.org/mantell/mantell_hall_june10.htm

June 11, 2006

Tom DeMary:

OK, I surrender. I probably can't see a 5 foot [wide] car 1 mile away. This means that I also can't see a 15 x 5 ft object 15 x 1 miles away; that is, a 75 foot object 15 miles away. Furthermore, cars aren't even translucent; they reflect light, unlike Skyhook balloons, so I have been told, which should make the balloons even harder to see. The altitude of the 73 ft balloon over Nashville has been proven to be 80,000 ft or 15 miles, so this same argument also proves that nobody on the ground would have spotted the 73 ft balloon over Nashville, because nobody on the ground was closer than 15 miles to the balloon.

Brad Sparks:

The original figures I gave for 20/20 vision are that a 70-foot object is at the limit of visual acuity at about 45 miles, it is 1 arcminute. Do you dispute that? Nitpicking at the boundary lines don't cut it. Prove that the nearly transparent Skyhook balloon could be seen from 140 miles away don't quibble about 15 miles vs. 20 miles. Prove that many people are capable of noticing and reporting a 0.3 arcminute object in the sky. Some people certainly could not have seen it at 15-20 miles, but others could and did. I contend that NO ONE can see a 70-foot object like the Skyhook at 140 miles.

Joel Carpenter:

Come on, Brad - the 100 foot diameter Echo balloon satellites were in a 900 mile \pm high orbit and could easily be seen from the ground.

Brad Sparks:

Come on Joel, the Echo satellites were MIRROR REFLECTORS made of aluminized (METAL) mylar plastic and brightly reflected sunlight so that they were "brighter than stars." The Skyhooks were NOT made of reflective MIRROR-like material but of TRANSPARENT dry-cleaner bag type plastic.

<http://www.astronautix.com/craft/echo.htm>

<http://www.nicap.org/mantell/SolarSailsConfMuller.pdf>

Fran Ridge:

Since there were about two launches of Skyhooks per week (about a hundred a year) one would think there would be many UFO reports attributable to them.

<http://ufologie.net/press2/eveningtelegraph13feb1951.htm>

Besides just launchings, even more important would be how long they are airborne, meaning many would be floating around at one time. WHY, why did this particular Skyhook (which I also contend was not) spark so much attention? Not so much because a man was killed and everybody knew it and was out looking, because the State Police at Madisonville were getting reports of an object 250' in diameter BEFORE they called the tower and BEFORE Mantell knew anything about anything. As Brad mentioned to me, we need to find out the source and content of THOSE reports, the ones that occurred before everybody was perked up to listen about something going on after a pilot was killed chasing a strange object.

Now, concerning what Mantell reportedly saw, if he couldn't have, and didn't see a Skyhook, whether this was a UFO situation or not, what DID he see? What would a pilot of Mantell's caliber be describing that appeared to him to be "large and metallic, tremendous in size"? Even if he COULD see the Skyhook, he wouldn't have described it as "tremendous in size" or "large and metallic". He did see an object "above and ahead of me". If he would have been close enough to actually SEE the object (which he was) a Skyhook would have then been described as a bright object which he couldn't identify, at best. The incidents occurring at the time of the Mantell incident are part of the Mantell report, but next we need to document even more so the two incidents we consider to be potential UFO incidents: at least Lockbourne & Columbus.

Fran Ridge:

Joel, I saw and photographed Echo several times, but seriously doubt any reflection would cause any object to be described by a pilot as large and metallic, tremendous in size. I can see a pilot mystified by an object like that, but I can't fathom anyone using those words unless they meant it. Besides, this wasn't at night for gosh sakes. This was broad daylight.

Jan Aldrich:

I agree with Dick Hall's posting. The arguments surrounding balloon appearance and behavior in recent postings are becoming more and more ridiculous and silly. I have some sixteen years experience in meteorology that involves thousands of balloon observations of all types.

http://www.nicap.org/mantell/mantell_aldrich_june11.htm

Brad Sparks:

By the way, grazing angle reflection requires angles of less than 1 degree between the surface and the light source -- in this case the Skyhook would have had to be within 1 degree of the sun thus blindingly masked in glare and not visible. Furthermore, the areal dimensions of a partial "sheen" of sun reflection off a 70-foot Skyhook is MUCH LESS than 70 feet and is nowhere near sunlight brilliance. Furthermore, naked eye witnesses in the Godman Field region sighted the object with extended dimensions much larger than a pinpoint of light. Godman commander Col Hix estimated 1/4 Full Moon by the naked eye (NO he didn't confuse the binocular view and was very clear about that in his statement

Jan Aldrich:

Where did you get 70 feet, same place you got all the information on Mogul #4? Out of the air. I don't believe you can tell how big the skyhook was unless you have met(eorological) data for that day and know the exact altitude and then it would only be guesstimates. Quantitative information my foot!

Brad Sparks:

If you had been paying attention instead of pontificating you would have known that the 70 foot size of the 1-6-48 launch AS PREVIOUSLY POSTED NUMEROUS TIMES (take note Mary) this past week came from the tracking data. When Mary can post Joel's patching-up of the multiple scans of the drafting-paper-sized map you'll see the balloon size or model type is recorded. And the plastic doesn't stretch in the stratosphere -- it breaks in the extreme cold.

Joel Carpenter:

Fran, there was an internal history of the Air Force balloon program published in 1959 that included this paragraph. "A further advantage, or disadvantage, of plastic balloons is that from a distance they look remarkably like flying saucers."

Fran Ridge:

Same thing the CIA said about U-2's. Joel, I believe balloons have fooled people. I saw one (I think) moving rapidly E-W one day and it looked like a flying disc. It could have been either one because it was going the wrong way, normally, but I only logged the date and time FTR just in case. Never took it seriously.

Has anyone wondered why Mantell didn't describe more than he did? Did he pass out that fast? Or is it possible that his radio acted up like the F-86 did over Albuquerque in 1952. Also, he would have caught up with that Skyhook real fast. He would have passed under it (because it was much higher), but it should not have outdistanced him. He said it was moving about "half my speed". Ever wonder how an experienced pilot could say that about a distant balloon of any kind?

Don Ledger:

Hi Joel, I'm guessing the first row of photos and second from the left had the Sun directly behind it. The 4th from the left would be more like what I would have envisioned that Mantell was chasing if it was a balloon. But in the second row, the 4th from the left is more like what the witnesses were reporting parachute shaped, ice-cream cone shaped etc. Sorry if this is silly and ridiculous.

June 12, 2006

Brad Sparks:

This is cute but it's not science. One of the balloons depicted, as Don points out, has the SUN DIRECTLY BEHIND IT!!! Gimme a break! Another one shown is obviously a mylar metallized mirror-reflective balloon which was not invented yet for Skyhooks in 1948. So, no one is willing to defend the fraud Charles B. Moore the so-called "balloon expert" who cannot correctly calculate balloon ascent rates with simple grade-school math???? Whose fabricated figures just happen to agree with his anti-Roswell slander scenario??? No one wants to assert that $2 + 2 = 5$? Or $100 / 12 = 350$ as Moore claims??? I will give \$1,000 to anyone who can prove that Moore's figures of $100 \text{ ft} / 12 \text{ mins} = 350 \text{ ft/min}$. Is that enough of an incentive? Or will you all just put up or shut up?

By the way, I happen to know that the 1-6-48 Skyhook DID include MIRROR-like REFLECTORS that NO ONE DOGGONE SAW in Tennessee or Kentucky. Yet the TRANSPARENT dry-cleaner-bag-like plastic is supposed to have brilliantly reflected sunlight like a mirror according to people on this List -- yet the actual MIRROR reflectors did not! But I can't talk about how I know, you'll have to ask Mary to let me talk about it.

Tom DeMary:

I originally said that people at Godman Field *might* have seen a balloon at Nashville because it was such a large reflector, and that I did not know how to calculate the apparent brightness. It turns out that the math involved is pretty simple, at least to calculate an upper limit.

http://www.nicap.org/mantell/mantell_demary_june12.htm

Brad Sparks:

Thanks for the calculation. I also consulted the formula in the Condon Report. (See detail)

http://www.nicap.org/mantell/mantell_sparks_june12.htm

Part 2-17: The Accident Report Arrives

June 13, 2006

Brad's computer had problems so his response to Tom DeMary's June 4 comments were delayed until this date:

http://www.nicap.org/mantell/mantell_sparks_june13.htm

as follows:

Tom DeMary:

The correspondence discussed below is for Sign Incident #187, and located at:

[USAF-SIGN7-26](#)

and is very legible.

Is this really a pro-UFO statement or simply the obvious observation that the calculated positions of Venus in paragraph 3 conflict with the observed positions reported in paragraph 2? It is quite clear that the measured positions reported in the letter are far from the known positions of Venus during the afternoon of 7 Jan 1948. This was a serendipitous discovery arising from an inquiry into another sighting, probably of Venus, from Godman Field in August 1948.

Brad Sparks:

You don't answer my question: Since when in the AF files have you EVER seen an anti-IFO or pro-UFO conclusions stated in writing as "conclusive"???? If you look at the historical context of the time, 1948, and the AF's efforts to make this sensational case go away, then this kind of

blunt anti-IFO statement is indeed very unusual and significant -- and in light of Deyarmond's next step of declaring the Mantell case "unexplained." No one in all of 58 years of UFO history ever knew that the AF had internally concluded the Mantell case was "unexplained" and had covered it up with weasel-worded. Today in 2006 we find out about it for the first time.

Tom DeMary:

Curiously, the positions cited by Col Hix and Lt Orner do not agree.

Brad Sparks:

They are at different times.

Tom DeMary:

Col. Hix reports 215°, but the letter attributes a 240° azimuth measurement to Orner at 1400 hrs. This measurement is not what Lt. Orner reported in his statement at:

[USAF-SIGN1-379](#)

Brad Sparks:

It's obviously a mistake in the analysis memo.

Tom DeMary:

There, he reports that the 240° azimuth, 8° elevation measurement was taken at 1735CST. He gives no time for the 250° azimuth at which his object went below the horizon.

Brad Sparks:

We are only reading a part of Lt Orner's reporting including his theodolite tracking at Godman Field. Cpl. James Hudson at Clinton County AFB heard the azimuth-elevation readouts from Orner's tracking over the Plan 62 Interphone System, linking several airfields in the region which was activated during the Mantell incident. Hudson at CC AFB heard and recorded the exact readouts and times 6:54 - 7:02 PM (CST) of Orner's theodolite tracking at Godman Field from around 250 degs (254.6 to 253. 9 to 253.0 degs).

Tom DeMary:

I initially presumed that this was Venus (it was almost an hour after sunset), but Venus does fit. Venus set at 249° at 1907 CST, but was nowhere near 240° , 8 at 1735 CST. It would have been there around 1818 CST, however. Did Orner make a mistake in his notes? 240° points a little south of Madisonville. I reason that the 1400 time in the above letter seems almost certainly incorrect, since the aircraft were dispatched toward 215°. But what of 1735CST? Was something seen at that time and azimuth? I can only note the discrepancy in these theodolite measurements. Daniel Wilson made an interesting related find, which seems to cloud things even more.

[USAF-SIGN1-526](#)

In this affidavit Cpl Hudson reports theodolite measurements from Godman Field with azimuths around 254° (a little off from Venus, but not too bad) and elevations and times that correlate very well with Venus. Fine on the surface, but how many theodolites were tracking objects that evening? Does this infer that Orner's measurements were taken in afternoon after all, and not at 1735 CST or later. Very confusing!

Brad Sparks:

No, Hudson recorded what he heard of Orner's readings over the interbase interphone system (see above). This does not match Venus too well, especially the sequence of DECREASING azimuths (254.6 to 253. 9 to 253.0 degs), whereas Venus' azimuth must INCREASE as it set. Here is

what I found around the time my computer crashed last week:

Godman Field Control Tower

Latitude N 37 54.4

Longitude W 85 58.0

Jan 7, 1948

TIME	OBJECT (UFO)		VENUS	
	Azimuth	Elevation	Azimuth	Elevation
5:35 PM CST	240 degs	+ 8 degs	232.9 degs	+15 degs 23.0 mins
6:54 PM CST	254.6	+ 2.4	246.3	+ 2 11.7
6:56 PM CST	253.9	+ 2.0	246.7	+ 1 51.6
7:02 PM CST	253.0	+ 1.2	247.5	+ 0 52
7:06 PM CST	disappeared		248.0	+ 0 12
7:07 PM CST	Venus set below horizon			

(Corrected for refraction, parallax, etc.)

The problem with this being Venus is that the azimuths are off by 7 to 8.3 to 7.2 to 5.5 degs and the elevation by 7 degs at first, but more troubling is that the object WENT SOUTH from 6:54 to 7:02 PM, instead of Venus which WENT NORTH. A setting celestial body cannot do this. However the nearly simultaneous disappearance of Venus and the object is troubling too.

Even if we postulated that the theodolite was miscalibrated by 7-8 degrees, that would mean all the directions are shifted consistently by that same angle (it's called a "systematic error"). The amount of that shift does not CHANGE from minute to minute!!! Once the theodolite is anchored that is it, a 7 degree error stays 7 degrees from then on. How then can we get only a 5.5-degree error if the hypothesized miscalibration was 7 (or was it 8?) degs????

Even so a miscalibration still doesn't explain the RELATIVE azimuth changes heading SOUTH when they should have been heading NORTH. Also the magnitude of azimuth change is problematic. The object moved South (to the left) by 1.6 degs in 6 minutes when at the same time Venus moved 1.2 degs (in those 6 minutes) to the North (to the right).

Joel Carpenter:

Ah, yes. The money shot. It was worth the wait. The UFO was mimicking the balloon and Venus. It's a fact that there were several interesting sightings of anomalous objects by Skyhook technicians while they were tracking their own balloon.

Jean Waskiewicz:

I have received a copy of this report (AccRep) from Rod Dyke. It is 127 pages long.

Brad Sparks:

Wow. It keeps getting smaller and smaller. I think it was first described as 400+ pages, then the next figure I saw was like 250 pages and now we find out it's only 127 pages. I wonder what's going on here?

Fran Ridge:

The documents below were found by researcher, Dan Wilson. Page three of this restricted routing slip had something we all had missed. Venus, we knew, had been ruled out a long time ago. But Brad brought to the attention of the UFO community, the statement by A. Deyarmond, made in November of 1948 (11 months after the incident), that the case was considered unexplained.

[USAF-SIGN7-26](#)

[USAF-SIGN7-27](#)

[NARA-PBB2-848](#)

Dick Hall:

Col Garrison Wood wrote a letter to Keyhoe in 1960 about the case, and said that as he recalled it, "Patterson Field" had contacted Godman _before_ their sightings that morning and told them to report any. It would be interesting to see whether this was documented at the time.

Brad Sparks:

As you mentioned to me offline Wood has serious credibility issues to say nothing of whether to rely on 1960 memories of exact timing -- did Wright-Pat contact Godman BEFORE or AFTER the first sightings??? Wood was forced out of the AF for corruption charges.

Dick Hall:

If the 1960 letter to Keyhoe survives, it will be in the NICAP files at CUFOS, probably in the Mantell files. I have just discovered some relevant news clippings about the Mantell case, transcribed by Ted Bloecher, and will scan them for you.

Mark Rodeghier:

Because of all the recent discussion about this case, Mary C. borrowed the CUFOS Mantell and is reviewing them at home. So you can contact her about looking for this document.

Fran Ridge:

Mark, This may be real important. I'd love to see this posted with a CUFOS credit on the dir. Can you check into this for us?

June 14, 2006

Joel Carpenter:

Greenwood/Carpenter Map overlay (1.5 GB)

http://www.nicap.org/images/MantellSightings_overlay2.jpg

Original link no longer works ([http://www.ufocentral.org/greenwood/mantell/Mantell 2 sightings_overlay2.jpg](http://www.ufocentral.org/greenwood/mantell/Mantell_2_sightings_overlay2.jpg))

Mary Castner:

Newsclips, map, skyhook launch charts (Original link no longer works)

<http://www.ufocentral.org/greenwood/mantell/>

June 15, 2006

Brad Sparks:

To Everyone:

Notice my subject line: "MANTELL CASE COVERUP." Well no one has commented on 58-year-delayed revelation of the AF COVERUP in the Mantell case -- the AF's stunning "unexplained" conclusion after "conclusively" ruling out Venus, in secret Nov 1948 documents including one by Albert Deyarmond at AMC Intelligence. No one ever heard of or knew about this before I discovered it recently *, we're finding out only after 58 years. It rivals the AMC TOP SECRET Estimate of the Situation and at least we have copies of the relevant documents.

* (Dan Wilson had discovered the Deyarmond document and posted USAF-SIGN-28 on June 3rd. MAXW-PBB3-704 is a composite of that document. It was later discovered that Michael Swords had mentioned this in 2000 in his paper on Project SIGN & the Estimate of the Situation)..

Joel Carpenter:

Your points are all valid, even taking the hyperbole into account. I am sure this subject is trying the patience of the list, so I won't prolong it except to note that I agree with you in general. Obviously, if this case was straightforward, it would have been buttoned up by the emeritus ufologists decades ago. It's not straight-forward. The evidence is internally contradictory. Which data you choose to accept, and which you choose to discard, either way it says something about where you stand relative to the whole phenomenon,

Richard Hall:

I second Joel's sentiment. The new discoveries are quite fascinating and a thorough re-analysis certainly is called for. However, I am not particularly troubled by some internal inconsistencies. That is virtually always the case in human testimony. Further, I am now thoroughly convinced that a Skyhook balloon (or equivalent) definitely was observed from Nashville, Tennessee. We need to pin down the tracks of all such balloons in the area about that time.

