

UFO INVESTIGATOR

NATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE ON
NICAP AERIAL PHENOMENA

HEYERDAHL SIGHTING SOLVED

Plumage of Navy "Bird" Gives Eerie Effect

The sighting by explorer Thor Heyerdahl and two of his boat crew in late June (*UFO Investigator*, July 1970) has been traced to an unannounced rocket launch from Cape Kennedy. The launch was made on the evening of June 29 (June 30 for Heyerdahl, who was in a different time zone) to test the Navy's Poseidon missile. As the missile climbed into sunlight on its suborbital trajectory, its exhaust spewed outward in ever widening circles, creating an amazingly geometric "cloud" that dominated the sky.

The launch occurred at 9:31 p.m. EDT. This was 1:31 a.m. GMT, almost exactly the time Heyerdahl's navigator, N. L. Baker, first spotted a strange light on the northwestern horizon. At the time of the sighting, Heyerdahl's boat was some 700 miles out in the Atlantic, due east of the West Indies. This put him at the edge of the Eastern Test Range, which extends from Cape Kennedy into the North Atlantic. The Poseidon was launched down this range.

The distortion in the phenomenon's shape as reported by the witnesses was due to the tendency of the missile to rotate as its second stage burned out. The contrail from the spiraling rocket created a "pinwheel" effect, which was enhanced by the rays of the sun. Heyerdahl could only see half of the pinwheel because the Earth's curvature obstructed his view.

This is not the first time a Poseidon launch has generated UFO reports. A similar shot in August 1969 set off sightings throughout parts of the Caribbean and the United States. A year before that, on August 16, 1968, a sighting in South Carolina was tied to the first developmental launch of the Poseidon (see the picture below).



Rotating rocket leaves ethereal pinwheel in its wake. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Navy)

MEDIA SHOWING NEW INTEREST IN UFOs

The Public Still Wants to Know the Facts

News media interest in UFOs is on the upturn, if recent NICAP contacts with the press are any indication. During the past three months, NICAP has granted interviews to newspapers, television stations, and radio broadcasters both locally and in other parts of the United States.

On July 23, NICAP's two corporate officers, John Acuff and Stuart Nixon, were guests on a three-hour radio program in Baltimore. Among the listeners who called in was a retired Air Force officer who had been one of the witnesses to a sighting some years ago at a military testing area in New Mexico.

In late July, a reporter from the Richmond (Virginia) *News Leader* traveled to Washington to do a feature article on NICAP and its new programs. The article, one of the longest ever done on NICAP, appeared in August.

Media inquiries thus far this month include a call from Mutual Radio News, which wanted to update its listeners on the UFO subject, and a phone interview with the ABC affiliate in Washington, D.C., which wanted NICAP's reaction to the Air Force Academy textbook that urges aspiring Air Force officers to keep an open mind on UFOs (see next month's *UFO Investigator*).

Also this month, NICAP conducted a lengthy interview with the Detroit *News*, which is planning a status report on UFOs, and NICAP officer Nixon appeared on two TV programs in New Haven, Connecticut.

MUTE WITNESSES STARTING TO TALK

Condon Report May Be Having Reverse Effect

The iceberg of hidden UFO cases may be melting. In recent months, NICAP has found increased willingness on the part of witnesses to disclose details of sightings made prior to 1970. Although some of the witnesses have been silent for as many as 19 years (see this issue's "Casebook"), they now admit to strong personal interest in UFOs, and are offering their own reports with increasing candor.

The explanation for this unpredicted trend is not clear, but some observers see it as the logical consequence of government withdrawal from UFO investigations. These observers cite the inhibiting effect of such agencies as the U.S. Air Force on people who experienced dramatic sightings but were aware of officialdom's prolonged attempt to explain UFOs as hoaxes, hallucinations, and misidentifications. With the cloud of ridicule and skepticism lifted, it may be that a positive atmosphere is developing, whereby reports long repressed can surface without fear of being unwelcome.

If this is the case, it comes as an interesting sequel to the Condon Report, which was offered by the Federal Government as the last word on UFOs.

Second of a Series

MAN AND NON-MAN

What Impact the Discovery of Extraterrestrial Intelligence?

In 1950 Arthur Clarke wrote a short story entitled "The Sentinel." Used 15 years later as the basis for the film "2001: A Space Odyssey," the story concerns an astronaut who discovers a strange artificial structure on the moon -- a structure that could not have been placed there by man. The story gives no details on government reaction to the discovery, or whether news of it was made public. Nor does it speculate on what effect the event might have had on the general population if and when disclosure of the discovery had been made.

