

# "U.F.O." REVISITED

"Unidentified Flying Objects", 1956

## Part Two: The Other Players



**Major Dewey J. Fournet Jr.**

Dewey J. Fournet Jr. is presently employed as a member of management in a large international chemical company. Like Chop, he stays quite busy with his job, and he isn't a publicity-seeker in any sense. As a matter of fact, when it comes to UFOs these days, Fournet stays very "low key." He offered me some rather profound dialogue, however, dealing with his involvement in the Air force UFO project in the early fifties. He, Chop and Ruppelt worked closely together on the official UFO investigation. And, like many other knowledgeable contributors, Fournet provided technical experience during the making of "U.F.O."

Fournet's role in the Air Force was intelligence. He served in the Army nearly four years in World War II, and for the last three years of that period, he performed intelligence work in the Army Air Force. The Air Force became a separate operation soon after the war, and Fournet's reserve commission was transferred from the Army to the Air Force. In April 1951, Fournet found himself recalled to active Air Force duty and he was sent to Air Command and Staff School until August. He was soon assigned to Intelligence at the Pentagon.

*"Shortly afterwards," he recalls, "I was assigned official Headquarters responsibility for the UFO program, serving as Monitor for Project Bluebook and handling UFO-related intelligence matters."*

Major Fournet left active service - and the UFO project - in January 1953, having racked up five-and-a-half years with the military during the two periods.

*"I was indeed a UFO skeptic when I was assigned to the program," Fournet states. "At some point during the first few months of my assignment - probably during early 1952 - I became convinced that the subject deserved serious attention."*

*"This change," he indicates, "occurred as a result of my exposure to the project files and the study of the steadily increasing volume of sighting reports". "I didn't become a 'believer' in the popular sense," he cautions, "I simply changed my posture from complete disdain of the subject to one of conviction that it needed serious study."*

Fournet, whose comments typify an intelligence officer who treated his work seriously, explained that the USAF had to learn as much as it could about the UFO phenomenon, *"if for no other reason than to be able to discern a potential Soviet attack through the background 'static' created by the deluge of UFO reports in 1952."*

Nowadays, admitting that scientific curiosity had to remain subordinated during his active USAF participation, Fournet hopes that science will take a major role in identifying UFOs. In the movie *"U.F.O."*, Fournet (who did not play himself, though he approved every line of his part in the script) shows Al Chop the Montana and Utah UFO films. In reality he, like Chop, found the films very curious. Following lab tests and witness interviews involving the Utah film, Fournet turned out to be one of the people responsible for classifying Delbert Newhouse's filmed UFOs as *"unknowns."*

Dewey Fournet has played a mostly silent role as a member of NICAP's Board of Governors since 1957. He recently attended the well-attended UFO conference held at Fort Smith, Arkansas (where, in fact, the Lorenzens of APRO kindly told him of my interest in interviewing him).

Again, thinking back, he summed up his views on the government's efforts to explain UFOs.

*"Personally, I regret the fact that the government no longer associates itself with this subject, although I feel no remorse whatsoever over the burial of the USAF project because of the extremely negative path that it generally followed after 1953. Captain Ruppelt confided to me that he could see the negativism developing following the report by the CIA Scientific Panel in early 1953, and this was the main reason for his request to be reassigned from the project."*

Fournet is keen, probably with justification, in emphasizing that the Air Force was mainly concerned with whether UFOs were a threat to national security. However, *"when the CIA Scientific Panel concluded in 1953 that no threat was evident, the Air Force philosophy seems to have undergone drastic modification with minor variations until the project was disbanded following the infamous Condon report."*

If a government agency with a less limited mission had been funded to study UFOs, according to Fournet, we might have had some of the answers to UFOs. *"Since this has never been done, I feel that it was proper for privately funded organizations to move into the vacuum."* But there are problems.