June 16, 2006

Tom DeMary:

The Blue Book papers report "Seyfert's balloon" as SSE of Nashville, moving SSE, then West at 10 mph. I suggest that might should have been "moving SSE, west of Nashville at 10 mph."

Brad Sparks:

The problem with this theory is that the AF document actually says Seyfert said it was "moving FIRST SSE, then W" so it's much more alteration required to force-fit it into your suggested emendation. It's an extended discussion of MOVEMENT.

June 19, 2006

Dan Wilson:

Don't think that we have this document yet. 12 April 1948 letter states:

"Capt. James F. Duesler is no longer a member of this Organization, therefore status of investigation promised Mr. A. C. Loedding by subject officer can not be determined."

<http://www.nicap.org/bb/USAF-SIGN1-367.jpg>

<http://www.bluebookarchive.org/page.aspx?PageCode=USAF-SIGN1-367>

USAF-SIGN1-367

June 21, 2006

Tom DeMary:

Loedding clamps down on UFO reports.

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs17.htm>

USAF-SIGN1-376-377

Fran:

These are the same documents that Dan Wilson found and we posted on May 28th. Those were MAXW-PBB3-713 & 714. [USAF-SIGN1-377](#) is a clearer version of MAXW-PBB3-714.

Dick Hall:

Fran, The data I submitted had to do with sunrise and sunset, not Venus setting times. I was comparing the sunset times to the changing colors seen on the "UFO" in that one story. That and the Seyfert observation and a couple of others show pretty definitely that a Skyhook-like balloon was in the area. They reflect sunlight very brightly, as my own 1956 or so sighting indicates. Also, Venus as you know doesn't sit still for 1-1/2 hours as Hix reported. Venus has practically nothing to do with the Mantell case, I agree. If a Skyhook weren't brightly illuminated by sunlight no doubt his calculations about how far the human eye can see something would be close to the mark. The light reflection changes that altogether.

Drew Speier:

Fran, Would you be available next week, say after Wednesday, to do another interview? We want to run our follow-up piece to the Mantell story the second week of July. You will probably be the only person we interview for this one. We want to talk about how the investigation was reopened because of our stories. I think we can mention how you are looking at Blue Book files now, etc., as well.

Fran Ridge:

Depends on my analysts' final comments. The re-investigation is ongoing and we are going over the skyhook path charts. No question a skyhook was in the region, but not everybody could have seen it. We think we can prove Mantell could not have seen it at all, let alone risk his life going after it. Also found evidence of a cover-up. But we have to get this right, FTR, and everybody caught the interview we had. And who knows, somebody reading it might be another key witness. We found another F-51 crash; pilot killed. BEDFORD, Indiana. UFO involved, and radar. And no records in

Blue Book files as yet, but we are only up to mid-1952 on those.

June 22, 2006

Fran Ridge:

Brad, I want to do this (interview), but I don't want to go out on a limb. What do you think we have at this point?

Brad Sparks:

You can say that we still don't know it was a UFO rather than an IFO. But the 70-foot Skyhook balloon that is now known to have been in the area was south of Nashville, Tenn., and at about 160 miles distance was too small or far away to be seen from Godman Field at Fort Knox, Kentucky. The balloon would have had to be something like 1,000 feet in size to be both visible and prominent enough for anyone to pay attention to it. The AF secretly concluded the Mantell case was "unexplained," a fact that was not discovered until this renewed investigation, after almost 58 years. The AF had always dismissed it as either a Skyhook balloon or the planet Venus, neither of which were visible, apparently. Other sightings that day are still being investigated, but some may be actual UFO's. The Mantell Accident Report is still to be analyzed (by the way what is the progress on that???).

June 25, 2006

Dan Wilson:

Jean, Thanks for the crash report. Looking it over carefully. Perhaps I am a bit too suspicious but page 14 of 76 (Richard L Tylers's report) and page 20 of 76 (Glenn T. Mayes's report) sound very much alike. Both talk of the plane doing three circles and then go into a power dive and slowly rotating, and did not burn on impact. A power dive? That is okay for Tyler of the ANG but for a civilian (Mayes) to say a power dive, that sounds like he was being coached--told what to say--get your stories straight , etc. Great job!

Dan Wilson:

Mantell Incident Crash Report

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/MantellAccRptPages65-97.pdf>

Frame (15 of 33) says only one pilot in the flight (the element leader) had an oxygen mask. Mantell was the Flight Leader.

June 26, 2006

Jean Waskiewicz:

I have created a PDF file of all the pages in the package I received leaving out the duplicate pages for now. It is 22.17MB and I loaded it onto my site at:

http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell_accprep.htm

Brad Sparks:

I'm already seeing that the Accident Report has more complete versions of the seemingly same statements of the same witnesses than what appears in the Sign/BB files. The editing has been done smoothly enough that you would never know you are reading an edited version if you didn't have the complete version to compare with.

June 27, 2006

Fran Ridge:

Did we ever run into any of these documents on Mantell?

Ruppelt: "I dug out the file. In 1949 all of the original material on the incident had been microfilmed, but something had been spilled on the film. Many sections were so badly faded they were illegible. As I had to do with many of the older sightings that were now history, I collected what I could from the file, filling in the blanks by talking to people who had been at ATIC during the early UFO era. Many of these people were still around, "Red" Honnacker, George Towles, Al Deyarmond, Nick Post, and many others. Most of them were civilians, the military had been transferred out by this time."

Fran Ridge:

In 1956 a former head of Project Blue Book (Capt. Ed Ruppelt) stated in his book ("The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects", page 41):

"According to the old timers at ATIC, this report (Chiles-Whitted case) shook them worse than the Mantell Incident. This was the first time two reliable sources had been really close enough to anything resembling a UFO to get a good look and live to tell about it." When I mentioned the AF being shook up on the original TV interview, somebody asked me where I got that. Well, two places: Lewis Blevis in 1960 and Ruppelt in 1956.

June 28, 2006

Dan Wilson:

The 9 Oct. 1961 letter mentions the Mantell Case, saying that there was no radioactivity connected with the remains of Capt. Mantel's aircraft, a P-51.

[MAXW-PBB9-515](#)

Dan Wilson:

Clingerman Request for Transcription of a recording made 7 January regarding an unidentified flying object and the discussion that took place between the three P-51 National Guard aircraft and the tower operator at Godman Field. During an investigation 9 January 1948 at Godman Field it was learned that such a recording was made. Maj. Matthews says his office has no record and refers to Detachment Commander, 733 AFBU, Godman AFB.

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs18.htm>

[USAF-SIGN1-295](#)

Part 2-18: WFIE - The Second Interview

June 28, 2006, continued.

Fran Ridge:

Mantell update on WFIE was 'filmed'.

Form: 97, Media Coverage

Date: Thu, 27 Jul 2006 07:25:27 -0500

From: Francis Ridge <nicap@insightbb.com>

**Subject: UFO or Balloon? Either Way Man Dies In Pursuit
WFIE Interview, Mantell Case
Part 2, June 28, 2006 (air date: July 26, 2006)**

Reporter: Drew Speier

New Media Producer: Rachel Chambliss

A Newswatch follow-up to a story we first brought you in May.

It was one of Kentucky's most famous and controversial UFO cases. It involved Kentucky National Guard Pilot Thomas Mantell, who crashed his plane and died in 1948 while chasing what he thought was a UFO.

After our story aired, UFO researchers re-opened the investigation. Here's what they've discovered.

The military says it was a skyhook balloon. But now, more than 58 years after the tragedy, new information has researchers saying the balloon theory is just not possible.

Francis Ridge says, "Something that had been written off for 58 years, all of a sudden became a hot topic."

What was Captain Thomas Mantell really chasing in January of 1948 when he flew his F-51 fighter to an altitude with no oxygen, forcing him to crash to his death in Simpson County, Kentucky?

"The discussions were going wild on the Internet, and people were digging up new information and were finding new evidence," he continues.

Was it a UFO or a skyhook balloon?

That new evidence has now become clear to UFO researchers, like Mt. Vernon's Francis Ridge, who is with the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomenon.

"Where the skyhook was eventually found to be, Mantell could not have seen it, and if he had, of course, it wouldn't have been anything like what he reported," says Ridge.

In a tape recording, Thomas Mantell says, "Mantell to tower. It appears to be a metallic object, and it's of tremendous size."

Ridge says the military's skyhook theory is impossible because official bluebook records show that there was a balloon, but it was hovering over Nashville, some 150 miles away. Those facts are documented by an astronomer who reported seeing it that day.

New reports from the official bluebook archives indicate that Mantell wasn't the only one who saw the UFO that day. So did Kentucky State Police.

Documents state, "Kentucky State Police had sighted an unusual object or aircraft flying through the air, circular in appearance, approximately 250-to-300 feet in diameter moving at a pretty good clip."

That information was relayed to Godman Air Force Base military personnel, and then dispatched to Mantell and three other pilots to investigate.

Three planes turned back because of a lack of fuel and oxygen. Mantell continued his pursuit.

Thomas Mantell, recorded audio, says, "Mantell to tower. I see it above and ahead of me. I'm still climbing."

Shortly thereafter, Mantell went down in a field in Simpson County, Kentucky.

To this day, former Kentucky National Guard Commander [Brigadier General Edward Tonini](#), now living in Louisville, is sticking to the skyhook balloon theory.

He says, "It was unexplained to him certainly what it was, and he was chasing something and not just an illusion. And I believe that it was just this balloon."

The commander of the Kentucky Air National Guard at the time of the incident, retired Two-Star [General Phillip Ardery](#), agrees.

General Ardery states, "It doesn't seem to be much of a mystery to me. We pretty much know what happened."

UFO researchers aren't surprised to hear the military's stance.

Ridge says, "It's natural for the military people to defend what they're told."

But Ridge says his new evidence should change the military's position and dismiss the skyhook balloon theory once and for all.

"They didn't know then what we didn't know a few months ago, and know now it was impossible for that to be," continues Ridge.

Finding the truth hasn't been easy for researchers, who are now investigating the actual accident, but it's not complete.

"This is the accident report. It was supposed to be 450 pages; then, it turned out to be 250 pages, and when we finally got it, it was 127 pages. What happened to the other pages, and what's on those missing documents?" demands Ridge.

(Note: This is probably an error made by UFOlogists, rather than actual missing documents. We caught it early but the interview was filmed three weeks prior to the showing. The accident report in its 127 version was still full of surprises and we're not finished with our analysis. - Ridge)

That's what researchers want to know, and what they will continue to investigate.

Ridge says, "There's more to this case, and thanks to WFIE and Drew Speier, we're getting more and more all the time. We're going to stick with it; we're not done with it by any means."

The Mantell directory

<http://www.nicap.org/mantelldir.htm>

has grown tremendously since our first report. The NICAP team believes that while they admit there was a secret skyhook project, the balloons were no secret. And they proved that the balloon they say Mantell was chasing, could not have been possible.

What they don't know is what Thomas Mantell was chasing to the point where he'd become the first person in history to die while pursuing a UFO. That's something they'll continue to investigate.

Part 2-19: "Cover-up of the Complicity"

Final entry for June 28, 2006:

Brad Sparks:

I would like to verify Mantell's WWII service. Doesn't seem likely that a mere troop transport pilot would come to the attention of brass like Gen Garland. Capt Tyler's statement says that Mantell flew "transition in B-24's" in WWII (not sure what "transition" means unless he was training for B-24 flight duty). B-24's were bombers not troop transports, and flew much higher (to 32,000 ft), where oxygen was necessary and thus Mantell had to be familiar with oxygen requirements from personal experience. The excuse that he only flew low-altitude transports doesn't cut it.

June 29, 2006

Dan Wilson:

During January 1948, Police Officer Joe Walker conducted an investigation of an aircraft accident which crashed into the yard of Mrs. Carrie Phillips, Route 3, Lake Spring Road, 5 miles southwest of Franklin, Kentucky. (W J Phillips farm)

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs19.htm>

[MAXW-PBB3-707](#)

Brad Sparks:

Then later Godman Field denied there was a recording ever made. It took months, Major Duesler who was supposed to have gotten the tape transcribed was himself transferred out. But there is another "trick" possibly involved here. There was something called a Plan 62 Interphone System linking several CAA (and presumably AACCS) control towers in the region. One guy at Lockbourne (if I recall which base correctly) actually listened in on Godman's Tower conversation and wrote down the Godman base theodolite trackings of azimuth and elevation for an unidentified object later that evening, which he heard over this interphone system hundreds of miles away from Godman. Without his record we wouldn't have most of those readings from Godman itself. Thus it is possible ANOTHER BASE recorded the Godman Tower communications rather than Godman itself. Later Godman could weasel-wordedly say that they at Godman didn't record anything.

Jean Waskiewicz:

The base was Lockbourne and the person was Pickering, also from Kevin Randle's analysis of the case:

"Richard Miller, (1953) in a privately circulated "Prologue," reported that he had been in the Air Force in January 1948 and that he had been stationed at Scott Air Force Base near Belleville, Illinois. Like Albert Pickering, he had been listening to the intercept over the closed communications link. Miller reproduced the inter-plane and the communications with the tower accurately, suggesting, "At 3:15 P.M., ... Mantell called in again and said, 'It's still above me making my speed or better. I am going to 20,000 feet. If I'm no closer then, I'll abandon the chase.'" Miller than added, "This is where the official Air Force account ends. However, there was on further radio transmission from Mantell at 3:18 that afternoon. His last statement has been stricken from all of the official records. He said, 'My god (sic). I see people in this thing.'" There is, of course, no corroborated record of Mantell ever having said anything like either of these two statements. The official record, now available to UFO researchers, was originally classified, and had Mantell uttered anything like that, it would have been included in that file. Air Force investigators would have expected the file to remain classified and would have had no reason to censor themselves. These sorts of quotes, and stories, created without proper foundation, while interesting, add nothing to the understanding of the case. They should now be expunged from the record." Whether this is true or not, could someone at Scott AFB have recorded the transmissions?

Brad Sparks:

Thanks Jean. Yes you've refreshed my memory. That's exactly what I mean, some other base such as Scott AFB or Lockbourne or Wright Field, whatever, might have recorded Godman's communications over their interphone system. Maybe Maj Duesler knew which base had the recording but was transferred before he could get it and didn't bother to tell anyone.

Fran Ridge:

This thing about Duesler not being available for Loedding's question about the status of the investigation:

"Capt. James F. Duesler is no longer a member of this Organization, therefore his status of investigation promised Mr. A. C. Loedding by subject officer cannot be determined." Didn't Duesler make out a report? Anyway, why couldn't he be summoned or written to?

Brad Sparks:

I am in the process of exposing a coverup of the complicity of Mantell's wingmen in the crash. More than just a possible UFO coverup is involved here but also ordinary corruption and deceit. Lt Clements' statement is riddled with falsehoods from start to finish evidently designed to minimize or

omit his role in supporting Mantell's chase without oxygen (he Clements was the only one with oxygen and he used it) in violation of AF Regs, above 14,000 ft. Apparently, as I infer, Clements saw the object for a substantial portion of the approximately 15-minute chase contrary to his statements that he only saw something at the very end. Thus he was puzzled or entranced with the object and went along with Mantell's ill-advised pursuit for a very long time without warning him not to. Clements has falsely compressed all this into a "few minutes" drama. If in fact they flew for roughly 15 minutes above 14,000 ft without Mantell having oxygen (or Hammond either) then why didn't Clements warn him again and again and again? It cries out for explanation. The Accident Investigating Board was also complicit in this coverup, which pinned the entire blame on Mantell -- who was conveniently dead and unable to respond to charges and unable to be punished -- and thus absolved Clements and Hammond of any responsibility whatsoever. They saw "something" too and that's why they, like Mantell, went on for so long at too high an altitude.

Brad Sparks:

I spent too many hours yesterday working out the Mantell timeline but drafted up most of it. I just need to finish it. It's the timeline that sinks Clements. He and the Board claimed that Mantell was gunning it into a maximum climb at full power right from the start just above Godman Field. I found out that's an absolute impossibility, they made it up to make Mantell look bad. It turns out that at max climb rate of about 2,000 ft/min at 15,000-20,000 ft it would have taken only 4 MINUTES to have gotten from 14,000 to 22,500 ft where the last contact with Mantell was made -- if that was true they would have barely gotten out of the vicinity of Godman!!!! At max climb the P-51's speed drops to only 180 mph and in 4 minutes they would only have gotten about 12 miles away from Godman Field! Mantell's crash site was 92 miles away and the Bowling Green area the Mantell flight flew over was 67 miles

Fran Ridge:

Check this out:

<http://arnold-air.org/roster/06/> (now archived at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20080407180313/http://arnold-air.org/roster/06/>)

Tommy Mantell Squadron, AFROTC Det. 295, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY

http://www.afa.org/contact_links.asp?searchby=state&stabbr=KY&ent=chapter Local AFA Chapters

Still hoping to find his service record. He wasn't an "ace". We knew that, but WFIE thought he was. They got an email that corrected that. But he was highly regarded and I would like to know what they say about him.

Fran Ridge:

This is unverified information, 1996, with no supporting evidence for the unusual claims.

http://ufoinfo.com/roundup/v01/rnd01_02.shtml

..... "Sightings" had an interview with former Army sergeant Quinton A. Blackwell, who was in the tower at Godman Field, Fort Knox, Kentucky the afternoon of January 7, 1948, when Captain Thomas F. Mantell had his fatal encounter with a UFO. During his meeting with Capt. Mantell's two sons and sister, Blackwell made a startling statement. He said that once Capt. Mantell had the large metallic saucer in sight, the pilot remarked, "We're going to need hot guns."