In "2001," however, whose script was written in part by Clarke, the scene is played out. The discovery causes immediate concern among space agency officials, who decide to impose tight security restrictions on the find until scientists can determine the purpose of the strange structure. The public is not told about it.

Today, 20 years after Clarke's story, the possibility of astronauts making a cataclysmic discovery is no longer a matter of science fiction. It could actually happen on the next lunar mission, or later when the moon and planets are actively explored. If, on the face of it, such a contingency does not seem likely, it nonetheless raises some profoundly interesting questions, not the least of which is how NASA -- or its Soviet counterpart -- would view a radical discovery of this kind and what information would be given to the public, if any. Is the scenario in "2001" realistic, or out of date?

To discuss such an eventuality and the larger questions it poses, NICAP recently interviewed Dr. Richard S. Young, Chief of Exobiology for NASA in Washington, D.C. As a key member of the NASA team engaged in the search for extraterrestrial life, Dr. Young has considered such problems and been privy to official thinking on some of the issues they suggest.

The interview ran for over an hour and touched on many aspects of life discovery and space exploration. Beginning with this issue, the interview will be published verbatim without editorial change or comment. We are grateful to Dr. Young for his kind cooperation in talking with us.

NICAP: What is NASA doing in the area of exobiology?

YOUNG: What we're really interested in is what we can learn about the origin and evolution of life, and where life began. And it's of equal importance to study a planet where there is no life. If there's no life on Mars, that's great; it could be just as valuable from a scientific point of view to research in the absence of life as it would be in the presence of life. Because the basic question is the origin of life, and when you look at it from that point of view, that argument (as to whether life is or is not present) is almost irrelevant.

We've got a problem with the planet Earth; we've got a planet that's reeking with life, and we don't understand

the basic interactions of life on Earth with the planet in an evolutionary sense. All we know is that life got here somehow, and why it is and how it began, we don't really know. Yet here it is, and all of a sudden, it's starting to outweigh the planet. We're now overwhelming the planet without understanding the very fundamentals of our interactions with the planet. It strikes me that one of the most useful things the space program could do would be to go to another planet and indeed find life, or molecular record of life, or go to another planet and find no such record at all, and then try and determine how a planet evolves in the absence of a biota, as compared to how this poor planet is evolving in the presence of a biota. It may give us some very profound baseline datapoints relevant to the origin-of-life question, and also relevant to contemporary problems here on Earth. So it's from that point of view that I try to look at this overall problem.

NICAP: What precisely does the word exobiology mean?

YOUNG: That's what I was just saying. Exobiology, I think, to the majority of people carries the connotation of the search for extraterrestrial life. And indeed that is part of it. But as far as I'm concerned, exobiology is an interdisciplinary program aimed at getting data relevant to the question of the origin and evolution of life: how life began, what were the physical and chemical steps that led up to the origin of life, and the early events that controlled the evolution of life. So it's really quite a comprehensive, fundamental program.

NICAP: Then the emphasis is as much on the origin of life as on the evolution?

YOUNG: Yes, definitely, if not more so. Once life arose, I guess then it becomes the subject of study in the classical biological sciences.

We look at it in three ways; there are three components to the program.

One we call chemical evolution. In this, we are concerned with that sequence of events that led up to the origin of life: the early synthesis of organic molecules, the beginning of the first cell.

And in addition to that, we are also working with the ancient fossil record of the Earth, the Precambrian record, trying to get a handle on what we think happened on Earth during that period of time when chemical evolution was taking place and when life actually first began. We are trying to figure out what the Earth was like then, in environmental terms, and get a feel for when life actually began on the planet Earth. And that's turned out to be a very fruitful area of research.

The third area is to look into the extremes of environment that terrestrial forms of life are capable of tolerating. It turns out we know very little about that. Generally, the biologist and biochemist will bring an organism into the laboratory and put it under the best of all possible conditions, because he wants it to flourish. And it turns out we know very little about what environmental extremes -- such as very little water, temperature extremes, extremes of PH, pressure, etc. -- what the limits are for terrestrial metabolism and growth. So, that too has been fruitful.

Another area we also encompass in exobiology is that of actually developing techniques and eventually instruments with which we propose to go look for this kind of evidence on another planet -- both chemical and biological. So that's what we mean when we talk about exobiology. It's a comprehensive program.

