

# AURORA SPACEMAN—R.I.P.?

*Eileen Buckle*

TO be really newsworthy, a UFO story has to be somewhat unique. Most UFO reports tend to be too commonplace to hit the headlines of any but the local press, but now and then (often in the "silly season"), something happens which fires the imagination of the national press and may even spread abroad. At the time of writing (early June) a welter of newscuttings and reports is being received from our correspondents in America, and from readers the world over, on account of two bizarre occurrences. Because these happened to take place simultaneously within a mere 75 miles of each other and both smacked distinctly of science fiction, they were frequently linked together in the same news items. One could only at a far stretch of the imagination associate one of these with ufology—biology would seem a more likely category, although there was once a case where giant puff balls were associated with a UFO landing.

## The "Blob"

In early May, a "pulsating, cancerous blob of matter which mysteriously oozed from the ground, defying explanation" appeared in Mrs. Marie Harris's backyard at Garland, Texas. It was "reddish with thick bubbles on top and blackish mucus inside and appeared to bleed red and purplish material." Despite several attempts to kill it, by cutting it up, spraying it with poison and crushing it, this biological curiosity merely reappeared bigger than before, increasing from the size of an oatmeal "cookie" to that of 16 oatmeal "cookies" in two weeks. By three weeks it had doubled in size yet again and a Dallas newspaper ran the story. The "Blob" promptly died. But it wasn't long before so much attention had been given to it in the news media that, for a time it is said, the public's mind was diverted thankfully from Watergate. According to a New York newsman: "It's been a long time since we've had a response like this to a story—any story."

The inevitable "outer space" theory for the origin of the "Blob" evolved, but the story has a mundane ending. Some scientists came along and identified it as a common slime mould, a lower type of fungus. According to Dr. Fannie Hurst, a botanist at Baylor University, it could have been a fuligo, a compound of spores which group into a large protoplasm which feeds on bacteria and is usually seen in the yellow, pulsating form Mrs. Harris described to newsmen (*International Herald Tribune*, June 1, 1973).

## Plan to exhume the remains of a "spaceman"

If officials of the International UFO Bureau (IUFO) obtain permission to open a grave in the village of

Aurora, Texas, whereby they hope to prove the remains to be those of a spaceman, perhaps the result would be an equal anticlimax. According to newspaper reports, Mr. Hayden Hewes, director of IUFO, has already embarked on legal means to obtain an exhumation order, after checking the grave with metal detectors and gathering facts for three months. As a result of the publicity given his project, Aurora, which has a population of about 100, has been besieged, we are told, by flying saucer enthusiasts, reporters, and the plain curious. Residents stood vigil round the grave to prevent the threatened exhumation, which the Cemetery Association is pledged to prevent.

Is there positive evidence of a "spaceship" having crashed at Aurora in 1897, and the mangled body of its pilot having been buried in the grave in question? The story is widely discounted as a hoax, yet some interesting facts have lately been uncovered to suggest there might be something in it after all. First, let us look back at the newspapers of April 19, 1897, which reported that "about 6 o'clock this morning early risers in Aurora were astonished by the sudden appearance of the airship which has been sailing through the country."

The story which appeared in all the papers was written by an Aurora cotton buyer named F. E. Hayden. It was said that the airship collided with a windmill tower and that the flying machine was shattered in a terrible explosion, scattering metallic debris over three acres, wrecking the windmill and destroying Judge Proctor's flower garden. Hayden said that the body of the pilot was badly disfigured but a prominent astronomer and Army Signal Corps officer, T. J. Weems, happened to be in Aurora and declared that the pilot was "not an inhabitant of this world. The town is full of people today who are viewing the wreck and gathering specimens of the strange metal from the debris. The pilot's funeral will take place at noon today . . ."

It has recently been stated by Frank X. Tolbert, a journalist from the *Dallas Morning News*, that on investigation, the aforementioned T. J. Weems turns out to have been the village blacksmith, and thus suspicion is cast on the truthfulness of the report. Nevertheless, UFO enthusiasts have, with some success, combed the area for tangible evidence that a crash had occurred, and urged residents of Aurora to search their homes, barns and storage places for clues to the incident. An article in *The Dallas Times Herald* written by aviation writer Bill Case, quotes the renowned Dr. J. Allen Hynek, Chairman of the Department of Astronomy at Northwestern University: "Now that scientific investigation makes it highly improbable that the report is a hoax as has been reported so many times, we feel the people of the area may be able to locate

information and physical evidence gathered and kept by their fathers and grandfathers."

### A sample of "unusual metal"

In another article by Bill Case in *The Dallas Times Herald* of May 31, it is said that two of three laboratories testing pieces of metal recovered from the site of the alleged UFO crash have reported they have found one sample "highly unusual." A physicist, Dr. Tom Gray of the North Texas State University, tested four samples which had been recovered near a well at the Brawley Oates Farm site by Dr. David Redden and a graduate student of the University using metal detectors. He said:

"Three samples have properties and content common to metals of this area, but one sample may require much more investigation."