Brad Sparks:

Capt Richard Tyler's statement says Mantell flew in B-24 bombers during WWII not just troop transports. B-24's flew as high as 32,000 feet. Thus Mantell did have personal experience with high-altitude oxygen requirements. The troop-carrier story doesn't wash (they said he didn't know about oxygen requirements because he had only flown low-altitude troop transports). Also, Mantell had 67 hours of flight time in the P-51D, which had a service ceiling of 41,000 feet or so. Did he not fly it with oxygen sometime during those 67 hours?

June 30, 2006

Fran Ridge:

Apparently Mantell was pretty sharp. Jean read somewhere where it describes his service activity pretty well with some hair-raising hollywood type incidents. But Wendy's account says Mantell told the tower they were not the planes from Standiford but were returning from a ferry flight from Atlanta to Standiford. He agreed to seek out and investigate the object but wanted the aircraft from Standiford to be aborted. (Apparently to avoid congestion while they investigated. Found a page in the accident report signed by LEE MERKEL

Brad Sparks:

Yes I noticed that Merkel had signed the accident reports, as KNG Commander. I don't have any reliable report that any general was in the Godman Tower but there were Colonels, Majors, Captains, etc. Godman expected 2 planes from Standiford scrambled but they did not show up. Godman Tower personnel all saw the object apparently. I am unsure if Mantell's other wingman Hammond saw anything -- he was suffering from hypoxia.

Fran Ridge:

(Did not show up) That's because Mantell had them abort the flight

Fran Ridge:

Be interesting if we could find a coroner's report that DIDN'T support anoxia for the cause of death. I assume that's how he died, but WHAT IF he didn't die that way? The plane crashed funny, just like you always said. Bet we don't have a coroner's report

Brad Sparks:

Yes we do have a coroner's report (it's in the Accident Report and states the wristwatch stopped at 3:18 PM) but what we don't have is an AUTOPSY exam as it seems it was not done.

Brad Sparks:

The Accident Report is based only on what the reporting station (Standiford) had and does not use any Godman Tower witnesses. I am in the process maybe today of comparing Godman witnesses' accounts of radio transmissions with Clements' false account. I believe he lied about almost everything.

Part 2- 20: The Real Work Begins

Much work in the area of transcriptions (which were presented as text when the documents actually were discovered and posted in this report), data-processing and preliminary analyses begins. Of particular importance is the transcription of the full accident report by Jean Waskiewicz.

July 1, 2006

Jean Waskiewicz:

Accident Report Documents

http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell_accrep_excerpts.htm

July 3, 2006

Fran Ridge:

Brad, Didn't Clements claim Mantell violated protocol by not switching to "B" channel when gave him hand signals? And what channel did the pilots use when they were in flight from Georgia?

<http://www.nicap.org/bb/MAXW-PBB3-754.jpg>

says B channel was out, A was weak. I thought the accident report showed a maint doc saying B was out BEFORE the ferry mission. Not sure they fixed it. And what channel did he talk to the Godman Tower on?

July 5, 2006

Brad Sparks:

I can't really find anything I need when I need it, hence nothing is getting done. Can someone reorganize the Mantell Directory so that there is a simple list of Witness Statements with BB Archive links to the Statements, with only Witness last names, NOTHING ELSE (no long-winded doc titles which are irrelevant), except maybe ranks, something like this (BUT COMPLETE): (samples given)

Fran Ridge:

We're working on that, too, the statements by each. But the rest will stay up because it shows who found what documents and when.

July 6, 2006

Brad Sparks:

I got the full PDF from Jean so that's fine. It's the rest that is so scattered I can't spend time right now to finish my report on Mantell.

Fran Ridge:

Here's where we are on the acc rep transcripts

http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell_accrep_excerpts.htm

Brad Sparks:

This is extremely helpful except for two things: 1. I was never told about this transcription until just now. 2. These are PDF's instead of text so they are not searchable on the Web and when I laboriously copy the text into a Word doc I lose all the spacings between paragraphs so the text looks cramped and difficult to read. Can Jean or you provide a Word doc with this text with all the spacings? Is it possible to get a list of all BB docs with

Godman Tower conversations with Mantell and crew and then Word document transcripts of those reports? These are like Blackwell's report and include Godman Commander Col. Hix, Lt Orner, Lt Col Wood, and others. Also there is a document that compares Tower / P-51 flight conversations.

Jean Waskiewicz:

Brad, I have just started doing some transcriptions in the last couple of days. I have attached the Word versions of those already finished and I will continue to send the Word versions to you as I finish them. I am in the process of going through PBB3-657-799. (Frames 657-666 already posted in Part 2-2 - Fran Ridge) which I have downloaded and looking for more documents that relate to each personality involved in this incident. I will start looking for the specific documents you need. If there are any others you need transcribed, just give me the page/link and I will get it done for you.

Brad Sparks:

Fran, Previously you said there is no rush. As you know I'm under the gun on a major project this week.

http://www.nicap.org/mantell/mantell_sparks_july6.htm

Fran Ridge:

There isn't. Take your time. Drew can wait on phase three and I'll just give him our status. This is for US, not for THEM.

Jean Waskiewicz:

Brad and Fran, I have created a complete cross-reference of the 127 pages in the Accident Report. This shows which pages are in the package more than once; includes a description of what is on each page and if the page has a signature on it. I hope this helps in our efforts. I have cross-referenced a number of the pages to the Maxwell Roll 3 entries. I will go back and try to find the pages I did not do yet to see if they have a pages in the BB rolls.

July 7, 2006

Brad:

Thanks Jean. Great work! So it looks like there is no witness statement from Hammond, very suspicious. Does this look like all of the Mantell files in the BB Archive or do you know of others you have to get to? I think there is a whole file on Mantell in the Other/SIGN microfilm rolls. Also there seems to be Mantell material mixed in with Lockbourne (and maybe Clinton Co. AFB) cases.

Jean Waskiewicz:

That is my next step in this process. I have started going through the rolls available online to find other documents relating to this case. I will finish the Maxwell roll and then I will go to the Sign roll 1 which I had already had a cursory look at last week. I will examine the pages already on the Mantell dir page and include those in the index as appropriate. I know there are more and I will move on as I finish each roll. As I go through this process, I will be creating an index like the one I just sent. I did not come across any new pages with conversations between Godman and the pilots when I finished the index, but I will keep this in mind as I go forward. I understand that the Mantell dir page is getting difficult to follow as it gets larger. Do you think we need some type of index or maybe some type of TOC that would make it easier to just find what a person is interested in rather than just looking at all of the entries as they are on the page currently?

Brad Sparks:

What would help most is to reduce the doc titles to a couple words each and organize them by category. (Examples sent to Jean)

Dan Wilson:

Statement of Lt. Paul I. Orner. Following is an account of the sighting of unknown objects from the Control Tower on January 7, 1948 at Godman Field.

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs21.htm>

USAF-SIGN1-379-380 (See Part 2-6)

Dan Wilson:

Statement by Captain Cary Carter, USAF, on duty at Godman Field on January 7, 1948, as an Operation Officer

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs20.htm>

[USAF-SIGN1-378](#)

July 10, 2006

Dan Wilson:

"There are no further theodolite readings available at this base. Briefs of daily weather requested as follows": Signed John W. Mitchell, Colonel, USAF
Commanding.

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs23.htm>

[MAXW-PBB3-700](#) from MAXW-PBB3-700-702

Dan Wilson:

Transcript of Long Distance Telephone Conversation, 13 January 1948, 0920, Mr. Loedding, Air Intelligence, Wright Field Called, Col. R. O. Davis Jr., Commanding Officer 332 Fighter Wing, LAAB

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs22.htm>

[MAXW-PBB3-696](#)

TRANSCRIPT OF LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

13 January 1948

0920

Mr. Loedding, Kembrook 7111 – 21204, Air Intelligence, Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio

Called

Col. N. O. Davis, Jr., Commanding Officer, 332d Fighter Wing, LAAB, Cols 17, 0.

Subject: Request for Information re: objects in the sky

Mr. L.: Colonel Davis, this is Mr. Loedding, Air Intelligence, Wright Field. I understand that a conversation took place January 7, Wednesday, between Godman Field, Kentucky and your base at Lockbourne regarding an unidentified object.

Col. D.: If I did I am not aware of it Mr. Loedding. I read about it in the Air Force Times yesterday. A statement about Col. Hicks saying something looked like a flying saucer. That is all I know about it.

Mr L.: Capt. Dusler said there was a call from Lockbourne Air Base and they were assisting in this thing.

Col. D.: I personally know nothing of that Mr. Loedding.

Mr. L.: I wonder if you could make an investigation - and think if somebody in the tower did see it, maybe you could call me back and I could come there and talk to somebody. Like to interrogate them.

Col. D.: Whether anybody on this station saw a foreign object in the air -

Mr. L.: and whether they discussed it with anyone – particularly Godman Field. If you call me and I will drive over and talk to them.

Col. D.: Shall I call you in case I don't find anybody?

Mr. L.: It would be a good idea to tell me what you find out. My number is 21Z04, Kembrook 7111, Wright Field.

Col. D.: I will be glad to do that Mr. Loedding.

Mr. L.: I will appreciate it, colonel. What is your extension?

Col. D.: Fr. 7-5711 Extension 201.

Mr. L.: Thank you very much, sir.

Dan Wilson:

Fran Ridge: Shows as of Oct 1948 they were still trying to find out what Mantell was chasing. We have better docs KO-ing Venus (Deyarmond) so this is just ftr.

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs24.htm>

MAXW-PBB3-697-698

July 11, 2006

Dan Wilson:

Request for complete theodolite readings and resume of qualifications of individual who made the readings. Request for further briefs on daily weather at Godman from 1 January to 15 January 1948

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs25.htm>

MAXW-PBB3-699

July 22, 2006

Brad Sparks:

Popular Science, May 1948, "Are Secret Balloons the Flying Saucers?"

http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell_sparks_PopScience.htm

July 23, 2006

Dan Wilson:

"Pilots Chase Disc", Ky. State Highway Patrol Officer Sgt. John T. Worful / 1948 (See text in Part 2-14)

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107press1.htm>

July 24, 2006

Dan Wilson:

Statement by Colonel Guy F. Hix, USAF, Commanding, Godman Field, Fort Knox, Kentucky. 9 January 1948. At approximately 1300 hours a call came to this Headquarters from State Police, reporting a flying object near Elizabethtown, south of Godman Field.

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs33.htm>

[USAF-SIGN1-381](#) (Text in Part 2-3)

July 25, 2006

Jean Waskiewicz:

As I was working on Blackwell's statement, I came across this that you should check for more mention of Police and Very large object

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs31.htm>

USAF-SIGN1-280 (See text in Part 2-3)

Dan Wilson:

Report of an observation of an Unidentified Object in the skies above Godman Field on Jan 8, hundreds of feet in diameter, and which could not have been the Skyhook now placed by researchers at 150 miles away over Nashville, again confirms what state police and other callers also reported.

The following report is dated 9 January 1948.- E. GARRISON WOOD

<http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell480107docs30.htm>

[USAF-SIGN1-376](#) (See text in Part 2-3)

July 26, 2006

Jean Waskiewicz:

This is one of the many articles I transcribed. This one also states that only one flier had oxygen.

http://www.nicap.org/images/1948_1_9_CourierJournal_2.jpg

Fran Ridge:

Mantell update filmed June 28 aired this date.

July 27, 2006

Dan Wilson:

This is weird. I was just thinking about a program I saw once (I think it was a Sightings Program) where some investigators went to the crash scene and they found higher than normal radiation readings there. This was years after the crash. Fran wrote: The AF NEVER went to the Mantell family. They found out from the neighbors! That is suspicious in itself. Are they hiding something?

Jean Waskiewicz:

Dan, I used to tape the Sightings show in the 1990s when it first aired and I just happened to have both episodes they did on Mantell. The VHS tapes are very old now but I was able to extract the episode and burn them to CD. The sound quality is very bad but if you use earphones to listen you can hear what is being said. I can mail you a copy of them if you want. I cant upload them to the website because they are too large. This is how we know that the AF never spoke to the Mantell family. It is on these recordings. If you don't have speakers for your PC yet you can plug earphones into it and listen that way. There should be a headphone jack on the actual box somewhere.

Jean Waskiewicz:

I have used the sign team list of people and a couple of others I've added to enlist their aid in finding information regarding possible radar detection in the Mantell incident. The document Brad has cited was of interest to me earlier but I didn't quite make the connection. I think we might all have missed the potential here. Brad has some suggestions on how we might go into this. We're open. The page we started is, at this time, unlisted and confidential, and a first draft.

http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell_radar_sparks.htm

July 28, 2006

Jean Waskiewicz:

I came across this as I was looking for more articles at the Newspaper Archive site and just thought it was interesting and also curious as to why this would come out when it did. I have attached the article. It is from the Lima, Ohio News from Aug 21, 1952.

http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/mantell_ins1952.htm

July 29, 2006

Brad Sparks:

Mighty interesting! Someone got a copy of the Mantell Accident Report released in some form in Aug 1952. I don't think anyone in UFOlogy knew about it. How did you find it? There are some confusions in it but overall most of it looks like straight out of the witness statements (except the stringing together of one long quote from Mantell, etc.).

Aug. 10, 2006

Jean Waskiewicz:

The Mantell Incident - Events on 7 Jan 1948 - Official Statements by Incident Number

http://www.nicap.org/docs/mantell/Mantell_Incident_Statements.htm

2007

Aug. 21, 2007

Robert Swiatek:

Not another controversy?? I'll give you a call tonight or tomorrow to discuss this. The report at issue is yours since you are the prime writer and force behind it (on behalf of the Fund, I asked you if it were something you could do, as you recall). You're right: if others contribute, yes, they should be given due credit, but principal authorship resides in yourself. Obviously, others can write their own reports over their own names if they so choose and market them accordingly.

Sept. 6, 2007

Dan Wilson:

Further request status of investigation promised by A. C. Loedding, Technical Assistant, Technical Intelligence Division by Captain James Duesler.
http://www.nicap.org/mantell/mantell_wilson_loedding.htm
[NARA-PBB2-870](#)

Sept. 14, 2007

Fran Ridge;

The real work now begins. Going over everything we have collected all these months and getting some people within the A-Team, and some independent analysts on the outside, to give us their opinions and analyses. Part Three will provide those reports. Part 3-1 will be a summation of what we found and our conclusions based on those findings. Persons submitting their analyses in a timely manner will be provided space in the report which will be printed by the Fund for UFO Research. Later analysts can submit their papers separately, however the online version of this report scheduled for released one year after the FUFOR publication will have all the current submittals available.

Francis Ridge
NICAP A-Team Director

Part 3- 1: Summary & Preliminary Analysis

This summation and preliminary analysis deals with what our team found during the re-investigation of the Mantell Incident that I began on March 8th of 2006 as a result of Channel 14 (Evansville, Indiana) Drew Speier's request to do a story I originally objected to, which aired on May 23rd, 2006. This summation will try to expound on this without re-hashing my seven reasons for thinking there was more to the case than the current wisdom suggested. In other words, prior to this re-investigation I was willing to accept the conclusion of my colleagues, that Mantell had died in an accident chasing a balloon of some type.

When the re-investigation began on March 8th, the first thing we did was to re-examine the old Mantell case file. There were three documents in that file

that we had not paid too much attention to. One that mentioned a "Plan 62" which had no real significance to us at that time. Another, a hard-to-read inverted image in black with white letters at the bottom that read, "Oxygen system was not serviced. System was in working order." Yet another document that said Mantell's body was removed before the Air Force accident team got there.

PLAN 62

Somewhere in an old email from Dan Wilson is a report he filed on Plan 62. The report was not tied to any particular sighting, so the file got sidestepped and was lost. But Wendy Connors document # 6 had mentioned "Plan 62". Three months into our re-investigation Plan 62 became the topic of discussion in the Mantell case. Brad Sparks had a pretty good idea of what he thought it was, and later found more details. In the fall of 2008 Dan Wilson was able to get an official document from the Air Force Historical Studies Office.

My research into Mantell led me to examine Captain Ed Ruppelt's unedited manuscript for his book, "The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects". It mentioned the Plan, but not by number. This then, was an important early discovery. Ruppelt's slip-up in his manuscript had mentioned that "The people on Project SIGN worked fast on the Mantell Incident, [in fact they heard about it through Flight Service while it was all in progress.]..." Our investigation was to show that Air Force personnel mentioned hearing about sightings that infamous day at the other bases as the event was actually unfolding.

Here is what Brad Sparks added in June: "The Air Defense Command (ADC) used the Plan 62 intercom system, through the Air Transport Command's Flight Service Centers, and the air traffic controllers of the Airways and Air Communications Service (AACS) in those centers and outlying bases, to coordinate the use of air traffic control towers and radars to track the UFO. This was because at that time the ADC had only two operating radars in the nation, both too far away, across the continent on the West Coast (at Half Moon Bay, Calif., and Arlington, Wash.)."

Ruppelt had said in his published book (page 33) that "rumor had it that the tower had carried on a running conversation with the pilots and that there was more information than was so far known." Ruppelt stated the rumors were not true. The evidence proves him wrong or a liar. We now know that a lot of people heard Mantell and his men. Project SIGN was even in on it, live!!!!