NEXT: Life and Nonlife -- Is There a Difference?

CASEBOOK

DATE: February 8, 1951

LOCATION: North Atlantic

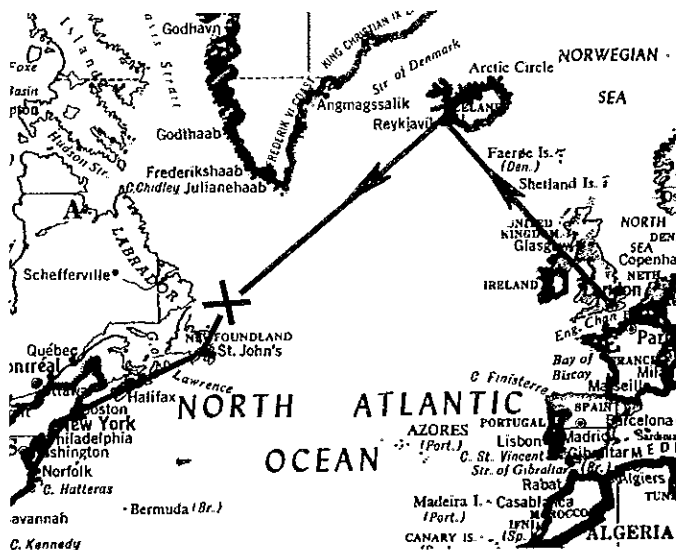
Chapter I of Major Donald Keyhoe's last book, *Flying Saucers, Top Secret*, is entitled "Encounter Above the Atlantic." The chapter describes a sighting made in the 1950s by the crew of a U.S. Navy aircraft en route from Iceland to Newfoundland. Keyhoe's source for the report was Captain James Taylor, a retired Naval officer living in Washington, D.C., whose name had been given to Keyhoe by another Naval officer, Admiral D.S. Fahrney, a close friend of the Major.

Taylor learned of the incident in 1956 from a friend and former associate, a Navy pilot who was one of the primary witnesses. This man, a Lieutenant at the time of the sighting and now a Commander, is identified in the book under the fictitious name George Benton. Keyhoe used the pseudonym to protect the officer from publicity, because Benton was still on active duty at the time the book appeared (1960).

In April of this year, NICAP contacted Benton and requested a personal interview, in hopes that the original report could be updated and corrected with first-hand information.

The interview was conducted a few weeks later at Benton's home in New Jersey. It was the first time he had confided details of his experience to anyone except military intelligence and his own friends and associates. His memory of the incident was only slightly affected by the passage of time, since, as he explained, "I have seen nothing like it in all my years of flying."

The sighting occurred in the early morning of February 8, 1951. Benton, 30 years old, was flying an R5D transport, which was returning to the United States from England via Iceland and Newfoundland. Benton had flown the Atlantic many times, having operated seaplanes over the South Atlantic for two years, and been assigned to the Naval Air Station in



Predawn sighting occurred on second leg of trans-Atlantic flight. "X" marks spot where encounter took place.

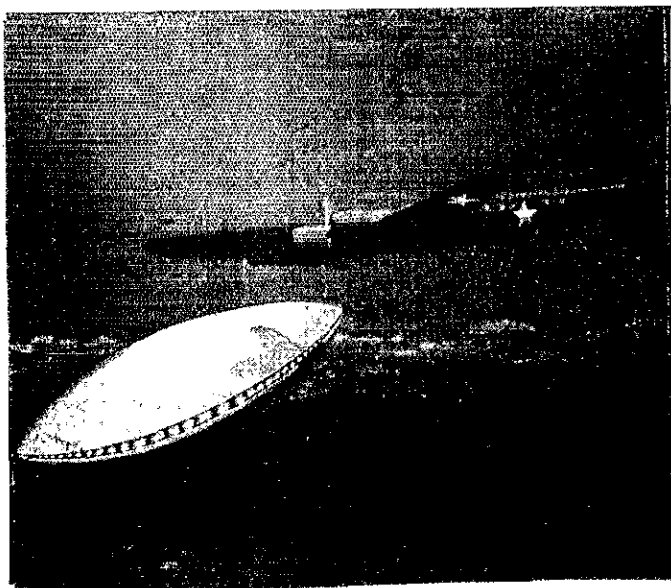
Brooklyn, New York, and later to a flight squadron at Norfolk, Virginia. At the time of the sighting, he was stationed at the Naval Air Test Center in Maryland, where he qualified for 38 types of military aircraft.