*"For example," Fournet concedes, "there are few totally serious organizations. Too many have sprung up on the fringe element, either to promote preconceived*

*philosophies and/or 'solutions' or to realize monetary windfalls. Then, the few sound organizations represent a fragmentation of resources and overlapping efforts, as a consequence of which no one is able to bring to bear all the available talent in one coordinated attack on the problem."*

Dewey Fournet - via Major Fournet - was portrayed in "U.F.O." in several scenes. Like Al Chop, he was present during the famous Washington National sightings in 1952.

*"My involvement in the Washington incidents did entail hectic days and nights, although these sightings were merely a small part of an unbelievable hectic period of eight or nine months in 1952." The advantage during the National sightings was that Fournet didn't have to depend on eyewitness accounts. He was on the scene, observing the UFOs on radar.*

*"My attention to what was going on, however, was far from undivided - long distance phone calls to handle, fighter interceptor requests to make, reporters outside to be satisfied, etc."*

At this point in reality, there arises another conflict in what "U.F.O." portrays. *"In fact, I wasn't even present when a fighter pilot reported that he was surrounded by UFOs," Fournet explains. "In reviewing the movie script, I had taken issue with Al Chop over this, and only after considerable discussion and reflection did I finally conclude that this occurred when I was on the phone, talking to Bob Ginna of 'Life' [magazine]."*

Discussing "U.F.O.", Fournet is careful to assert that the events in the movie are depicted as they are seen through the eyes of a public information officer (Chop). *"Although the facts depicted are accurate," Fournet said, "actual operations in Intelligence were materially different in many respects from the impressions the movie can leave. Al happened to be a privileged recipient of considerable information because I had convinced my superiors in 1952 that all non-sensitive UFO information should be made available to the public."*

*"Because of this," Fournet points out, "I tried to keep Al informed of all developments that I thought would provoke queries from the press and members of the public."*

*"This was the only 'open' period that I know of in the entire existence of the UFO project."*

The written interview with Dewey Fournet included a final question. Do you feel a lot of important UFO information has been and/or is still being censored by certain government agencies?

*"To the best of my knowledge," he replied in conclusion, "there has never been any censoring per se, with the exception of deleting names of witnesses and any data pertaining to radar or intercept procedures."*

*"On the other hand, I'm positive that the public was frequently fed misleading statistics and examples of reports that were atypical, intended only to make the subject appear to be entirely asinine."*

Straight talk from Dewey J. Fournet Jr., another important figure in UFO history who helped to add accuracy to "U.F.O."

Clarence Greene was well on his way to making his planned documentary a celluloid reality in late 1955.

Al Chop had given the okay to basing the film on his experiences with the official UFO investigation. Dewey Fournet had offered to lend technical advice. Arrangements were under way for Edward Ruppelt to play his own role as well as give advice. Delbert Newhouse and Nicholas Mariana were available to be interviewed on film about the unexplained UFO films they had made.

In addition, Greene had enlisted the aid of electronics engineer and radar specialist Wendell V. Swanson. Swanson had built our first radar installation at Okinawa, and later analyzed many radar-confirmed UFO reports at Wright Field during the years the movie depicts. By 1954, he was a leading engineer in the missile guidance division of a West Coast aircraft plant. Like Ruppelt, Swanson played himself in "U.F.O."

The production staff was being readied as well. Exhaustive research by screenwriter Francis Martin was being put into script form and undergoing revision. Winston Jones, a Hollywood prop man, was about to assume a more strategic position as the director of "U.F.O."