OXYGEN

Our report on file on the Mantell Incident file by the end of 2005 had documents that strongly suggested that something strange had been going on in the region, and one of those documents was USAF-SIGN1-310. A better version of this document was uncovered by Dan Wilson on June 1st of 2006, but we actually had it in December of 2005. The bottom of document USAF-SIGN-310 clearly reads, "Oxygen system was not serviced. System was in working order." Regarding Mantell having oxygen, my take was that the system, like an automobile with a gas tank, carburetor and fuel pump, was in working condition, except it had not been fueled or topped off with oxygen. Brad believes Mantell not only had to have had oxygen, but has found supporting evidence in the Accident Report that we obtained and transcribed for our use and supplied to him.

BODY REMOVED

USAF-SIGN1-372 documents that State Police officer Joe Walker arrived at the crash scene and stated that the pilot's body had already been removed. We later learned that the ambulance crew had done this and it was reported in a newspaper. The source was the Franklin (Kentucky) Newspaper of January 8, 1948. "Mrs. Joe Phillips said she called the telephone operator and asked for an ambulance and for help to be sent to the crash site." And the very next line read: "The body of the deceased pilot has been removed from the scene by ambulance men and were transported to the Booker Funeral Home, waiting for the family's instructions, which was to be informed of the tragedy by the authorities at Fort Knox."

NOT A BALLOON

Later on in the same document mentioned above, it states that a Dr. Seyfert from Vanderbilt University had spotted an object SSE of Nashville, Tennessee. This turned out to be the infamous Skyhook that the Air Force tried to blame for the object that fooled everybody and subsequently lured Mantell to his

death.

So, on March 8, 2006, the re-investigation began. My first interview was on May 23rd, with Drew Speier on Channel 14 on the Mantell Incident.

On May 27, 2006 we found another version of USAF-SIGN1-372. It was NARA-PBB2-854 and it mentioned again the famous Skyhook SSE of Nashville.

Who in the Air Force investigated the Mantell incident? Early on in our re-investigation it was clear that the Air Force took the case seriously. And by 1952 it had still shaken the Air Force up. Michael D. Swords wrote: "The core personnel for the project were probably the most talented group to work on UFOs until the Air Force ended its investigation in 1969. Aiding chief officer, Capt. Robert R Sneider, were two outstanding aeronautical engineers, Alfred Loedding and Alfred B. Deyarmond. Completing the group was nuclear and missile expert Lawrence Truettner. The quality of these people indicates the seriousness (and the comparative difference in later years) with which the Air Force considered the flying disk problem."

On May 28, 2006, Dan Wilson found document MAXW-PBB3-714, that mentions Alfred Loedding from Project SIGN. Wilson: "The cover-up of the Mantell case begins with the timely discovery of a document (MAXW-PBB3-714) signed by base commanding officer, Colonel Guy F. Hix. In the document below it clearly states that the civilian investigator (Alfred Loedding) from Wright Field, arrived at Godman Field on January 9, 1948 and made a thorough investigation. After obtaining statements and full information on the matter, he (Loedding) issued instructions that no report on the subject would be made until further instructions were given."

We also discovered on MAXWELL-PBB3-713 that two other aircraft had taken off from Standiford Field and might have been directed to go after the object. But nothing else was found to verify this.

By May 29 Brad Sparks was checking on balloon launches and found impossibilities and extreme coincidences all over the place. The big skyhook balloon could not have been launched from Camp Ripley. More lies and evidence of a cover-up.

By May 31, Rod Dyke advised that the Archives for UFO Research (AUFOR) had a copy of the Official Accident Report (Inquiry # 10-480107-1) It was essential that we order the FULL official accident report, and this was done immediately. Up until then we had pages from it, but not the entire document. It was supposed to be 450 pages; then was supposed to be 250 pages, and when we finally got it, it was 127 pages. What happened to the other pages, and what's on those missing documents? We don't know.

By June 3 we had the great maps from Mary Castner & Joel Carpenter.

On June 3, Dan Wilson found docs that showed that even nine months AFTER the Mantell incident, it was listed as unexplained. Pages from a restricted Routing and Record Sheet document, signed by A. B. Deyarmond, Asst. Deputy for Technical Analysis, AMC, part of which is presented here from frame 28:

- "1. Re Sighting of 7 Jan 1948 : Reference is made to your conversation with Capt. Sneider on 19 October 1948 concerning your desire for a check on the position and visibility of Venus on 7 Jan 1948 between the hours 1330 and 1350 as compared to the position of an unidentified aerial object.
- "4. The evidence obtained from MCREXE44 conclusively proves that this object was not the planet Venus."

On June 5. Dan found the interview of Pickering by Bill Jones. One report of a UFO that "dipped down touching a grass strip that was a cleared extension of the runway."

Brad checked Pickering's 1948 account that we posted which specifically places the object maneuvering over Commercial Point 3-5 miles to the WSW of Lockbourne and disappearing into the high overcast at 120 degrees (ESE) at the end of 20 minutes of maneuvers which had included a landing or near-landing. "This makes a circling of the base consistent with appearing on both sides of Lockbourne, east and west. Can't make it out to be in one direction only so as to make it Venus -- which was not in the ESE at 120 degs azimuth. Thanks for locating the BB Archive doc refs as it led me to the unsanitized name of the Lockbourne amateur astronomer Control Tower operator I previously discussed who turns out to be Frank M. Eisele. This is now bringing to memory that maybe McDonald investigated this case and maybe interviewed Eisele and others (it's a vague memory, not sure)." Albert Pickering's testimony nailed down the object's position relative to Mantell. It was no longer guesswork.

Kevin Randle stated that Mantell's death was a tragic accident complicated by his violations of AF regulations. But Mantell was asked to investigate this object and in the military if you are asked, that's the same as an order. This strongly implies he had oxygen because he knew the limitations of flying above 14,000'.

By June 9, Brad made it clear, Mantell could not have seen any kind of balloon 160 miles away. On the tenth he mentioned that he didn't know if the sighting was of an IFO or a UFO, but if it was a Skyhook or a UFO, it wasn't very well documented either way. By now even Tom DeMary is convinced, by new calculations, that Godman Tower couldn't have seen a balloon at 160 miles. Nor could the object, described by state police as 250-300 feet wide moving a pretty good clip.

On June 13 Jean received the Accident Report. Jean was able to reproduce the entire report in four pdf files so that Brad and others could do their own analyses. On the same day Brad pointed out that USAF-SIGN7-26 clearly states that Deyarmond was convinced the UFO was not Venus. This was the first time such an anti-IFO statement had ever been made by the Air Force, and at a time when they were scrambling to explain a case that had badly shaken them.

On July 26 (Airedale) my second interview with Drew Speier on Channel 14 took place. Our findings to-date were discussed.

FINDINGS

The picture presented of Mantell chasing a Skyhook balloon to his death with the region filled with IFO reports is false. There were UFO reports in the region. The story of how Mantell said some things but nobody was sure exactly what, is a lie. Everybody heard what went on through Plan 62, even Project SIGN people heard it. Mantell didn't just go above 14,000' and violate regulations. He was under orders and he knew what he was doing. If he had oxygen problems that resulted in anoxia and passing out, it was due to a problem, not him going hell-bent-for-leather after a pinpoint of light in the afternoon sky. And he reported more than that. The biggest balloon available that day was too far away to be a factor. The case was covered up and declared as unsolved, and was still unsolved and shook up the Air Force five years later.

During the next few months we went over the data we had compiled, including the accident report records. Although our team had made many important new discoveries, the importance of the Mantell case came into sharp focus with Brad Sparks analytical skills on the Accident Report. After several delays due to other pressing matters Sparks wrote the first draft of his analysis. Our report presented here includes our preliminary analyses and Brad's findings. Others wanting to provide their own separate analyses are welcome to do so and their reports will be made part of the case record as provided.

Francis Ridge
Investigator & Researcher
NICAP Site Coordinator & Archivist

Part 3- 2: An Analysis by Brad Sparks

THE MANTELL CASE REINVESTIGATED

The Official Account of the Crash is Overturned

This year is the 60th anniversary of the tragic death of the young fighter pilot, Capt. Thomas Mantell. Mantell crashed in his F-51D Mustang prop fighter plane while pursuing an unidentified object almost a hundred miles across the state of Kentucky, on the afternoon of January 7, 1948. He became known as the first fatality in a UFO encounter. He reported over the radio that he saw an object "metallic and tremendous in size," a famous phrase that has become legendary in UFO history. He was just 25 and left behind a wife and two little children. The case has spawned 60 years of confusion, mystery, sensation, speculation, controversy and finally disdain.

At the time, the US Air Force and Mantell's Kentucky Air National Guard (ANG) unit put the "blame" (actual word used) on Mantell for his crash because he pursued the UFO at too high an altitude without oxygen supply. They explained the sighting as merely the planet Venus then later changed the official explanation to a large Skyhook balloon, once it was admitted that Venus was difficult to see in daytime and very unlikely to trigger spontaneous sightings by large numbers of people in widely separated areas.

All this has turned out to be false, the no-oxygen claim as well as the official IFO explanations, as we will see below and in Part 2. The Mantell quote, "metallic and tremendous in size," though sometimes doubted is in fact essentially correct, but his report was a bit more detailed than this. And, for whatever it is worth, the chief investigator of the Mantell accident speculated in the classified Accident Report on the possibility of an "outside force" causing Mantell's crash.

Capt. Richard L. Tyler, operations officer at Mantell's home base at Standiford Field, Louisville, Kentucky, privately told the accident board in his report in a rather equivocal statement that "If some outside force did not cause his death, I think he passed out too quickly" (Accid. Rpt., p. 10). Thus the mystery endures. But the coverup is coming to an end.

Contrary to the AF's public position, the official accident report states that:

Mantell's "Oxygen system ... was in working order."

(Kentucky ANG-USAF Mantell Accident Report, AAF Form 14 "Report of Major Accident," Jan. 22, 1948, p. 2, section "I"; see full quote below).

As noted in the full quote of the accident report, Mantell's oxygen was not serviced pre-flight for his original low-altitude mission (flying at 5,000 feet)

according to the post-accident maintenance report - which, by the way, did *not* say Mantell was *missing* or lacking any oxygen gear (Major Bernard M. Durey statement, Accid. Rpt., p. 41). Hence this information about the good "working" condition of Mantell's oxygen system must have come from an accident investigator's personal on-site inspection of the oxygen equipment in Mantell's wrecked plane soon after the crash.

Also unknown or concealed from the public for decades, the AF had internally declared the case "unidentified" in Secret classified documents after considerable investigation (Albert Deyarmond, Nov. 10, 1948, AMC Tech. Intell. Div., Asst. Deputy for Tech. Analysis; C. A. Griffith, Chief of Ops Section, memo to Deyarmond, Nov. 8, 1948). This conclusion leaked out only twice and was essentially forgotten each time, evidently because the AF refused to make "unidentified" its *consistent* official position in the Mantell UFO case.

And despite that frank admission among themselves about the UFO, in still other classified internal reports on the accident, which were not so candid or forthright, the AF and Mantell's ANG unit privately tried to pin *all* the "blame" for the crash on Capt. Mantell rather than on his crew and rather than on fair distribution of the responsibility. They accused a dead Mantell who could not answer back and who could not be court-martialed like his wingmen could have been. They painted the picture of Mantell, a decorated pilot and war hero, as recklessly endangering his crew with an obsessed pursuit of the UFO.

An official AF statement in 1952 said "it is probable that the excitement caused by the object [UFO] was responsible for this experienced pilot [Mantell] conducting a high altitude flight without the necessary oxygen equipment."

One section of the Accident Report, "Statement of Rebuttal," poignantly states "Inasmuch as the pilot was killed in the accident, it was impossible to obtain a statement of rebuttal regarding pilot error." (Accid. Rpt., p. 38.) Mantell was charged with violating AAF Regulation 60-16, paragraph 43 (Accid. Rpt., p. 3, sect. L4), for flying higher than 14,000 ft without oxygen, a falsehood contradicted by the accident report's own statement, previously quoted, that Mantell's "Oxygen system ... was in working order." None of Mantell's crew were charged with anything, even though Lt. Hammond admittedly flew above 14,000 ft without supplemental oxygen.

But it was Mantell's subordinates, the men in his flight, who disobeyed his orders and went AWOL by abandoning Mantell. If as his wingman Lt. Clements claimed, it was "known" by all that Mantell did not have oxygen then they endangered Mantell's life by not calling his attention to that fact (if it was a fact, but it evidently was not). If Mantell was suffering from hypoxia (low oxygen) and its resulting mental confusion, then his wingmen needed to step in and intervene to save his life, as Mantell was unable to do so (if this story was true).

The wingmen also should have reported Mantell's alleged hypoxia danger to Godman Tower control, not only for flight safety reasons but also because Mantell's (alleged) disability directly affected the authorized intercept mission Godman had requested. Godman's request was tantamount to direct military orders of superior ranking officers, relayed from Godman's commanding officer, Col. Hix, even though couched as a "request" as is customary. If the mission needed to be redirected, or called off and a new set of interceptors dispatched, then Godman obviously needed to know that. Mantell's wingmen thus violated the military orders of Col. Hix and the other Godman Field officers, as well as disobeyed Mantell's command decisions.

But instead the wingmen told Godman tower that they were abandoning the chase because they were low on fuel and oxygen, with one lacking oxygen gear and the other having it but needing to get "more oxygen" (Major Matthews Wright Field Flight Service report, Accid. Rpt., p. 31; Major Matthews, Capt. Carter, Lt. Orner statements to Project Sign). The wingmen made *no mention* to Godman controllers that it was "known" that Mantell (supposedly) also had no oxygen - a crucially important omission that indicates that in fact they knew Mantell *did* have oxygen. They did bring up their oxygen situation, so the subject was not taboo or of no importance, yet no mention was made of Mantell purportedly lacking supplemental oxygen and nothing about him flying too high without oxygen.

And the wingmen should have led an immediate search and rescue mission when they admittedly lost contact with Mantell, instead of delaying for over an hour by flying all the way back to home base first (only Lt. Clements returned to the air). They could have landed immediately at the local airport at Bowling Green they had just flown by and had just discussed on the radio right before abandoning Mantell (in fact the Bowling Green Airport was used just three hours later by the accident investigation team which landed there then drove to the Mantell crash site; see Accid. Rpt., p. 7).

Mantell's crewmen could have been charged with these derelictions of duty and their future careers wrecked. Lt. (later Major) Albert W. Clements, Jr., quickly advanced to the position of commanding the KANG's 165th Fighter Squadron from 1949 to 1950. Lt. (later Lt. Col.) Robert K. Hendricks commanded the redesignated 165th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron from 1958 to 1963.

Hendricks was Mantell's designated wingman who left even before the UFO pursuit began and continued on to home base, on the flimsy excuse that it was simply "time for him to land," as Godman controllers heard over the radio (Capt. Duesler statement to Project Sign). Since Hendricks was flying an identical airplane with an identical fuel load along an identical route at the exact same time as Mantell and the others he could not have been low on fuel.

But they dodged the instant end to their careers by making Mantell the scapegoat. Mantell's men insinuated that they were without fault, that they tried to warn Mantell he was flying too high, "into the sun," like the ancient Icarus myth, but that he ignored them. However, Godman's controllers and the base's top officers present in the control tower *heard no such radio warnings* to Mantell.

Years later, Lt. Col. Hendricks wrote an especially self-serving account of what he called this "interesting" story, "unique as it was odd," comments that seem to be rather callous and to belittle the tragedy. He even pinned the blame on Mantell for the whole UFO sighting, as well as the deadly chase. Not even the most extreme debunker has ever suggested anything as absurd as Mantell inventing the UFO and initiating the UFO chase. In Hendricks' account there is no mention that Mantell had been directed to investigate the UFO by Godman Field whose commanding officer and top officers were all watching the UFO, after numerous people had reported seeing the UFO in western Kentucky.

Though acknowledging it was "probably" a Skyhook balloon and thus a real object, Hendricks planted doubt in the reader's mind suggesting that the UFO may have been all in Mantell's head, because he chased "whatever he *thought* he saw" to his death. Interestingly, Hendricks coyly avoids saying that Mantell had no oxygen equipment, only that he "lost consciousness for lack of oxygen," which of course would occur if Mantell did have oxygen but it ran out or the mask failed:

HENDRICKS: "Mantell ... had been on a routine training mission when he reported seeing an unidentified flying object (UFO). Despite efforts by his wingman to call him back, he chased whatever he *thought* he saw farther and farther up. It is assumed that he lost consciousness for lack of oxygen, because he did not attempt to use his parachute prior to impact."

(Kinnaird, Hendricks, Cooper, "The Mustang Years 1947-56," pp. 46b-47a, in KyANG 1947-77 history, "Mustangs to Phantoms.")

There are many unexpected surprises and unprecedented bombshells in this case (see list below). Among other things, they puncture the image of the Mantell case as that of bumbling hillbillies isolated from the rest of the world and limited by primitive, seat-of-the-pants techniques and resources.

After all, the military units at Godman Field, which was located at Fort Knox, were responsible for protecting the famous U.S. gold treasury, and with the units at Standiford Field, Louisville, they were also indirectly guarding the vital high-tech Oak Ridge nuclear labs one hundred miles away, both very important defense assignments. Mantell's Kentucky ANG unit at Standiford had quickly established a national reputation for achievement and soon won the prestigious annual Spaatz Trophy, on Aug. 14, 1950, for outstanding air guard readiness and flight safety (!), the first of three Spaatz awards in its long history.