"He said the sample looks as if it has been melted and splattered on the ground."

"However, the most intriguing thing is that it is made up primarily of iron, but is not magnetic," he explained.

"First analysis shows it to be about 75 per cent iron, and 25 per cent zinc, with some other trace elements."

"But it lacks properties common to iron, such as being magnetic," Dr. Gray said. "It is also shiny and malleable, instead of being dull and brittle like iron."

"Most alloys which contain iron are magnetic," he added.

"Dr. Gray emphasised he did not mean his comments to indicate the sample was of earthly or extraterrestrial origin. 'But its physics stir my curiosity as a scientist,' he said. [*non-earthly?*—E.D.]

"This sample may require much more investigation," he added. "If it proves to be a rather strange beast, then a great deal more study will have to be done."

"Gray said his reports will be sent to Dr. J. Allen Hynek, chief consultant for MUFON (Midwest UFO Network) and the nation's leading UFO expert at Northwestern University."

"In a second report on seven samples submitted by *Dallas Times Herald* reporters to one of the nation's largest aircraft manufacturers, scientists said 'one of the seven different pieces submitted for examination is highly unusual.'

"They said the sample also was shiny, non-magnetic and tests so far show unique properties. A spokesman said, 'We are giving this a complete run-down, including spectroscopic tests and feedback run-through in a computer bank of all known metals.'

"A preliminary report of this collection of samples should be ready Friday. A third set identical to this given to the American Aircraft Co. has been sent to the National Research Institute in Ottawa, Canada."

"We are seeking independent evaluations of the metals from as many highly reliable sources as possible under the circumstances," a MUFON spokesman told *The Times Herald* Thursday. "If the results indicate at least one of the metals is considered definitely unusual by the scientists we would then have scientific evidence on which to base a request to exhume the body of the reported UFO pilot."

"Using metal detectors, reporters and MUFON investigators have located a remote grave in the country

cemetery from which they receive the same decibel readings as they did from the sample of metal Dr. Gray and the aircraft company scientists say they find 'puzzling' and unusual."

### Surviving Eyewitness' accounts

Perhaps the most convincing evidence that an unidentified flying object crashed at Aurora in 1897 came to light as a result of the recent search for witnesses and additional information about the supposed airship crash by UFO investigators. Three witnesses to the event came forward. Charlie Stevens, aged 86, of Aurora, described to *The Times Herald* how his father, Jim Stevens, was an eyewitness to the UFO crash. Mary Evans, a 91-year-old woman, in a UPI report has this to say:

"That crash certainly caused a lot of excitement. Many people were frightened. They didn't know what to expect. That was years before we had any regular airplanes or other kind of airships. I was only about 15 at the time and had all but forgotten the incident until it appeared in the newspapers recently. We were living in Aurora at the time, but my mother and father wouldn't let me go with them when they went up to the crash site at Judge Proctor's well. When they returned home they told me how the airship had exploded. The pilot was torn up and killed in the crash. The men of the town who gathered his remains said he was a small man and buried him that same day in Aurora cemetery."

The testimony of the third witness, a "remarkably alert 98-year-old," G. C. Curley, of Lewisville, now a resident of Lewisville Nursing Home, was quoted in *The Times Herald* of June 1, 1973:

"We got the report early in Lewisville. Two friends wanted me to ride over to Aurora to see it. But I had to work. When they got back on horseback that night they told me the airship had been seen coming from the direction of Dallas the day before and had been sighted in the area. But no one knew what it was. They said it hit something near Judge Proctor's well. The airship was destroyed and the pilot in it was badly torn up. My friends said there was a big crowd of sightseers who were picking up pieces of the exploded airship. But no one could identify the metal it was made of. We didn't have metal like that in America at that time. And they said it was difficult to describe the pilot. They saw only a torn up body. They didn't say people were frightened by the crash. They couldn't understand what it was."

The three witnesses' statements thus corroborate the story written by H. E. Hayden in Dallas and Fort Worth newspapers the day after the alleged crash.

Finally, to counterbalance the evidence in favour of the airship crash with some information which puts doubts in the mind, I thought it would be of interest to quote from a letter sent to our reader, Mr. Johannes Dettwiler of Ruislip, Middlesex, in response to a written enquiry he addressed to the Aurora Town Council in January, 1972. The questions asked by Mr. Dettwiler were: Did the story about an airship carry some truth, and if so, was the pilot's burial ground preserved to this day? Has a proper investigation been undertaken into this case in the past? This was the reply, dated February 22, 1972:

"Dear Mr. Dettwiler,—This letter will probably

arrive somewhat later than you expected, seeing that your letter of January 7th didn't arrive here at Rhome until February 19th. This delay was due to the fact that your letter was evidently sent to every other post office in Texas before finally arriving here. The reason for this is the fact that Aurora is no longer large enough a town to need a post office and all mail addressed to Aurora is delivered here to Rhome.