The weather on the night of the sighting was excellent. The moon had set, but visibility was still good. As Benton remembers it, "You could make out the horizon clearly but . . . you could not see the white caps on the water clearly."

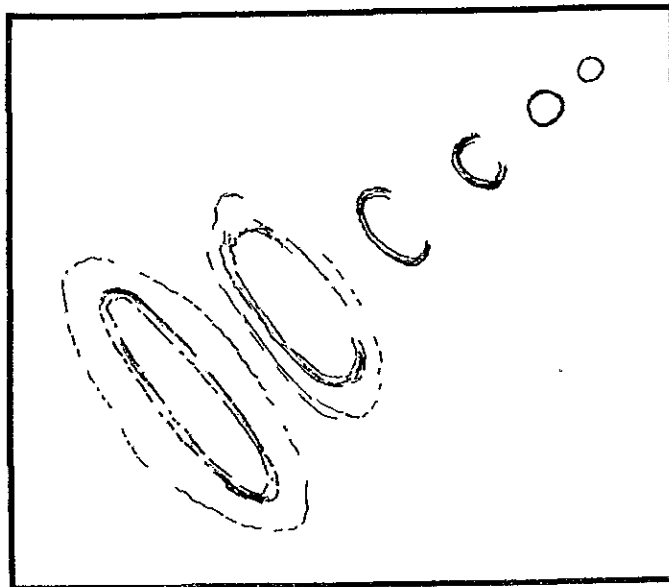
Seated opposite Benton in the co-pilot's seat was the plane commander, Lt. Com. F.K. (identified in Keyhoe's book as Peter Mooney). Back in the plane, asleep, were two extra crews, one a relief crew for Benton's men and the other on board as passengers. The aircraft was flying at 10,000 feet, on due course for Newfoundland. Ground speed was over 200 knots (230 miles per hour).

Approximately three and a half hours out of Iceland, at mid-point in the flight, the plane passed over a weather ship, which was on station below, off the coast of Greenland. The ship reported everything normal.

(Continued next issue.)



Artist version of sighting, based on faulty data, shows too much detail. Night was not this clear, and object did not come this close.



Eyewitness sketch depicts UFO at various stages of its ascent toward aircraft. Shrouded in white glow, object had fiery ring at outer edge.



MEMBERSHIP CARD REMINDER

A few members have expressed concern over the wording on the new membership cards. Since each card is imprinted by computer with an advance expiration date, it enables the holder to claim active membership even though he fails to renew. We were aware of this drawback when we designed the cards, but we felt it would not present a serious problem. If a member decides not to renew, the card becomes invalid because the expiration date on it will not agree with our files. Any use of the card, therefore, would be a misrepresentation of fact. On the other hand, if a member renews, he automatically has a valid card for the year covered by the renewal, since our files will be updated to agree with the card as soon as we receive the renewal. This, we felt, was an important advantage to the card's design, because it eliminates a delay between the time you renew and the time you have in hand a valid membership card. Just keep in mind that you have to renew (using the form that comes with the card) to make the card good.

WHY THE COLOR CHANGES?

If it seems like we can't make up our minds what color paper to use for the newsletter, don't despair. We never intended to switch from the soft avocado we used for the May issue, but each time we go to press, our printer tells us he can't get that color. So thrice now we have substituted another color at the last minute -- an expediency that has brought some grumbling from the membership. We apologize for these changes and hope we do not have to do it again. If you like the color we are using this time, let us know. We tried to pick one that was relatively light and easy to read.

UFO PAPERS STILL AVAILABLE

Members may be interested to know that the following two papers on UFOs are still available: 1) "UFOs: An Historical Perspective," presented at the 1967 ASME Design Engineering Conference. Order from and make checks payable to: George Earley, 9 Hiram Lane, Bloomfield, Connecticut 06002. Price: \$1.00 postpaid. 2) "Science and the UFO," presented at the 1969 NAA Convention. Order from and make checks payable to: Kenneth Steinmetz, 1680 West Hove Place, Denver, Colorado 80223. Price: \$2.00 postpaid (\$3.00 foreign). When ordering either paper, please make payment in U.S. currency.

NICAP'S NEW ADDRESS

Just a reminder that the street number in NICAP's address has changed (as we announced in the June issue) from 1536 to 1522 Connecticut Avenue. Everything else is the same, including the zip code and telephone number. We would appreciate all organizations that regularly mail material to us to note this change in their records.