Amidst all the organizing, documenting and double-checking, however, there was still a key position to be filled. Someone had to play the role of Al Chop. That someone was found in the City Room of the now defunct "Los Angeles Examiner." His name was Tom Towers, a writer who was then a senior member of the Aviation Writers association. Towers recently recounted the events surrounding his selection for the part:

*"When 'U.F.O.' came about, Al Chop recommended me to Greene-Rouse Productions as an active newspaperman who would fill the part he played as a member of Project Bluebook. Chop was then working in the public relations department of the Douglas Aircraft Company and I knew him through my aviation writing duties. So, after a few meetings with Greene-Rouse - and a check with my editors at the 'Examiner' - I was able to get a 21-day leave to make the picture."*

*"The picture was low-budget - under \$200,000 I believe - and I furnished almost all my own wardrobe. I also furnished my own car for scenes requiring a vehicle, and the film was made in a small hideaway studio on the outskirts of Hollywood."* Towers emphasizes that production was carried out under strict secrecy for fear that other companies might try to rush a competing film into print. Or perhaps to keep reporters

away from the studio: *"I recall that my dressing room in this 'studio' was the men's room. What a put-down!"*

Tom Towers is very opinionated about his role in *"U.F.O."* He regrets that he wasn't able to give the form of portrayal he had in mind. *"This was because I was under the direction of a director who was following the script and taking orders from producers who were genuinely interested in presenting the facts. I do not offer this as a criticism, but only as my own feeling. I felt the film was too damn factual. It attracted two kinds of people: those who believed and those who did not. The broad middle mass could not have cared less - and you need that market to make a film successful at the box office."*

Tom Towers. He admits that as the highest paid performer in *"U.F.O."*, he only grossed \$1,500.

In attempting to reach his goal of making *"U.F.O."* a documentary of the highest standards, Clarence Greene sought out people and events that had the means to lend authenticity. For instance, even though the Newhouse (Utah) and Mariana (Montana) films had been shot in color - and *"U.F.O."* was filmed in glorious black and white - Greene insisted on showing the UFO movies in their original color. Therefore, every point of *"U.F.O."* contains color sections just to accommodate these films.

It might be argued that Clarence Greene left very little to chance in his selection of convincing UFO events. What better form of documentation could there be than to include an interview with a commercial airlines pilot who, with crew and passengers aboard, actually encountered a UFO while in flight? Greene located an American Airlines pilot who was still on duty with the company. His name was Capt. Willis T. Sperry (*"Doc"* Sperry, as he is known to his friends).

Sperry had made an important UFO sighting on May 29, 1950, at about 9:30 in the evening. There was unlimited visibility, and Sperry's American Airlines flight was 60 miles southwest of Washington, DC, headed for Nashville, Tennessee. His aircraft was flying at 7,500 feet. Sperry (who retired from American in April, 1971, after 32 years of service) was about to make UFO history. A UFO came into view.

*"I was turned around in my seat at the moment it appeared, getting a map out of a briefcase. My copilot called out, 'What is that - look out - it's coming right at us.'" Sperry outlined what happened next.*

*"I made an immediate right turn from a heading of approximately 230 degrees to 320 degrees."*

*"The object was a very bright shimmering blue light. We were very interested in ascertaining its distance from us."*

As Sperry leveled off in flight, the UFO appeared to stop in the sky.

*"As I look back on this incident, I recall that, at the time, it did not occur to me that I was seeing an object called a UFO. It was a very puzzling sight." By the time the UFO appeared to stop, the stewardess and eight passengers had seen the light, along with Sperry, the copilot and the flight engineer. The object remained stationary for about 30 seconds before it began moving again. "At this time," continued Sperry, "I started a left turn to keep it in view."*

*"There was a full moon in the eastern sky; the object passed between us and the moon, and I got a definite silhouette of it. It appeared cigar-shaped, with no external (characteristics) protruding from it."*

*"It circled around behind us and appeared on our right, where it again came to an apparent stop. How far was it from us? I will take a guess that it was five miles away. We really had no way of judging its distance."*

*"After about 20 to 30 seconds," Sperry relates, "it started moving eastbound, climbing at about a 30 degree angle. We watched it until it disappeared."*

For this interview, "Doc" Sperry surprised this writer with further information on his sighting - data that is not known even to veteran researchers.