Many people helped in various ways in this research project over the last two years, my apologies if I missed anyone (listed here alphabetically): Ole Jonny Braenne, Joel Carpenter, Mary Castner, Rod Dyke, Barry Greenwood, Jim Klotz, Don Ledger, Kevin Randle, Francis Ridge, Barry Spink, Jean Waskiewicz, Dan Wilson.

(A) Mantell Case Surprises

(1) Mantell had oxygen, but it may have run out or the mask failed, a common occurrence even today in aviation (a survey of 1990-2001 hypoxia incidents in Australian military aircraft found 63% due to oxygen mask failures). Accident investigators may have missed a slow leak in Mantell's oxygen mask, in saying the equipment was in "working order," or it may have been working fine but the oxygen simply ran out and Mantell had miscalculated how much he had left.

(2) Contrary to the accident report, Mantell must have regained consciousness and tried to regain control by throttling back from maximum power settings after his plane dived back to lower altitudes where there was more oxygen for him to breathe. The wrecked plane was found with throttle set at only 1/4 power, mixture control in "Idle-Cut-Off" (Accid. Rpt., p. 4, section M) not at maximum power. Mantell had gone to maximum power only at the very end of the UFO pursuit, and not during the whole pursuit, which would have been impossible (see discussion below).

(3) The location of the 70-foot Skyhook balloon, Flight B launched by General Mills in Minnesota at 8 a.m. on Jan. 6, 1948, is rather precisely known. The Skyhook was not even within the State of Kentucky but was in Tennessee near Nashville at the time of the UFO sightings the next day (Jan. 7), and it was physically impossible to see it with the unaided eye from Godman Field in Kentucky, or by Mantell and crew, from about 140 miles away.

(4) Godman Tower tracked a second UFO by theodolite (a precision angle measurement telescope) *during* Mantell's pursuit, as well as after his crash, and then theodolite-tracked the same or another UFO three hours after the crash. The second UFO was apparently 30 or more degrees away in compass direction from the UFO that Godman Tower sent Mantell to investigate, thus not the same object.

(5) Air Defense Command "plotted," possibly by radar, one of these UFO's (or another UFO) after Mantell's crash, heading west-southwest from Ohio over several states traveling about 250 mph, and was observed by Scott AFB Tower and St. Louis Tower passing directly overhead.

(6) Many other AF bases listened in on the Godman Tower radio conversations with Mantell and afterward, through a special AF interphone system between military airfields called "Plan 62," thus multiplying the number of witnesses to the dramatic events.

(7) The Air Defense Command (ADC) used the Plan 62 intercom system, through the Air Transport Command's Flight Service Centers, and the air traffic controllers of the Airways and Air Communications Service (AACS) in those centers and outlying bases, to coordinate the use of air traffic control towers and radars to track the UFO. This was because at that time the ADC had only two operating radars in the nation, both too far away, across the continent on the West Coast (at Half Moon Bay, Calif., and Arlington, Wash.).

(8) Godman Tower controllers (as well as personnel at other bases connected by intercom) overheard air-to-air radio conversations among Mantell and his men which Mantell's wingmen at least did not think could be overheard, and which proved them to be false in their later statements about Mantell's crash.

(B) UFO's Location During Mantell's Pursuit

Although it would be premature to delve into the UFO sighting details which will be covered thoroughly in Part 2 of this report, a very simple model of UFO behavior and location can be presented which will show that a sensible sequence of events emerges, unlike with the IFO explanations which cannot fit the facts and the laws of physics. This will forestall needless argument over balloon vs. UFO scenarios.

The basic timeline is: Mantell radioed his position report at 2:50 PM, was then asked by Godman Tower to intercept the UFO, but first flew directly over Godman Tower at 2:52 (so that controllers could see and double-check exactly what heading Mantell took flying away from the tower towards the UFO). Mantell then spiral climbed to 14,000 ft directly over Godman until 2:55 when Mantell took off southward on the heading given by Godman (initially 210 degrees true then adjusted to 205). Mantell crashed at 3:18 some 92 miles south of Godman Tower (more precisely, at 202 degrees true azimuth from the Tower), near the Tennessee state line.

Godman Field commanding officer Col. Guy Hix stressed repeatedly in his statements to investigators and the press that the UFO never seemed to move in position during the hour and a half he saw it, and his officers said the same, no apparent movement in position. He is shown in one press photo explaining how he sighted along a bracket in the control tower in order to be sure of the object's position and lack of movement, and this angular reference method is mentioned in Project Sign's interview reports of Col. Hix.* To Hix "movement" meant up or down, left or right, which sighting along a bracket would show, but not motion farther or closer.

(*Technically, Project Sign did not become activated until Jan. 26, 1948, but the directive establishing it was dated Dec. 30, 1947, so the various interviews and files collected on the Mantell case by AF Air Materiel Command personnel in early January 1948 who became part of Sign will be designated "Project Sign" for simplicity of reference.)

Col. Hix expected that if it was a celestial body as he first thought, it would move, but it did not. A celestial body should have moved about 20 degrees in an hour and a half; also the Skyhook balloon would have moved about 15 degrees in that same time but in the opposite direction. The flight path of Mantell's F-51 fighters** provides an independent check confirming the directional position of the UFO they pursued in the south-southwest, but this detailed discussion will have to be left for Part 2.

(**The AF changed all of its P- for "pursuit" fighter designations to F- for "fighter" on June 11, 1948, so the P-51 became the F-51, but for simplicity we will backreference "F-51" here in the events and reports of Jan. 1948, in the data on the P-51/F-51, etc.)

Hix and his deputy, the base's air inspector, Lt. Col. E. Garrison Wood, estimated the UFO's angular size at $1/2$, $1/4$ and $1/10$ of Full Moon, apparently reflecting a gradual increase in distance, receding away from observers without noticeably moving up or down or right or left. (Hix, Wood statements to Project Sign; Hix interview in Louisville Courier-Journal, Jan. 8, 1948).

If the UFO was about 300 feet in size, as the initial witnesses reported to state police, and was initially about $1/2$ Full Moon in angular size as seen from Godman Tower, then it would have been about 12 miles away. If it receded to the point where it was about $1/10$ Full Moon, or five times smaller in apparent size, then its distance would have increased by that same factor of five, to about 60 miles from Godman (to the south-southwest), or very near Bowling Green, Kentucky, near where Mantell and his wingmen would soon part company. That represents a modest speed of only about 240 mph when fitted with the incident timeline, less than Mantell's 300 mph, yet the UFO would stay ahead because it began with an initial 12-mile head start. This fits Mantell's report that the object at first was traveling slower than he was, yet he could not catch up with it.

If the UFO was very roughly 10 degrees above the horizon (as data indicate***) and if it maintained that elevation throughout the Mantell chase so that it did not appear to have moved to Col. Hix, then when it was 12 miles away it would have been at an altitude of roughly 10,000 feet, when it might well have seemed to Mantell that it was reachable. When the UFO was at 60 miles distance, it would have been at about 50,000 feet altitude (the altitude increasing

by a factor of five just like the distance, proportionately). This is simple geometry to maintain the appearance of no movement of position as seen from Godman. Do the math.

(***Mantell's wingman saw the object "slightly lower" than the sun which was at about 14 degrees elevation. See Accid. Rpt., pp. 14, 44.)

This would also represent a UFO climb rate of about 3,300 feet per minute if the receding motion occurred during the first twelve minutes of Mantell's chase until they reached the vicinity of Bowling Green. This was beyond Mantell's F-51D maximum climb rate at the higher altitudes (about 3,000 ft/min dropping to 2,000 ft/min and less as he went higher). Mantell would find himself unable to reach the UFO even as his *horizontal* distance closed, because he would soon see it was climbing faster *vertically* than he was climbing or was capable of climbing. This matches what Mantell reported, as we will see next.

By time Mantell got to Bowling Green, the UFO would have been almost directly overhead above Mantell, at 50,000 ft and still climbing, far above the F-51D's ceiling of about 42,000 ft, and thus unreachable (Mantell was still at only about 20,000 ft). This fits Mantell's radio report that the UFO was far above him and also had increased speed, so that he could not catch up to it. At this point, as Mantell closed in, the UFO must have increased speed to about 300 mph to match Mantell's 300 mph velocity, and only at this point Mantell went to maximum climb because of the UFO's great height (and the max climb would have then dropped Mantell's speed to about 200 mph). No extraordinary speeds or maneuvers are required, though they were still beyond the capabilities of the F-51D interceptors and of an unpowered Skyhook balloon.

MANTELL CASE BOMBSHELL -- PART 1(C-D)

(C) Mantell's Reckless "Maximum Climb" - A Physical Impossibility

Mantell's wingmen, the ANG accident investigating board and the AF's special two-man investigation team, all put forward the claim that Mantell flew at "maximum power" at "maximum climb" rate, "climbing at full force" or "climbing at full power," during the entire UFO chase, thus making it difficult for his wingmen even to keep up with him (yet they did, which belies the claim). (See Accid. Rpt., pp. 4, 14, 33, 35, 44; Capt. Tyler in Louisville Courier Journal, Jan. 9, 1948.)

This claim was central to the accident board's depiction of Mantell as an obsessed madman recklessly pursuing his goal regardless of the consequences. The principal accident investigator, Capt. Richard Tyler, who was the operations officer at Mantell's squadron, stated: "I firmly [firmly] believe that if he thought he had any chance of catching this object he would have pursued it knowingly to his death" (Accid. Rpt., p. 10). This makes Mantell out to be a fanatic with a death wish.

But the max climb allegation is also factually false and a physical impossibility, a violation of the laws of physics. The board and the wingmen evidently did not work out their scenario very carefully and probably assumed that no one would ever see a problem since the report would be locked away in classified archives. The secret was successfully buried for 60 years.

It is a simple fact that rising at the F-51D's maximum climb rate Mantell's plane would have reached the blackout altitude of 25,000 feet in *4 minutes* after starting on the intercept vector at 14,000 ft, not the 20+ minutes required by the impossible official scenario. He would not even have gotten out of the vicinity of Godman Field before blacking out and crashing, but would have barely gotten 12 miles away at the maximum speed possible in a maximum climb. The maximum speed at max climb is necessarily reduced to about 200 mph from the approximate 440 mph maximum speed in level flight, at that altitude range.* Do the math.

(*See North American Aviation P-51D [F-51D] Performance Charts and Tables, 1944, 1946, for approx. 9,000 lb gross weight corresponding to Mantell's 1/3 depletion of 209-gallon aircraft fuel load after the 1hr13min flight from Marietta, Georgia. Even the Accident Report, pp. 13, 43, mentions this approximate max climb speed of about 180 mph, in passing remarks by wingman Clements.)

If Mantell and his men had started blacking out within several minutes, they would still have been within plain view of Godman Tower controllers and ranking officers who would have seen the planes obviously in trouble or flying out of control. But Godman saw nothing wrong with Mantell's flight. The F-51's could be seen up to about 24 miles with the naked eye (see below) and much farther with binoculars.

In fact, at full power climb, called "war emergency power" (or "combat power"), the F-51 engine would have burned out soon after 5 minutes (see NAA F-51D Performance Charts and Tables, 1944, 1946). It is likely that this is what happened at the very end of Mantell's chase and resulted in the plane seeming to explode in mid-air, after about 7 minutes of dangerous "war emergency power" settings. The plane would not have survived the 20-25 minutes of "war emergency power" demanded by the official scenario.

If Mantell blacked out near Godman Field, as he would have had to under the official story, then how did Mantell manage to crash 92 miles away, clear across the State of Kentucky near the Tennessee border at 3:18 p.m.? The 3:18 time of impact was officially determined by the coroner from the time on Mantell's watch that stopped on impact, and from eyewitnesses to the crash who reported the time as 3:15-3:20, which precisely brackets the 3:18 time. (Accid. Rpt., pp. 1, 5, 7, 15, 17, 46, 48, 49.) Efforts to force the crash time later, merely make the timeline discrepancies worse, as we will see below, as it buys too much time.

An accurate timeline can be constructed from this 3:18 crash impact time and from Mantell's radio position report at 2:50 p.m. (Accid. Rpt., pp. 27, 30), plus the additional position data from flying over Godman Tower and passing by Bowling Green airport (Accid. Rpt., pp. 13, 43, etc.), all of which serve to correct the various errors and imprecisions in other reporting in the Mantell case. Indeed, the correct Mantell pursuit climb rate, a gradual 600 ft/min (not the war emergency maximum of up to 3,000 ft/min), allows us to assign accurate times to the timeline using just the reported altitudes since Mantell started the 600 ft/min climb at 14,000 ft at 2:55 p.m. directly over Godman Tower (see summary Table, below, and minute-by-minute reconstruction in Part 2).

The math is easy. Resolving a few understandable confusions in reported altitudes coming from three different aircraft in Mantell's pursuit mission is a bit more involved (and will be explained in Part 2, with some hints below) but they do not affect the main conclusions arrived at here in Part 1.

But if Mantell had really pushed a continuous maximum climb to chase the UFO, without oxygen, until blacking out and crashing near the Tennessee state line, then he would have had to cover that 92 miles in the 4 minutes it would take to reach blackout height, or at about 1,500 mph (well over Mach 2). Do the math. If one tries to argue that Mantell could have remained conscious for up to about 2-1/2 minutes at 25,000 ft (ignoring the fact he would already have been oxygen-deprived for minutes before even reaching 25,000 ft if he truly carried no oxygen) it would extend the time for covering 92 miles of distance before blacking out. But it still requires impossible supersonic speed (850 mph) for his subsonic fighter. Do the math.

Mantell's subsonic WWII fighter would have had to break the sound barrier for 4 to 7 minutes non-stop, which was an absolute physical impossibility. No F-51 ever flew at Mach 2. Period. We know it was a physical impossibility as proven by the fact that when Mantell actually did approach the sound barrier in the fatal crash dive for just seconds at the tragic end the aircraft broke up in midair from the Mach compression forces (Accid. Rpt., pp. 4, 9, 38).

And if the F-51 maintained a "full power" climb for the entire UFO chase as the accident board claimed, it would have been limited to the actual max climb speed of about 200 mph for the F-51D. Mantell's plane could not possibly have covered the 92 miles to the crash site in only the 23 minutes of the chase (broadly including the crash dive too in the 23 minutes), as determined by the corrected timeline. Mantell would only have covered 77 miles in 23 minutes

at 200 mph, some 15 miles short of the exactly known crash site coordinates (at 36-40-16 N, 86-35-12 W), some 92 miles from the start of the pursuit at Godman Tower. Do the math.

Mantell's plane would have needed approximately 28 minutes to travel that 92-mile distance at its 200 mph max climb speed, but the timeline allows no more than 23 minutes (from 2:55 to 3:18 p.m.) and certainly much less, only about 19 minutes, if we discount the fatal dive as not advancing the horizontal distance much if at all. Do the math.

Possibly the accident board was dimly aware of a serious "getting there from here" problem and tried to "fuzz up" the timeline and stretch it out to 25-35 minutes by using the most carelessly reported or inaccurate times instead of the most accurate data (and ignoring Mantell's 2:50 p.m. radio position report among other crucial data points). And again, as mentioned above, the engine would have burned out after about 5 minutes, so it was physically impossible to have sustained a max power climb for 28 or 35 minutes. Moreover, to take so long as 35 minutes to cover 92 miles would require the F-51 to fly at the very slow sub-cruising speed of only 158 mph, which no one reported and which makes no sense for a fighter interceptor chase, plus it flatly contradicts Mantell's radio reporting of his speed as 300+ mph during the pursuit.

There is still another reason why it was physically impossible for Mantell to have max climbed for 25 to 35 minutes: He would have reached the F-51D's maximum altitude of about 42,000 ft in about 18 minutes (NAA F-51D Performance Chart, 1944, time to climb data). He could not possibly have climbed higher than his fighter's highest possible altitude and climbed higher still for another 7 to 17 minutes! The official scenario is nonsense.

All of these dogmatic assertions of the official Accident Report require violations of the laws of physics. An accurate flight scenario must incorporate all factors of speed, altitude, climb rate, distance covered, landmarks, time marks, headings, etc., and cannot pick and choose some of them in order to force-fit it to a preconceived theory. A valid flight scenario cannot just pick speed and altitude (as the accident board seems to have done) but ignore distance, time, etc., and the requirements of basic physics and math. It does not work. An accurate timeline also requires use of the most accurate data for each factor (most accurate times, locations, headings, altitudes, etc.), not the least accurate, and not the inconsistent or contradictory data. A first-order reconstruction that incorporates all factors and the best data is presented in summary form in the summary Table at the end of Part 1 and is documented in detail, minute by minute, in Part 2.

In actuality, Mantell covered the 92 miles in about 19 minutes, or at about the same 300 mph cruising speed stated in his official flight plan (Accid. Rpt., pp. 20, 27-28, 40). It is virtually the same speed as actually flown on the first leg of his ferrying mission from Georgia (ground speed about 280 mph, possibly reduced from a 300 mph airspeed by a small headwind). This is the maximum cruise speed, not maximum full power speed of about 440 mph, nor is it the ordinary cruise speed of about 250 mph (please note exact figures vary slightly depending on altitude and fuel load).