WHEN YOU MOVE, TELL US

As explained in the August CLIPBOARD, it is extremely important that members advise us of address changes. Foreign mail with an incorrect address is not always forwarded, even though it goes first class. Domestic mail (U.S.) goes third class and is returned, not forwarded, when the address is out-of-date. Usually, when foreign mail is returned, the new address is unknown, and we can only hold the return and hope the addressee remembers to send us his correct address. When domestic mail is returned, the Post Office provides us the new address (if it is known), but we must take the time to update our files and re-mail the envelope. This means extra cost to us and a long delay to you. So the best policy, in all cases, is to make sure we know (in advance) when you change addresses. Our computer system is working well, but it is no better than the information we give it. And our best source of information on your address is you.

ALL LAPEL PINS SHIPPED

If you recently ordered a NICAP lapel pin, you should have received it by now. We have taken delivery of the pins from the manufacturer, and all orders have been filled. Henceforth, pins will be shipped by First Class mail (Air Mail for foreign orders) on the day we receive the order.

CHECKING YOUR EXPIRATION DATE

If you are in doubt as to when your membership expires, you can always find your expiration date in the upper right corner of your address label. The only time the date might be wrong is if you send in your renewal very close to the day we prepare the label. When that happens, we do not receive the renewal in time to update the label. Subsequent labels, however, will show the correct date. If your label shows you have already expired, yet you have received no renewal notice, don't worry. You will receive one as soon as we publish the issue dated for the month you expire. We do not feel we should bill you for a renewal until you have received all issues to which you are entitled under your current membership. It is not necessary for you to renew until you receive a notice, although you may renew before then if you wish.

LAPEL PIN IDEA

Paul Cerny, our Subcommittee chairman in San Francisco, informs us that the NICAP lapel pin can easily be adapted to a clip-type tie bar for men's ties. As presently designed, the pin can serve as a tie tac without any modification, since its stem is long enough to go through several layers of cloth. However, removal of the stem allows the pin to be glued or soldered to a flat surface, such as a tie bar, which some users might prefer. Our thanks to Mr. Cerny for the helpful idea.

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Annual Membership Dues
United States, Canada and Mexico \$10.00
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Editor: Stuart Nixon



Q. How do I apply to become a NICAP field investigator?

C.G./Baltimore, Md.

A. NICAP is not presently organizing field units or recruiting field personnel. Resumption of these activities has been deferred, pending full implementation of the corporation's new administrative programs. At such time as it is again feasible to be active in this regard, new guidelines will be issued, and members will be advised.

Q. An article in the Philadelphia Inquirer states that "strange radio signals are being received by equipment left on the moon by the Apollo astronauts." Is this on the level?

K.S./Broomall, Pa.

A. The article in question -- "Are There Strangers Among Us?" -- appeared in the Inquirer's Sunday magazine for October 19, 1969. It is strictly tongue-in-cheek, with no basis in fact.

Q. I have read about a U.S. space probe that supposedly weighed less when it returned to Earth than when it was launched. Is it possible for a lightweight metal, after exposure to space, to lose weight in the Earth's gravity field until it becomes practically weightless?

B.M./Terryville, Conn.

A. Weight is a function of mass and gravity. Any body that has mass and is acted upon by gravity possesses weight, however small. It is not particularly surprising that a satellite recovered from space would weigh less than it did before launch. Structural deterioration from re-entry typically produces weight loss to an orbited payload that returns to Earth.

Q. I recently saw a movie on TV called "The Earth Versus The Flying Saucers," which named Major Donald Keyhoe in the list of credits. Was the Major involved in production of the film?

B.N./Duncanville, Texas

A. No. Major Keyhoe's name was linked to the film through his second book, Flying Saucers from Outer Space, which was used in preparation of the film's script. Because the film was science fiction rather than a documentary, Major Keyhoe protested -- unsuccessfully -- the use of his name in connection with it.

Q. I recently read in the newspaper about "tiny flashes of light" seen by the Apollo astronauts. Do you have any information on this?

L.P./Saratoga, Calif.

A. The astronauts have observed many interesting things in space, ranging from large objects at great distances to tiny particles just outside the spacecraft window. The identity of these phenomena has not always been evident, and some remain unexplained. It is doubtful, however, that there is any relation between UFOs and such anomalies as "flashes of light" or other ephemeral apparitions.

ON TAP . . .

Major Scientific Announcement on UFOs Expected Soon

Full Details in November Issue.