*"An eastbound American Airlines DC6 between Nashville and Knoxville at 19,000 feet, headed for Washington and flown by Capt. Henry Myers, observed what appeared to be a brilliant shooting star falling eastward from the zenith."*

*"When it got to the horizon, it stopped. They watched it for seconds as it seemed to move horizontally, then it disappeared."*

*"I talked to Myers after the incident and we correlated the time of my sighting with his, and it was exactly the same time."*

Myers told Sperry that what was most interesting was the fact that "shooting stars" don't stop and change direction!

*"His aircraft was 450 nautical miles to the southwest of us," Sperry continued.*

*"I have been reluctant to report this, as he asked me at the time to please keep his sighting out of the news. He is now deceased. Capt. Henry Myers was the pilot of the Sacred Cow, which flew President Roosevelt during World War II," Sperry added. (I double-checked with Sperry to make sure he wanted this information released now; he did, and I'm glad.) Thus, Clarence Greene invited Sperry to tell his story in "U.F.O." The interview took place at L.A. International Airport. Now, twenty years later, Willis Sperry is in partnership with another man, and he's still in the "flying business," though from a different point of view. Instead of just piloting assorted aircraft, Sperry now sells them, at his Orion Aircraft Sales Company (Van Nuys, California).*

Sperry was asked if he recalls receiving any public reaction or any reaction from American Airlines after his interview in "U.F.O." appeared across the nation. *"The public reaction at that time," he indicates, "and from American Airlines, was genuine interest."*

Sperry confirms that no particular physical effects resulted among anybody on the plane during or after the UFO sighting.

*"I had no idea that this sighting would generate so much interest," he confesses. "Almost everyone seemed genuinely interested in what I saw. I had several interviews with Air Force Intelligence personnel from Washington."*

*"American Airlines expressed only interest in what I saw and never issued any censorship orders to me."*

In the Greene-Rouse movie, Sperry was asked, *"Have you ever seen any similar object, Captain?"* He replies, *"Never before or since."* He feels the same today.

*"Although I observe probably more than the average layman for any unusual phenomena, I have never seen anything since then."*

Willis Sperry. Like so many pilots, he believes UFOs are more than products of the imagination. What is your opinion of UFOs in 1976? I asked in conclusion.

*"I am very much of the opinion that there is some extraterrestrial phenomenon that has not been explained," he advises. He believes that the findings of Erich von Daniken ("Chariots of the Gods?") are very convincing.*

But Sperry bases his belief on other events - like sightings by people who know about things that fly - on the Earth and beyond.

*"The sightings by Apollo flights to the moon should convince most skeptics that this old Earth has been visited in the past as well as the present."*

Willis Sperry. In many ways, he unintentionally acts as a spokesman for many pilots whose views on UFOs are similar to his own. Willis Sperry. Another reason why "U.F.O." can truly be classified a documentary.

All the good, sincere people - all the documentation - all the time and all the planning came to fruition in May 1956, when "U.F.O." Was released by theaters around the world. Movie reviews were generally kind, often ecstatic. Columnist Louella Parsons wrote: *"Hollywood is talking about the incredible interest expressed by fans and those in the industry over the flying saucer film made by Clarence Greene and Russell Rouse with our government's knowledge. It actually shows pictures of the saucers and is attracting front page and editorial attention although what the saucers are is still a mystery."*

From *"Variety"*: *"An authentic beat! Interesting, informing and important! Gripping climax! Should register well!"*

And the movie did register well, but not as well as it should have. The documentary approach just didn't go over as attractively as the producers had planned. Why not, is anybody's guess, and the whole question is irrelevant at this point, anyway.

Greene-Rouse went to great lengths to support their motion picture with facts. Every document that would back up the story line was placed in the custody of a Los Angeles insurance company and made available for public inspection.

Among the documents on file was a weather chart which reported atmospheric conditions over Washington, DC during the July 1952 sightings. The chart reportedly proved that the radar pickup of UFOs could not be attributed to temperature inversions. Also on file was a transcript of General Samford's Pentagon press conference held after the July 26 sightings.