Hence there was no reckless "head long dash" pursuit - as accident investigator Capt. Richard Tyler spun it to the press - that made it difficult for Mantell's wingmen even to keep up with him. An F-51 cannot climb at maximum rate at the same time it is traveling at maximum horizontal speed - it simply cannot do both at the same time. The F-51 cannot max climb even at its top cruising speed, as that is still too fast to be physically possible. At max climb rate the max speed is only about 200 mph, depending on the altitude. In fact, simple math shows that Mantell's plane was in a gradual climb of about 600 feet per minute during the entire straight-line pursuit of the UFO, not in a maximum climb of up to about 3,000 feet per minute. (NAA F-51D Performance Charts and Tables, 1944, 1946.) But this will be covered in detail in Part 2, in a minute-by-minute reconstruction of events and flight path (see summary Table below).

If Mantell never forced his flight into a reckless "maximum climb" at "full power" in a 20-35-minute long UFO pursuit, and could not possibly have done so without violating the laws of physics, then the entire official scenario collapses. The bold statements of his main wingman, Lt. Clements, accusing Mantell of forcing him to keep up with him at full-power maximum climb for 20+ minutes are conclusively proven to be willful falsehoods, not mistakes of

minor details - a pilot would know whether he was straining the engine at full power for 20 minutes or not. The AF-ANG accident board's confident embrace of this false scenario in order to condemn Mantell implicates the board in an official whitewash and coverup to rescue the careers of Mantell's men whose actions were arguably criminal. The facts are as inescapable as the law of gravity.

(D) The Official Story and Its Many Contradictions

The official story was put forward publicly by the principal accident investigator, Capt. Richard Tyler, Operations Officer at the Kentucky ANG unit, the 165th Fighter Squadron of the 133rd Fighter Group, within two days of the accident and well before the classified accident report two weeks later:

"Capt. R. L. Tyler, Louisville operations officer for the Air Guard at Standiford Field, said investigation convinced him Mantell had 'blacked out' from lack of oxygen at 30,000 feet....

"Tyler **blamed** Mantell's **head-long dash** after the 'saucer' on the fact that Mantell's World War II experience largely was limited to low-altitude flying. From the stories of Hammond and Clements, Tyler surmised Mantell was **climbing at full force** at 23,000 feet.' Mantell probably lost consciousness seconds later, Tyler said."

(Louisville Courier Journal, Jan. 9, 1948, asterisk emphasis * * is added here and in other quotes below.)

The following is quoted from one of several incident narratives in the formal Accident Report, not all of which are completely consistent with each other, but are quoted here in pertinent parts to lay out the basic official case against Mantell (Accid. Rpt., p. 33, emphasis added):

"A flight of four P-51's departed a southern base on a ferry mission to their home base. The four planes were flying in formation and the flight was proceeding normally. As the flight neared a field [Godman], the leader [Mantell] called in a position report [to home base, Standiford]. The [Godman] tower operator [overheard Mantell's radio report and] asked the nature of the flight and asked if they had the time and fuel to chase an object he had been observing in the sky. The leader acknowledged and was given a heading to fly. He immediately went into a steep climb with two of the other pilots in the flight following. The fourth pilot broke formation and proceeded to the destination.

"The leader **continued** to climb at **high power settings** and when 22,500 ft. was reached, the other two pilots broke off and went to the destination. When the leader was last seen, it appeared that he had the plane under control and was **still climbing**. A short time later the plane was observed in a spiraling dive to the ground. Between 10,000 and 20,000 ft., the left wing came off. The plane crashed to the ground. **Only one pilot** in the flight (the element leader [Clements]) **had an oxygen mask** and was using oxygen when higher altitudes were reached. The flight leader had stated that they would climb to 25,000 ft. and stay there for ten minutes in an attempt to overtake the object. The element leader broke off when his wingman indicated that he was having trouble due to lack of oxygen.

"The board was of the opinion that the leader was overcome by anoxia at about 25,000 ft. As his plane was trimmed for maximum climb, it was believed that it continued to 30,000 before leveling off and starting its descent. Since the plane went so high, apparently the pilot was dead when it started down. The canopy lock was still in place in the wreckage indicating that he made no attempt to abandon the plane."

The investigating board's Accident Report (pp. 35-36), in incorporating the AF special report, further asserts that its "investigation disclosed" that:

"e. Captain Mantell **did not advise** the other aircraft in his flight of his intention [to investigate the object as requested]. (Exhibits 4 and 5)

"h. At 14,000 feet, Captain Mantell broke off the spiral and started a straight climb on a heading of approximately 220° [sic; actually 210°] at the **maximum rate of climb**. (Exhibits 4 and 5)"

"Captain Mantell led the flight in that direction [given for the intercept] and started *climbing at full power*. At this time the one wingman, Lt. Hammond [sic; actually Hendricks], broke formation and proceeded to Standiford and landed."

"t. From 18,000 feet on, the point at which the high blower engaged, Lt. Clements *had to use full power to maintain his position* in the formation. (Exhibit 4)"

"At approximately 22,500 feet, the other aircraft turned back due to lack of oxygen. A short while later an observer on the ground noticed an aircraft circling at a high altitude then come diving down, slowly spiraling and evidently under full power. At approximately half way from the originally observed altitude and the ground, the plane was seen to disintegrate and subsequently crash on a farm near Franklin, Kentucky. This aircraft was identified as the one piloted by Captain Mantell who was found in the wreckage."

As we have already seen, the accident report's assertion that Mantell pursued the UFO all the while "climbing at full power" and that his wingman "had to use full power" just to keep up with Mantell, is completely false, a physical impossibility.

The accident report findings refer to Exhibits 4 and 5 for key points, and these are affidavits of two of Mantell's three wingmen, Lt. Albert W. Clements and Lt. Robert K. Hendricks, respectively. Hendricks declined the UFO pursuit mission and broke off from the flight to continue on to home base without participating in the UFO pursuit. But Exhibit 5 by Hendricks does not even support the findings it was cited for by the accident board, as we will see below.

The prime example of the accident board citing these two exhibits, when those exhibits actually contradict the board's assertion, is when the accident report quoted above claims that "Captain Mantell did not advise the other aircraft in his flight of his intention" to investigate the UFO. The report alleges that this supposed fact is reported in Exhibits 4 and 5, the affidavits of wingmen Clements and Hendricks. A narrative elsewhere in the report also claims "No conversation between Captain Mantell and any member of his flight revealed a clue as to his intentions." (Accid. Rpt., p. 4)

But this is false. Clements admitted in his affidavit that he *did* have considerable radio conversations with Mantell about what they were chasing and Clements said he saw the bright object himself. Clements swore under oath that when he asked Mantell "what we were looking for" that Mantell replied over the radio, "Look, there it is out there at 1200 o'clock," and Clements said "I was able to discern a bright appearing object." Clements then recounts his discussion with Mantell of tactics to try to reach the UFO. According to Clements, Mantell stated his "intentions" of pursuing the UFO for 10 minutes at a certain altitude (more on this later).

Even though he did not participate in the UFO chase but went straight home, wingman Hendricks also heard enough to know from Mantell what was going on. Hendricks swore in his affidavit, accident report Exhibit 5, that he too heard Mantell discuss with Godman Tower the UFO intercept mission. Hendricks stated that he heard Godman Tower say, "we would like for you to take a look at it, come over the field on a heading of 330° and we will try to guide you." Then he heard Mantell answer, "Roger, I'll give you a call when I identify it." Hendricks states that "Upon hearing this I requested permission to leave the flight to return to Standiford Field, the request was granted by Captain Mantell." So, therefore, Mantell and Hendricks did have a conversation about mission intentions.

Thus, accident report's Exhibits 4 and 5 refute the report's claim that Mantell had "no conversation" with "any member of his flight" about what they were doing, that they were intercepting a UFO at the request of Godman Field.

Furthermore, if there were any alleged difficulties with Mantell communicating over the radio it may well have been due to problems with his SCR-522 radio. That WWII model radio was troublesome and difficult to maintain. Even though Mantell's F-51 was a virtually brand new fighter, the maintenance

record prior to his fatal flight shows the radio suffered several problems requiring a day of repair work from Dec. 18 to 19, 1947. Channel B did not work at all until it was repaired and this was the main channel designated on the flight plan, the one used for all of the UFO-chase communications.

From the post-accident flight maintenance report on Mantell's plane:

"12-18-47 'A' channel very weak. No 'B' channel. Radio VHF retuned, checked OK. [signed] Marks. 12-19-47" (Accid. Rpt., p. 19.)

Some of the main conclusions of the Accident Report (pp. 37-38) are as follows, and note that the no-oxygen-equipment claim directly contradicts the statement at the beginning of the same report (p. 2), quoted above, which said Mantell's "oxygen system ... was in working order":

"14. CONTRIBUTING CAUSE FACTORS:

"a. The **poor judgment** displayed by Captain Mantell in that he elected to climb to altitude **without oxygen equipment**.

"COMMENTS

"b. ... It is believed that Captain Mantell was rendered unconscious from anoxia [sic] and the uncontrolled aircraft started a slow spiral culminating into a dive which was precipitated by the high power settings and torque. Consequently, the aircraft with its **engine producing full power** rapidly **exceeded its design limitation** as was evidenced from the photos, disposition of the wreckage, and later supplemented by civilians statements to the effect that the aircraft disintegrated approximately half way from its initial point of dive to the ground." (Accid. Rpt., pp. 37-38)

Strangely, there was never any affidavit presented from the fourth wingman, who **did stay** with Mantell and Clements, namely Lt. Buford A. Hammond. One would think with all the public controversy and pressure to find an answer to the mystery of the incident, that every scrap of first-hand witness testimony would be secured. But all we have from key witness Hammond is a few brief remarks to the press, no statement to the accident board, no affidavit, and no interview by Project Sign investigators.

MANTELL CASE BOMBSHELL -- PART 1(E-F)

(E) Dissecting Wingman Clements' Version of the Official Story

Mantell wingman Lt. Albert Clements' affidavit (Accid. Rpt., pp. 13-14, 43-44, emphasis added) will be quoted below in sections and rebutted factually in "FACTS" sections after each quote:

CLEMENTS: "At this point 1455 Lt. Hendricks, #2 man, broke away from the formation and headed towards Standiford Field. Capt. Mantell immediately after this began a rather sharp spiraling climb to the right at rather **high power settings**, necessitating a power setting of 47" MP [inches manifold pressure] and 2700 RPM to **maintain position in the formation** with him. He continued spiraling at about 14000' where he broke off the spiral and headed on a south-westerly heading of approximately 220° [sic; actually 210°], still **climbing at the maximum rate** of 180 IAS [Indicated Air Speed mph].

"At about 16000' I put on my oxygen mask and began taking oxygen because it became apparent that Capt. Mantell was heading for much higher altitudes even though it was **known** before hand that he did **not have oxygen equipment** and neither did the element wingman Lt. Hammond. The flight continued on this south-westerly course and at about 18000' I attempted to pull up fairly close to the flight leader and try to signal him with hand motions and try to contact him on B Baker channel asking where the flight was headed. Capt. Mantell had at no time signaled for a change over to B Baker channel which is always customary from the flight leader, either [by] visual signal or on the radio."

FACTS: Here Clements insinuates that Mantell never communicated with his wingmen on Channel B during the entire UFO chase and that he had to "try" to hand signal and radio Mantell over Channel B after they reached 18,000 feet, but failed (part of the effort to depict Mantell as obsessed and unresponsive to reason). But in the very next sentences (below), Clements states that he *did* in fact converse with Mantell over the radio. Even before the UFO chase began, when everyone was still at 5,000 feet, wingman Hendricks figured out Mantell was using Channel B and switched to it and listened in on Mantell's communications with Godman Tower and then asked Mantell's permission over Channel B to continue to home base rather than join the pursuit mission (Hendricks affidavit, Accid. Rpt., p. 42).

Hendricks heard Mantell on Channel B giving the 2:50 p.m. radio position report when Godman broke in to request diversion to track the UFO. They were on a course of about 345 degrees to Standiford and were directed to turn to heading 330 degs to come over Godman Tower (Hendricks affidavit, Accid. Rpt., p. 42; note that the "45" degree heading must be a typo for "345" which was their course to home base). This involved a 15-degree left turn. Why didn't Clements immediately ask Mantell what they were doing turning away from home base?

Why did Clements wait about 12 minutes, until after they had completely reversed course and were heading south and had climbed to 18,000 ft before trying to "signal" Mantell as to what they were doing?? In fact, Godman Tower heard a wingman, evidently Clements, at the very start of the UFO chase, radio "What the hell are we after?" (or "Where in the hell are we going?"). This was when they were between 14,000 and 15,000 ft at the start of the chase, at least 5 minutes before reaching 18,000 ft in the reconstructed timeline. According to Godman controllers, Mantell answered right away and said he did not see the object yet, but he soon spotted the UFO directly ahead of him at "12 o'clock high" position, as he reported over the radio. (Duesler, Orner, Oliver, Blackwell statements to Project Sign.) In fact, this was Clements' original story to the press within two days of the crash, contradicting his later testimony by sworn affidavit to the accident board.

Clements told the Louisville Courier-Journal that his and Mantell's observation of the bright object at "12 o'clock" radio report was "soon" after the very beginning of the chase and that that was when they "started after" the UFO:

"Clements said Mantell informed him they were to look for something 'but didn't seem to know exactly what it was.' *Soon*, Clements related, Mantell shouted through the loud speaker, "Look, there it is at 12 o'clock." Clements said this meant it was "right over our nose." Clements gazed straight ahead and saw a "bright shining object that looked like a star." He and Mantell *started* after it. (Louisville Courier-Journal, Jan. 9, 1948, p. 1.)

Clements changed his original story to shift this "12 o'clock high" radio report by Mantell to near the *end* of the chase, at 20,000 ft, or about 8 minutes later than Godman actually heard it, when they were still at 15,000 ft, shortly after starting the UFO intercept at 14,000 ft. Clements clearly wanted to cover up the fact that *he* had seen the UFO himself almost from the beginning, along with Mantell. This was another effort to suggest that no one could figure out what madman Mantell was taking them towards all throughout the pursuit.

Notice that before Clements changed this portion of his story, he seemed to admit that Mantell was himself initially unsure of what it was they were being sent to identify, which would in effect give Mantell some allowance for not being able to explain it to his wingmen, an allowance that Clements later made sure to withdraw: "Clements said Mantell informed him they were to look for something 'but didn't seem to know exactly what it was.' "

Since Channel B was listed on their flight plan, but not Channel C, Clements should have known instantly that Mantell was using Channel B and should not have had to have Mantell hand "signal" him. Godman Tower had radioed Mantell over Channel B after hearing him give his radio position report using that channel and then got the idea to request Mantell's assistance in identifying the UFO. How hard was it to switch from Channel C to B to check?

CLEMENTS: "In one of my transmissions I notified Capt. Mantell that we were considerably over our ETA for Standiford Field and suggested that he

notify Godman Field to relay our position to Flight Service to which he replied 'Roger'. However, I failed to hear Capt. Mantell contact Godman Field on this."

FACTS: Again, Clements tries to portray Mantell as the reckless fanatic who would not listen and would not respond to reason. Problem is that Godman Tower *did* hear Mantell radio his changed ETA (Estimated Time of Arrival) for Standiford Field, changed to accommodate Godman's request to divert course to intercept the UFO (Lt. Col. Wood statement to Project Sign, Jan. 9, 1948). Thus Godman Tower, in effect, makes Clements out to be a liar.

CLEMENTS: "In the next few minutes I heard Capt. Mantell say "Look", there's a town down there with an airport beside it", and from previous flying in this area I recognize it to be the town of Bowling Green with it's [its] airport to the south east, and at this point I noted that we were at 20000' and still climbing. I called Capt. Mantell and notified that this was Bowling Green and again asked him what we were looking for. He then replied "Look, there it is out there at 1200 o'clock," and I was able to discern a bright appearing object, very small, and so far away as to be unable to identify it as to size, shape, color, but it was definitely something which could be seen. It's [sic] position was slightly lower and to the left of the sun. This was at approximately 1515 [sic]. I called Capt. Mantell and told him I could see the object but suggested that since we did not seem to be making a gain on the object, that it would be better if we leveled off and tried to pick up some speed and possibly get under the object. His transmissions were garbled but he mentioned something about going to 25000' for about 10 minutes and then if we were unable to make any further progress towards the object, we could drop down."

FACTS: Here Clements insinuates that Mantell's radio transmission was "garbled" due to effects of hypoxia, yet Clements heard every single (alleged) detail of what Mantell said: (a) Going to 25,000 ft (b) for about 10 minutes (c) if unable by then to make progress (d) then they could drop back down to lower altitude. More importantly, Godman Tower personnel also heard this transmission, but no one heard any "garbling" in Mantell's voice or had any trouble understanding Mantell's transmissions. Furthermore, Godman heard Mantell say they would go to 20,000 ft (a much safer altitude for oxygen problems), *not* to 25,000 ft. Godman heard this over the radio near the *beginning* of the UFO chase (at 15,000 ft) not near the end at 20,000 to 22,000 ft, thus once again in effect making Clements out to be a liar. (Capt. Carter statement to Project Sign.)

CLEMENTS: "From the time that the high blower kicked in at about 18000' Capt. Mantell did not seem to decrease the throttle heading to correspond with this and began pulling away from us at 18000' on up even though I was using these *maximum power settings*. At about 22500', realizing that it was too high to maintain without oxygen, I broke off the flight out of formation and Capt. Mantell disappeared, still climbing almost directly *into the sun*. I called him and informed him that we were breaking off the flight and returning to Standiford Field, but he did not acknowledge."