"In answer to your first question, as to whether or not this report was true, I regret to say that the entire event was a hoax. This statement I base on the lack of evidence to support such a happening. I have read much about the event and most written accounts of what happened contain very little evidence to support the claims that an airborne craft crashed or even appeared anywhere near Aurora. More important than this however, in talking with citizens of the community who were alive then, I find that all of them report the entire thing as a hoax.

"In answer to your second question, I must admit that no record exists to support the claims that the pilot was buried in the cemetery there, and it only seems logical that if such an event did take place it would have received extra attention in the burial plot records. Also, no gravestone exists that would indicate that there was anyone unusual buried there.

"In answer to your third question, I can find no evidence of any investigation into the matter. The land on which the craft was supposed to have crashed has, however, been dug up, sifted and searched with metal detectors so many times that any strange metal would have been found by now, and none of note has been.

"The question in your mind right now is probably 'If nothing happened, why would it get so much publicity?' In answer to this question, I report that all evidence indicates that the sighting was merely a joke brought on by boredom by employees in a railroad telegraph office near here. You may have read that sightings of similar objects were reported at the same time. Further research will show that these sightings, in Iowa, were also reported by employees of a railroad telegraph office.

"I'm sorry that I am unable to provide any more information than this. You may use this as you please." (Mr. Dettwiler suggests that the writer's name should not be made public to save him receiving unnecessary follow-up letters.)

Will the case for a UFO crash remain inconclusive, like so many others? The thought occurred to me that even if the body was exhumed, it might not be possible to *prove* that it belonged to a spaceman. Perhaps there was a poor old tramp resting near Judge Proctor's well who happened to get in the way.

**Highlights of the forthcoming FSR Case Histories Supplement 16 . . .**

**The Faymonville photographs:**

A report from Belgium by SOBEPS investigators.

**Further details of the Rosedale UFO and Occupants:**

An artist's report from Brian James.

**Frightening incident on the London-Brighton road:**

by Mlle. J-M. Rivaux.

## UFO AND SPACE AGE PUBLICATIONS

**ORGONE ENERGY**, by Jerome Eden. The cosmic energy that can save our planet from destruction. Why did U.S. Government officials suppress the vital discoveries of Wilhelm Reich? **£3-20**

**FLYING SAUCERS THROUGH THE AGES**, by Paul Thomas. **£1-20, Paperback 42p**

**THE WARMINSTER MYSTERY**, by A. Shuttlewood. **£1-40, Paperback 42p**

**EARTH IN UPHEAVAL**, by Immanuel Velikovsky. **71p**

**OUR HAUNTED PLANET**, by John A. Keel. Strange truths about the earth and its mysterious inhabitants. New hard-cover edition. **£2-30**

**THE DRAGON & THE DISC**, by F. W. Holiday. An investigation into the totally fantastic. **£3-45**

**VENUSIAN HEALTH MAGIC**, by Michael X. Barton. 10 big chapters. For those who have a burning desire to leave poor health behind forever. Reprint. **£2-60**

**YOUR PART IN THE GREAT PLAN**, by Michael X. Barton. Includes special exercises and methods for protection in this present age. **£1-15**

**INVISIBLE HORIZONS**, by Vincent Gaddis. Reprinted. **65p**

**THE PSYCHIC WORLD AROUND US**, by Long John Nebel. **£2-85**

**CANADIAN UFO REPORT**, by John Magor. Illust. 40 pages of fascinating information. Professionally printed. **45p**

**SYMPOSIUM ON UFOs**. Hearings before the committee on Science and Astronautics U.S. House of Representatives in July 1968. **£4-25**

**OMEGA**, by Derek Samson. Latest publication on space contacts and inner space. Thick bumper issue. **35p**

**ALIEN CONTACT**, by Kurt Glemser. Booklet. **55p**

**INVESTIGATING UFOs**, by Larry Kettlekamp. Illust. **31p**

**IDENTIFIED FLYING SAUCERS**, by Robert Loftin. **£2-60**

**UFOs—MENACE FROM THE SKIES**, by Kurt Glemser. Illust. booklet. **65p**

**FLYING SAUCER INTELLIGENCE SPEAKS**, by Kurt Glemser. Illust. booklet. **65p**

**FLYING SAUCERS FROM BEYOND OUR DIMENSIONS**, by Kurt Glemser. Illust. booklet. **65p**

**FLYING SAUCERS AND THE INNER EARTH**, by Kurt Glemser. Illust. booklet. **65p**

**UFOs—VENTURE INTO NOWHERE**, by Dennis Stamey. Illust. booklet. **65p**

Prices include postage and packing inland. Overseas 10% extra. Any surplus credited. Lists 5p (free with orders). Dollar cheques must include 75c. bank exchange.

**Miss S. R. Stebbing, 87 Selsea Avenue, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 8SD.**