A wire from Al Chop was likewise on display in which he said: *"I AM TELLING THE TRUE FACTS TO THE PUBLIC FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YOUR MOTION PICTURE."*

Capt. Edward Ruppelt, USAF Reserve, also had a wire on file, and he stated: *"I HEREWITH CONFIRM THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE FACTS AND INCIDENTS DRAMATIZED IN YOUR SCREENPLAY."*

Maj. Dewey Fournet submitted a statement to Greene-Rouse, also kept on file: He certified that the part of the script dealing with his role was *"\_factually correct and true to the best of my knowledge\_"*

Delbert C. Newhouse and Nicholas Mariana each placed statements on file regarding their UFO films. The Newhouse film contained up to 12 unknowns; the Mariana film, two.

Some of the documents on file were as much of an anomaly as the UFOs. Part of an official press statement prepared by Albert Chop and Colonel Wendell Smith (Current Intelligence Office Branch, Deputy Chief of Staff, Intelligence USAF) stated that the Newhouse Utah UFO film "could not be produced under simulated conditions."

At the same time, this press statement *"was cleared by Col. Adams, Chief of Current Intelligence, and also by the Air Force Office of Information Services."* Then, the puzzler: *"At the last moment,"* the statement continued, *"this press statement was killed by Col. Teaburg of Air Force Intelligence."* Assuredly, the military works in strange ways.

However, Col. Adams sent a letter to Newhouse, telling him that his UFO film *"still remains one of the most interesting incidents we have investigated."*



The full reports of Thomas Mantell's death while chasing a UFO was also placed on view.

The Gorman case of October 1948, dramatized in "*U.F.O.*", was on file, containing information on a blinking, white light that made a pass at the Fargo, North Dakota, Air Base tower. Lt. Gorman, coming in for a landing, dove at the light and chased it for 27 minutes while several observers watched the "*dogfight*." Substantiating witness reports were on file.

Another official report, from January 1951, was in the hands of the insurance company. A Mid-Continent Airlines DC3 had taken off from Sioux City (Iowa) Airport. As it climbed for altitude, an unidentified light closed in. The object made a head-on pass at the DC3, which swerved to avoid a collision. The incident was observed by several passengers - including a colonel from Military Intelligence. The chaos ended when the UFO suddenly zoomed straight up in the air and disappeared. This event was also portrayed in the movie.

Capt. Willis Sperry's report, in affidavit form, was the final document kept on file. "*Since my experience,*" he clearly pointed out, "*I have talked to many airline pilots who have seen similar objects that absolutely cannot be identified in any known type of aircraft category due to the speed, maneuverability and shape of the object.*"

Any discussions of "*U.F.O.*" should also make mention of the theme music. The lively, often beautiful score heard throughout the movie was written by Ernest Gold (conducted by Emil Newman) and is entitled "*U.F.O.*", according to the files of the musical society, A.S.C.A.P. It's one of those scores that, if put into an LP album (as so many movie scores are these days), might be very successful.

Where can "*U.F.O.*" be found these days? Actually, the motion picture can be obtained for special showings (or by TV stations when purchased in a "*package*"). Write the following for information, and don't fear the price of rental - group showings can be arranged for around \$70.00 per viewing: UA Sixteen, 729 Seventh Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10019. "*Unidentified Flying Objects.*"/Clarence Greene.

Maybe if the two of them had made acquaintances today, instead of 1956, the movie would have the same shattering effect on audiences that recent films like "*Chariots of the Gods*" have had.

Strange, really. Way back in December '75, I wrote Clarence Greene and asked a question that was special to me. Considering how public interest in UFOs has become more heightened and sophisticated over the years, would you ever consider making another UFO film documentary? Green's reply consisted of just one word: "*Possibly.*"

One contemplates what wonders Clarence Greene might work with an updated documentary on the UFO mystery. UFO research owes him a great debt. Unfortunately, he does not owe UFO research another great film documentary.

"U.F.O." Could there ever be another like it?

"Possibly," the sound of the word makes me more hopeful. "*Possibly.*"

**\*\* THE END \*\***