FACTS: Clements insinuates that Mantell had been "climbing almost directly into the sun" for quite some time before finally disappearing, and then Clements reversed course to head to home base. But their adjusted course was towards 205 degrees, not towards the sun at 227 degrees. Mantell could not possibly have headed towards the sun at 227 degs for very long since he ended up crashing several minutes later at an impact site 202 degs from Godman, very close to their 205 degs intercept heading.

If Mantell had briefly turned right and into the sun by about 20 degrees, to avoid our crash-site location problem, then we run into the problem that Clements immediately made a 180-degree turn. How could Mantell still be "into the sun" when Clements looped away by miles on the 180-turn? In a standard fast 1-minute turn at 300 mph, within 15 seconds or less Clements would have put Mantell towards the west (about 70 degrees from the sun) or towards the east (about 110 degs from the sun), depending on whether Clements turned left or right, respectively. Thus it is preposterous that Mantell could have remained in the sun so long that he "disappeared." There is more to the unraveling of this false and ridiculous story.

Even if hypothetically Mantell had somehow managed to "pull away" by say 10 miles by the time of disappearance, Clements' 180-turn would have shifted Mantell's position in the sky by about 10 degrees away from the sun within 30 seconds, and about 15 degrees from the sun by the end of the turn. And that assumes a 10-mile separation which we will see below was factually false and a physical and logical impossibility.

Clements alleges that Mantell pulled away from him from 18,000 ft "on up," because of his extreme power settings, the actions of a maniac he implies. But earlier in his affidavit (see above) Clements was easily able to keep up with Mantell and actually pulled up "fairly close" to him at this *same 18,000 ft altitude*, in order to hand-signal him. And Clements was still with Mantell at 20,000 ft by his own statement here above (at the Bowling Green airport vicinity) and to 22,500 ft when he says he broke away from Mantell. Clements cannot have it both ways.

There are so many reasons to question this part of Clements' affidavit, as with so much of the rest of what he said, that it is left in a shambles, a pastiche of some well-thought-out and some poorly-thought-out falsehoods. The mythic image of Mantell disappearing "into the sun" is not presented here by Clements for its poetic value. It's an effort to solve the problem of how Mantell could possibly have "disappeared" so quickly, an effort apparently based on the poor logic that two inconsistent explanations can be just as good as one good explanation, if they are both superficially plausible-sounding.

If the sun explanation did not ultimately work, then apparently Clements thought the "pulling away" scenario would take its place, regardless of the mutual contradiction. In the "pulling away" scenario, Mantell's flight at full power generated such a high relative speed to Clements that Mantell's plane could disappear from Clements' sight in just a few seconds. But the 37-foot wide wingspan of the F-51 would have made it visible to the human eye up to about 24 miles (for 20/20 vision 1 arcminute Minimum Angle of Resolution).

If both Mantell and Clements were in a maximum climb how could there be much of a difference in speed? Both were in identical F-51D's with identical engines and identical fuel load and weight, and should have had identical speeds. Suppose we assume that somehow a very generous 60 mph (1 mile per minute) relative velocity developed between Mantell and his wingman Clements at this point at about 3:09 p.m. in the reconstructed timeline (this assumes Mantell at 360 mph and Clements at 300 mph, instead of both at 300 mph). It would have taken about 24 minutes for Mantell's plane to disappear (which would be at 3:33)! Mantell already crashed long before that time (at 3:18)! So the "pulling away" cannot explain how Mantell's fighter supposedly disappeared so fast.

Imagine another possibility, that Clements' turn in the opposite direction put his flight speed opposite to that of Mantell's speed, resulting in possibly up to 600-700 mph in relative velocity between the two fighters. The accident report claims that Mantell's plane disappeared from sight to Clements at about 23,000 ft (Accid. Rpt., p. 8). Based on the reconstructed correct climb rate of only 600 ft/min, this would be just under 1 minute after Clements began to turn around and head for home base at 22,500 ft. This assumes that both Mantell and Clements were flying together at about the same altitude and that the 500 ft increase represents about 1 minute of climbing at the 600 ft/min rate.

(But if, as some reports suggest, there was a minor 500-foot height difference with Clements' plane at 22,500 ft [Accid. Rpt., pp. 14, 44] when Mantell's plane was at 23,000 ft, then this does not represent a 1 minute time interval at all, which would have allowed some separation distance to develop between them. However we will consider the 1-minute possibility for illustration of the insuperable difficulties with Clements' nonsense story about Mantell's disappearance.)

How far could Mantell possibly have gotten from Clements in 1 minute when Mantell was climbing at the maximum possible climb rate and Clements had turned around to reverse course? In max climb, speed in the F-51D is limited to only about 200 mph (NAA F-51D Performance Tables and Charts, 1944, 1946). But Clements was no longer climbing, so he could fly faster, let's say it was the F-51D's max speed of about 440 mph in level flight. If the 1 minute estimate is assumed, then Clements would have put only about 6 miles between himself and Mantell on their now opposite headings. But this is not enough to make Mantell disappear. It is not even close to the 24-mile maximum visual range for seeing an F-51. But it *might* be understandable if one could only look *backwards* briefly to try to spot Mantell's now rapidly receding F-51.

The truth is evidently that Mantell's plane disappeared not because of fading in the distance, not because of the sun's glare, but because Clements had turned

his plane around in the opposite direction and left Mantell all alone, making it difficult to crane his head backwards to look for Mantell. Clements could not easily look back to watch Mantell while flying his own fighter. That is the true cause of Mantell's "disappearance" from sight.

Rather than admit that his abandonment of Mantell is what caused Mantell's disappearance from view, Clements apparently just made up the mythical story of Mantell disappearing "into the sun."

CLEMENTS: "Through the later stages of this climb Lt. Hammond was signaling that he was having trouble because of his lack of oxygen and wished to go down to a lower altitude."

HAMMOND: In the only known statement of wingman Lt. Buford A. Hammond, made to the press, he describes this purported hand signaling that Clements cites:

"Mantell and Clements were linked by radio, but Hammond's communications set was tuned to a different frequency....

" 'I felt a little shaky at 15,000 feet,' he [Hammond] declared, 'because I realized we were supposed to take oxygen at 12,000 [sic; actually 14,000 ft].

" 'By the time I hit 22,000 I was seeing double. I pulled alongside Clements and indicated with [hand] gestures that I didn't have an oxygen mask. In fact I circled my finger around my head to show him I was getting woozy. He understood the situation and we turned back.' " (Louisville Courier-Journal, Jan. 9, 1948.)

FACTS: This dramatic story of Hammond and Clements having to communicate by hand signals instead of by radio (because their radios were "tuned to a different frequency") is very colorful. It is also very false.

Hammond radioed and did not hand signal his oxygen problems. Godman controllers *heard* Hammond reporting his oxygen problems to Clements over the *radio*. In a report by Major DeArmand Matthews, deputy commander of the Wright Field Flight Service Center, which overheard the Mantell mission over the Plan 62 intercom network between the AF bases in the region, we learn that the Service Center shift supervisor Capt. Arthur Jehli heard the following radio communications between Mantell's men. Major Matthews quotes from Capt. Jehli's report:

"At 22,000 feet pilot Hammond, NG 737, advised Clements, NG 800, that he had no oxygen equipment. Both pilots then returned to Standiford Field; pilot Mantell, NG 3869, continued climbing."

Hammond "advised" Clements by radio of his oxygen problems, and it was heard over the intercom network from the air-to-ground radio feed. The whole story by Hammond and Clements about "hand signaling" was completely made up. It never happened.

It should have been obviously suspect just with the bizarre notion that Hammond could not communicate by radio, as if their F-51 aircraft were equipped with incompatible radios. Or as if we are supposed to believe Hammond could not make a simple switch from Channel C to B on his radio when he heard nothing over Channel C, and when their flight plan called for using Channel B anyway. It should have raised questions about how Hammond could possibly have reached the dangerous altitude of 22,500 ft without himself crashing, especially when Hammond and Clements both admitted that Hammond had been having trouble with oxygen for a long time before the supposed hand-signaling incident (about 12 minutes from 15,000 ft when he "felt a little shaky" to 22,000 or 22,500 ft).

Godman controller PFC Stanley Oliver heard *both* wingmen, Clements and Hammond, trying to contact Mantell by *radio* at the very end: "Other pilots in the formation tried to contact him but to no avail," Oliver reported (Oliver statement to Project Sign). This further refutes the claim that Hammond had the wrong channel and had to communicate with Clements by "hand signals."

Someone should have questioned how a pilot experiencing severe hypoxia effects - who was feeling so "woozy" he circled his fingers to indicate dizziness - could carry out such an insanely dangerous alleged maneuver of pulling up close to another aircraft, so close that his hand gestures could be seen. If that had actually happened, Hammond could very easily have collided with Clements, endangering or forfeiting both their lives when all they had to do was just talk by radio from a safe distance.

But as we have just seen, this hand gesture story is bogus, there was no such life-threatening maneuver forced by Mantell's supposedly reckless actions. It was clearly all fabricated to make Mantell look bad, in the nature of a complaint by innuendo of the type "See what he made us do??"

Godman controllers also heard Mantell's wingmen say over their radios that one of them had leveled off at 15,000 ft while Mantell and the other wingman climbed to 20,000 ft or more. The wingman who stayed at 15,000 ft must have been Hammond who lacked oxygen gear, and the one who stayed close to Mantell was evidently Clements who had oxygen.

Godman's weather detachment commander, Lt. Paul Orner, listened in on the air-ground conversations with Mantell and his crew. Orner reported:

"From pilots reports in the formation NG869 [Mantell] was high and ahead of *the* wing man [Hammond] ... when he disappeared.... From messages transmitted by the formation it is estimated the flight leader [Mantell] was at 18 to 20 thousand feet and the wing man [Hammond] at approximately 15 thousand feet wide formation when the flight leader NG869 [Mantell] disappeared." (Orner statement to Project Sign.)

Notice once again that Hammond was in radio contact with Godman Tower, as only he could have described how Mantell appeared "high and ahead" of him, Hammond at 15,000 ft and Mantell at a visually estimated 18,000 to 20,000 ft.

Because Godman did not yet have ground control approach (GCA) radar (it was a few months away), their tower controllers had to depend on pilots to report their altitudes over the radio. Some controllers could recognize voices of the different pilots but others could easily mistake one for the other. As Capt. Cary (not "Gary") Carter stated, for him it was "impossible to identify which plane was doing the talking" (Carter statement to Project Sign). Others such as Lt. Orner were able to distinguish the radio reports of Mantell, Clements, and Hammond.

So when a flight supervisor at another base listened in on these conversations he might be still more likely to mistake one pilot for the other, since he was not their ground controller and not responsible for them. Thus when Capt. Jehli in Ohio heard that, when *someone* reported being at 22,000 ft, and Hammond advised Clements of not having oxygen, this did not necessarily mean *both* pilots were at 22,000 ft. Apparently, Hammond at 15,000 ft, was continuing to have hypoxia difficulties and it was Clements who was at 22,000 ft with oxygen, not Hammond who had no oxygen.

Jehli may not have heard or realized that twelve minutes earlier Hammond had said he had leveled off at 15,000 ft so Jehli assumed mistakenly that both Clements and Hammond were at 22,000 ft along with Mantell. Hammond by any account started suffering from hypoxia at 15,000 ft so it makes sense that he leveled off at that altitude, stopped climbing any higher, and followed Mantell and Clements from below them, Mantell and Clements being the only members of the flight with oxygen. AF regulations in 1948 required that all pilots flying at 14,000 ft or higher must use oxygen (AAF Reg. 60-16 para. 43).

By continuing to fly at 15,000 ft for 12 more minutes when he was already feeling "shaky," Hammond was still taking a risk but not as severe as if he had tried to climb to 22,500 ft where he could lose consciousness at any moment or within seconds after 17 minutes of flying with ever decreasing oxygen levels (counting from when they started at 5,000 ft). Hammond may never have made it to 22,500 ft had he tried, and might well have blacked out long before and crashed.

CLEMENTS: "From the time we broke off from the formation, we began a rather sharp descent [sic] back on course to Standiford Field, about 40°, and

finally established contact with Godman tower giving them a position report and our destination and asking them if they would try to contact Capt. Mantell and inform him that we were returning, in as much as he failed to acknowledge our previous message.

"The last contact by radio which we had with Capt. Mantell was when he said he could see the object at 1200 o'clock which was from 20000' and when last seen he seemed to have the airplane under perfect control and still climbing towards the object."

FACTS: Clements is at pains (he will repeat himself below) to insist that Mantell was not in any trouble from hypoxia or anything else when he abandoned Mantell. If he had admitted that Mantell's plane was wobbling or erratic then he would make his dereliction of duty to come to Mantell's assistance all the more egregious, and invited a court-martial all the more.

CLEMENTS: "I relayed my thoughts to Godman tower as to what we had seen and proceeded with Lt. Hammond on my wing to Standiford Field, landing without further incident at approximately 1540. As near as I can recall, the last time we saw Capt. Mantell was approximately 1520 [sic]. At no time did I observe Capt. Mantell to be in trouble and not until the later stages of the flight, prior to our breaking off of formation, did I realize what the object of this *high rate of climb* and unusual heading away from our ultimate destination was. By the time that I switched to B Baker channel, after we started climbing, we were apparently out of range of the Godman tower. In conjunction with the last time when we left Capt. Mantell I would judge our position to be about 40 [sic] miles northwest of Bowling Green.

"/s/ Albert W. Clements"

FACTS: Again, Clements wants to mitigate his dereliction of duty and violation of orders by insisting that Mantell was okay when he left him. And again he falsely asserts that he did not know what the purpose of their "unusual heading" and purported "high rate of climb" was until the "later stages," and drags in the phony excuse of Mantell somehow misleading them to stay on the wrong radio channel. As we showed earlier, Clements knew all along they were chasing an unidentified object and had spotted it himself almost from the start of the UFO pursuit. They knew that Channel B was their official radio channel as it was logged in their flight plan.

Clements' belief that they "were apparently out of range of the Godman tower" at these "final stages" of the UFO chase was dead wrong. But it was fortunate for us because Godman Tower controllers listened in on Clements' radio chatter when Clements did not think anyone could hear him. And Godman's controllers' eavesdropping makes Clements out to be a liar, as we have seen, on such matters as claiming Mantell never updated their ETA to reflect the delay for the UFO pursuit, that Mantell's radio transmissions were garbled as if due to hypoxia, that Hammond had to "hand signal" him, and most significantly on who had oxygen supply problems - only Hammond was reported, not Mantell.

(F) AF Was Suspicious of Accident Investigators from Mantell's Home Base

Within a day of the crash, the AF was already a bit suspicious of having Mantell's fellow Kentucky Air National Guard officers or even AF officers at Standiford Field conducting the accident investigation or of them being the only ones involved. Unusual orders were issued stating that while "Standiford Field National Guard Unit is handling investigation" the AF's Wright Field Flight Service "suggested that an Air Force Officer aid in the investigation and requested Godman Field to do so" rather than Standiford's AF officers (Accid. Rpt., p. 30).

A special investigation team of two AF officers, Major Robert J. D. Johnson and Capt. Robert R. Rankin, did prepare a special report (see Accid. Rpt., pp. 34-50; not known if they were in fact from Godman) but it was not an independent investigation, since they simply rubber-stamped the ANG board's findings and conclusions, despite the apparent unease of AF Wright Field Flight Service.

Mantell's crew and the Standiford accident board implied that Mantell acted like some crazed madman who endangered his entire flight team with life-

threatening orders to fly too high too fast without oxygen (no such orders were ever given) to try to reach a dubious target, an object in the sky that his crew could not even see (also not true). They painted the picture of Mantell as obsessed with reaching the UFO, forcing them into following him on a dangerous maximum climb at full power, and turning a callous and indifferent ear to his fellow officers' legitimate complaints about what was happening and the increasing lack of oxygen to breathe.

Mantell's flight said that one wingman was flying too high with no oxygen and was feeling dizzy (Lt. Hammond), but that they could not contact Mantell visually or by radio through the fault of Mantell himself. All of these charges and innuendoes also turn out to be falsehoods.

They claimed Mantell did not follow procedures in switching radio channels so they could listen in, that he was using the wrong channel instead of the correct VHF Channel B radio frequency (126.18 MHz), thus leaving them uninformed and in the dark on what was going on. The Mantell crew complained that he did not explain what they were doing, that they were pursuing a UFO, and that he did not explain why they were so greatly departing from their flight plan.

In actual fact, Channel B was the official frequency listed on their Flight Plan (Accid. Rpt., pp. 20, 40), so Mantell's wingmen surely knew that and Mantell should not have had to inform his crew of that fact. The one wingman, Lt. Hendricks, who decided to head back to base early on, stated in his affidavit that he visually noticed Mantell talking on his radio and simply switched his own radio to Channel B and listened in on Godman Tower requesting Mantell to check out the UFO.

Thus, the other wingmen, Lts. Clements and Hammond, would have known to do the same thing, change to Channel B. And when they saw Lt. Hendricks head off to home base they had to know something was up and to change channels to find out. Their aircraft radios, SCR-522, had only three channels (or at most four if specially modified), Channels A, B, and C, anyway, so how difficult was it to check all three in case of questions? The claims that Clements and Hammond were kept in the dark by a reckless flight leader Mantell just do not ring true.

MANTELL CASE BOMBSHELL -- PART 1(G-H-Table)

(G) Mantell Had Oxygen

Thorough reinvestigation of the Mantell case has revealed that in actual fact Mantell **did** have oxygen equipment, contrary to 60 years of official assertions to the contrary.

The official accident report relates the classified findings of the five-man Accident Investigating Board of Kentucky ANG officers, and an attached classified Special Investigation of two AF officers, in a formal Army Air Forces Form 14 called the "Report of Major Accident," of January 22, 1948 (note that the AAF had become the AF by this date but they still used up the old AAF forms).

The Accident Report states on page 2 that Mantell's "oxygen system" was "in working order," and simply had not been serviced with oxygen pre-flight. This implies that the amount of oxygen still in Mantell's tank must have been unknown to the ground crew, and thus raises the possibility it was misestimated by Mantell. This finding was indirectly supported by ground-air communications with Godman Tower controllers directing Mantell's UFO intercept, who were told that wingman Lt. Hammond was having trouble with a lack of oxygen supplies but no mention was made of a "known" lack of oxygen supply by Mantell.

Section "I" of the AAF Form 14, the Mantell Accident Report, asks if there was any special equipment such as "oxygen equipment" which "was a contributing cause factor in the accident for any reason including failure, misuse, or by reason of **not being in the plane**" and then the accident board

filled in the following information:

"Oxygen system was not serviced. System was in working order"

The official story of the Mantell tragedy comes unhinged with this crushing disclosure. The Accident Report, with the above statement about Mantell having an unserviced "oxygen system" aboard his plane, has been openly available in the Project Blue Book files since their public release in 1976. This early part of the accident report Form 14 must have been filled out before the board settled on the story that Mantell did not carry oxygen, which appears later on the form, at page 4.

(The "Oxygen system ... in working order" page is available on National Archives Blue Book microfilm released in 1976, on 16 mm Roll 2, page 767, and on the unredacted Maxwell AFB AF record microfilm released in 1998, Roll 3, page 748. For both see <http://www.bluebookarchive.com/> on the Web, along with still another copy in the special Project Sign microfilm given to Herbert Strentz in 1968, Roll 1, page 310.)

The accident report form specifically asked what was a "contributing cause factor" in the *crash*, the crash of Mantell's plane, serial no. 44-63869, so it was not asking about the other planes in Mantell's flight, which of course did not crash.

And the report form asked specifically if "oxygen equipment" was a "contributing cause factor" by "reason of *not being in the plane*." So if the crash had been caused by Mantell not having oxygen equipment in his plane then this was the officially *required* place in the formal accident report for documenting that alleged fact. The fact that the accident report two pages later implies that Mantell had no oxygen equipment and crashed because of that, suggests that those preparing the report forgot about what was stated in the early part of the report when they developed the official storyline later on, during the two weeks they worked on the report. The truth survived by escaping through cracks in the coverup.

The issue of oxygen equipment and supplies has been the primary focus of the attack by the AF in this case, but there are some very troubling and obvious questions raised in reinvestigating the case today. The accident board criticized "The poor judgment displayed by Captain Mantell" who they claimed "Violated AAF Reg. 60-16 Par. 43" by going above the 14,000-foot altitude limit without the oxygen required in those regulations (Accid. Rpt., pp. 3, 37). But the only evidence the board cited was the single anecdotal statement of wingman Lt. Albert Clements, who as it turns out had the most to lose if he had been court-martialed.

Why rely on someone's word, someone who has a direct stake in the answer, when you have objective, indisputable, physical evidence that can be consulted?? Why was not the obvious step taken of examining the wreckage of Mantell's aircraft to see if he had oxygen equipment or not? Would that not have been the most definitive and conclusive evidence? In law, when less satisfactory evidence is presented instead of more satisfactory evidence the less satisfactory evidence is viewed with suspicion.

But, apparently the wreckage *was* examined, as argued earlier, and it resulted in what is now the bombshell revelation that Mantell *did* have oxygen equipment and it was reportedly in "working order" (Accid. Rpt., p. 2).

Godman Tower controllers learned from the radio reporting and the interphone system between bases that Mantell's main wingman, Lt. Clements, had returned to home base at Standiford Field to refuel and to replenish his *oxygen* so he could go up to 33,000 feet to search for the UFO again (Carter, Orner statements to Project Sign). (Clements did not say he was searching for Mantell because that would imply he knew Mantell was in trouble. Even though Mantell had "disappeared," had been out of contact for over an hour, and never showed up at any base, Clements was evidently determined to mislead, to not to reveal any serious concern to ground controllers.)

Yet, Standiford Field claimed it had no oxygen supplies, but had it on order (Accid. Rpt., p. 37, para. 13"ff"). How did Clements replenish his oxygen supply at Standiford in order to go back up to look for the UFO at higher altitudes, if Standiford did not have any oxygen? Someone must have been lying. Since Godman Tower heard the radio reports of Standiford having oxygen for resupply at the time it happened, it must have been Standiford Field that was lying in its later official reporting about not having had oxygen on hand.

Imagine the enormity of such a fraudulent claim. A military base falsified its records or reporting on its oxygen supplies in connection with a fatal accident attributed to an oxygen supply problem, to phrase it broadly. Evidently Standiford base officials wanted to distance themselves as much as possible from any responsibility for Mantell's accident, no matter how remote, by simply lying and claiming it had no oxygen whatsoever, and this falsehood was knowingly incorporated into the Accident Report (p. 37). Perhaps the reasoning was a not too well thought out effort to reinforce the Mantell-had-no-oxygen story. If Standiford had no oxygen supplies available, the accident investigators may have reasoned, then it could not have given any to Mantell, and so that would further bolster the story that Mantell had no oxygen on board his aircraft at the time of his crash.

The issue of oxygen supplies and equipment was one that motivated outright false statements by AF and ANG officials, not just on Mantell's oxygen, but also on Clements' oxygen and Standiford Field's oxygen. Again this calls into question the entire official case against Mantell. Clearly a very considerable "oxygen coverup" was perpetrated by the ANG and the AF at Standiford base in Louisville in January 1948 and, of course, forever after. Almost every alleged fact about oxygen in relation to the Mantell crash has been contradicted or falsified.

It was often and falsely claimed that, as the accident board put it, "Mantell was not aware of the symptoms of anoxia in that his high altitude flying experience was very limited" (Accid. Rpt., p. 38). The principal accident investigator, Capt. Richard Tyler, was quoted in the media: "Tyler blamed Mantell's head-long dash after the 'saucer' on the fact that Mantell's World War II experience largely was limited to low-altitude flying." (Louisville Courier-Journal, Jan. 9, 1948.)

But Capt. Tyler seemed to contradict himself in private, as he admitted in his statement to the accident board that Mantell "did respect the airplane and the dangers of anoxia" (Accid. Rpt., p. 10). How would Mantell know and "respect" the dangers of anoxia (hypoxia) if he didn't have some kind of high flying experience that was sufficient to make him knowledgeable? All this talk about Mantell's high-altitude experience or lack of it is just double-talk anyway, since Mantell did have oxygen.

Mantell's pilot experience is also sometimes disparaged, with suggestions that he was not experienced as a "fighter pilot" specifically or that he was unfamiliar with the F-51. Such discussions usually omit mentioning that Mantell had been flying the F-51D for over seven months, since the arrival of 25 F-51D's at Standiford in late May 1947 (Accid. Rpt., p. 9; Kentucky ANG histories). Mantell had about 3,000 flying hours total, of which 1,608 hours were pilot-flight time, and he had 67 hours in the F-51D. Although the length of each flight in the F-51D is not stated, Mantell's total hours in the F-51D at thirty and ninety days and all total before the accident are given (Accid. Rpt., pp. 1, 34).

Based on those figures, it appears that as a rough estimate from May to September 1947, Mantell flew the F-51D a couple hours about *once a week*, then from October to December about *twice a week*. Since the F-51 was capable of reaching a ceiling of about 42,000 feet which absolutely requires oxygen, on many if not most of the F-51D flights Mantell surely must have tested out the F-51 Mustang's high-altitude capabilities and thus used oxygen, and thus become familiar with oxygen, as the lead accident investigator implies (Accid. Rpt., pp. 9-10).

(H) The Mantell Case Over the Years

The Mantell case has been the staple of UFO books and articles for over half a century. Wild rumors have swirled around the incident almost from the start, usually in a lurid attempt to attribute the crash to hostile attack by the UFO or alien beings.

From the beginning, on the day after Mantell's crash, the press relayed various suggested explanations that the mysterious object might have been a special balloon or the planet Venus or even a comet. There was considerable discussion of these possibilities in the press with a number of officials and experts interviewed. There were many observers of the Skyhook balloon though no one specifically linked it to the then publicly known (not secret) Skyhook project until later.

Over the years the AF's explanation has changed, and is now blamed on a large Skyhook balloon, supposedly a 'secret' Navy project (in fact it was not secret at all and not exclusive to the Navy). The presence of Venus in the same area of the sky is thought to be a coincidence since it was not bright enough to be visible or prominent in the daytime sky. Occasionally it has slipped out that the sighting was actually considered "unidentified" by the AF.

The Mantell incident appears in the TOP SECRET Air Intelligence Study on Flying Discs, dated Dec. 10, 1948, and issued April 28, 1949, which was discovered and released only in 1985 thanks to the untiring efforts of the late Robert G. Todd. In the highly classified study, the AF Directorate of Intelligence at the Pentagon under Major General Charles Cabell treated the Mantell case as unexplained:

"On 7 January 1948, a National Guard pilot was killed while attempting to chase an unidentified object up to 30,000 feet. While it is presumed that this pilot suffered anoxia, resulting in his crash, his last message to the tower was, 'it appears to be metallic object....of tremendous size....directly ahead and slightly above....I am trying to close for a better look.' " (AID Study 203, p. 12, para. k, ellipses in the original)

In early 1952, as a result of press inquiries by LIFE magazine, the head of the AF's Project Grudge (later renamed Blue Book), then Lt. (later Capt.) Edward J. Ruppelt, was asked to look into the Mantell case for the Pentagon. LIFE found out and soon published the AF's surprising "unsolved" conclusion on the Mantell incident (one of only two times this fact ever leaked out).

But Ruppelt the skeptic instead latched onto the idea the UFO was a Skyhook balloon launched by the Navy from Clinton County Air Field, Wilmington, Ohio, and claimed the winds were right to bring it within view of military air traffic controllers at Godman Field, who were at the center of the UFO incident. In an official AF statement (see below) Ruppelt misleadingly implied there were records of this purported Skyhook launch from the Clinton County base, but in fact there were no records as he later admitted in his book and none were found in his Blue Book files.

In the AF statement Ruppelt alleged that it was "*determined* that on the date of the Godman sighting a balloon *was* released by the Navy from Clinton County airport in Ohio" and that "The *release time* of the balloon was related to the wind plot for 7 January 1948, and it revealed that the balloon would have been in the area of Godman at the time of the sighting." No such "wind plots" were found in Ruppelt's Blue Book files, let alone records of the date and "release time" of any purported Skyhook launch from Clinton County, this is apparently just sheer fabrication.

Meanwhile, evidently to be ready for the expected heavy impact of the LIFE article, Ruppelt wrote an official summary (just mentioned) of the Mantell case in early 1952 for internal AF inquiries and for the press. The document reports the "ATIC opinion" as "the Air Force conclusion" (Air Technical Intelligence Center was the parent organization of Project Blue Book; ATIC has now evolved into NASIC, National Air and Space Intelligence Center, still at Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton, Ohio).

This official AF conclusion in 1952 was that Mantell's "excitement" over the UFO overrode his better judgment about his oxygen, as we quoted earlier. This statement tries to have it both ways on the IFO explanations, adopting both Venus *and* the Skyhook, suggesting that the planet Venus "probably" caused the initial UFO sightings, but the purportedly "classified ... 'need-to-know'" Skyhook balloon "probably" caused the later Mantell sighting.

Skyhooks were not classified and were widely reported in the New York Times in 1946 and 1947 and a detailed front-page story in Popular Science

magazine in May 1948. Even the classified uses of the unclassified "Project Skyhook" balloons were referred to in the Popular Science article (pp. 101b-102a) for carrying "devices about which the government maintains secrecy." The magazine actually printed photos of the launch of the Jan. 6, 1948, Skyhook balloon which later drifted near Nashville around the time of Mantell's chase, though this connection was not realized at the time. But the magazine did suggest that Skyhook balloons were causing some of the UFO sightings of the day.

Interestingly, Ruppelt/ATIC adopted the event scenario in which Mantell's two wingmen in the UFO chase stayed at 15,000 ft and did not remain with Mantell as he climbed to 22,000+ ft (in fact Hammond stayed at 15,000 ft and Clements went up with Mantell further on the gradual climb; more on this in Part 2). Ruppelt maintained this flight scenario in his classic 1956 book, *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*.

Later in 1952, while working with the former astronomical consultant Dr. J. Allen Hynek, Ruppelt and Hynek rejected Hynek's own original findings in 1949 supporting the Venus theory. The two now decided that Venus was not bright enough in the daytime. Thus, the Skyhook balloon was left by default as the official AF explanation for the Mantell case.

Decades later, balloon engineer Prof. Charles B. Moore claimed that his records showed that no Skyhooks were ever launched from Clinton County airfield until July 9, 1951 (Greenwood, *Just Cause*, June [July] 1994, p. 9). Skyhooks were manufactured by General Mills in Minnesota, and Moore worked on the Skyhooks for General Mills at that time. It also stands to reason that since Clinton County airfield was heavily involved in the evening UFO sightings right after Mantell's crash, which were actually publicized by an official CAA (Civil Aeronautics Administration now the FAA) press release, one would think that the unusual aerial activity would have prompted the uncovering of an unusual launch of a Skyhook that same day from the same base if such a thing had occurred (as Barry Greenwood has pointed out).

In 2002, veteran UFO investigator, author and former military intelligence officer, Capt. (now Major) Kevin Randle, posted a lengthy analysis of the Mantell case on UFO UpDates for comment. Though still adhering to the traditional explanation of the case as a combination of oxygen supply and Skyhook balloon, Randle seems to be the first to suggest (p. 6) that Mantell's wingmen falsified information about their flight altitudes to protect themselves, the "survivors," from military discipline for violating regulations on oxygen.

But Randle's study elicited little response. In part this was due to the difficulties in obtaining legible copies of the Mantell accident report and BB files on Mantell and disentangling them into a sensible order. The AF files as released to the public are a disorganized mess. Multiple copies, including typewritten copies and poor photostats, of the same document or parts of a document are repeated in many different places in the BB files in little or no coherent fashion.

In March 2006, a local Evansville, Indiana, television station WFIE interviewed NICAP website coordinator and long-time UFO researcher Francis Ridge for an upcoming program on the Mantell case. When the TV show was broadcast on May 23, 2006, it stirred up renewed interest and debate among UFO researchers on several email discussion lists, which led to the present reinvestigation. Ridge's dedicated volunteers helped dig out the confusing AF and other documents and even retype some so they are legible (special thanks to Jean Waskiewicz).

CUFOS webmaster Mary Castner then researched the old NICAP files at CUFOS headquarters and succeeded in getting Barry Greenwood's news clipping and newsletter files on the Mantell case posted on the Web. Castner uncovered some files of renowned UFO investigator and atmospheric physicist, Dr. James McDonald, that included some useful Minnesota-Iowa tracking data on the Skyhook balloon, reported by Otto Winzen head of Winzen Research, in 1968.

Thanks to this tremendous effort of these persistent researchers the case has been stunningly blown wide open after 60 years.

Reconstruction of Mantell Flight Profile - Summary Table

TIME	MILES	ALTITUDE	CLIMB	GROUND	EVENT /	LANDMARK
PM	FROM	(FEET)	RATE	SPEED	NEARBY	
CST	GODMAN		FT/MIN	MPH		
1:42	289	0	0	0-300	First two F-51's	take off from Marietta AAF, Ga.
1:43	289	0	0	0-300	Last two F-51's	take off from Marietta AAF, Ga.
2:50	10	5,000	0	300		Position report, ~30 mi SW (~SSW) of Standiford AAF, Louisville, Ky. (~10 mi S of Godman)
2:51	5	5,000	0	300		
2:52	0	5,000	3,000	180		Mantell and men enter max climb spiral directly over Godman Tower
2:53	0	8,000	3,000	180		Still in climb over Godman
2:54	0	11,000	3,000	180		
2:55	0	14,000	3,000	180		Leveled out from spiral climb vectored straight SSW to 210
2:56	5	14,600	600	300		
2:57	10	15,200	600	300		
2:58	15	15,800	600	300		
2:59	20	16,400	600	300		
3:00	25	17,000	600	300		Max range F-51 visible from Godman w/unaided eye
3:01	30	17,600	600	300		

3:02	35	18,200	600	300		
3:03	40	18,800	600	300		
3:04	45	19,400	600	300		
3:05	50	20,000	600	300		
3:06	55	20,600	600	300		
3:07	60	21,200	600	300		
3:08	65	21,800	600	300		Near Bowling Green airport
3:09	70	22,400	600	300		Clements abandons Mantell, who now climbs at combat max rate/speed
3:10	75	23,000	2,000	240		
3:11	79	25,000	2,000	240		Mantell passes out (?), loses control of plane which begins descending in a spiral
3:12	83	23,000	-2,000	240		Picks up speed
3:13	87	21,000	-2,000	300		1st spiral complete
3:14	92	19,000	-2,000	300		
3:15	-92	17,000	-3,000	350		2nd spiral complete
3:16	-92	14,000	-4,000	400		
3:17	-92	10,000	-10,000	500 to 200		Mantell regains consciousness (?) tries to throttle back (?). Plane breaks up at Mach limit, engine overheats, vertical dive then flat spin (?)
3:18	92	0	0	0		Impact 4 miles S of Franklin, Ky, plane hard lands on belly.

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