

## UFO's: A History 1948

By Loren Gross

1948: January – July

**Excerpt:** *Pages 1-12 and Footnotes mentioned on these pages*

### *Story about and around the Mantell Incident*

On New Year's Day, 1948, a New York Times editorial conceded that a review of the previous year called for a comment or two about the weird phenomenon that had become known as "flying saucers," a mess that meant a double gulp of aspirin for the military.

Referring to a Dr. C. C. Wylie's address before the American Association for the Advancement of Science a few days earlier, the Times found itself agreeing with the professor's sentiments that the confused conditions that prevailed during the previous summer were apparently due to the laxity of government agencies. The Times editorial expressed a prejudice in favor of the idea that the "saucers" were simply ordinary objects or natural processes erroneously perceived and warned authorities to handle future sightings more promptly and efficiently. This criticism was tempered, however, by a rather confident feeling that the "saucers" were now old stuff, the Times deploring any hint that the "problem" might somehow survive its apparent death, the corpse given a faint pulse by a smattering of "fanciful literature."<sup>1</sup>

The great New York paper would have been shocked if it could have foreseen the tidal wave of "fanciful literature" just over the publishing horizon. The first real ripple was the maiden issue of a magazine titled Fate that had just gone to press and was due to hit the newsstand early in the spring, a publishing event that would be the vanguard of many more magazines, books, television shows, and even motion pictures, that would excite, puzzle, inform, and too often misinform, persons the world over, and accompanying the increase in fame would be the growth of intrigue concerning the official investigation of the strange aerial objects.

The numerous inquiries made by Air Force Intelligence during 1947 had been conducted under increasing difficulties. The skills of the military experts relied on known technology and could not cope with anything that could perform like the reported flying discs. Official investigative actions pertaining to the saucer matter limped along in a condition of "organized confusion." <sup>2</sup> Moreover, uncertainty about the European "ghost rockets" (a mystery apparently a close kin to the saucer riddle) and the phenomenon's possible relationship with a potential Russia threat, were depths of strangeness that continued to bemuse penetration as more such "missile" activity was reported. On January 3rd a brief message from Finland about a fiery object in the sky over that country produced this snippet by U.S. Air Force evaluators:

"Information given here is not sufficient to establish even vague identification.

"The object seen could have been a fireball, although the length of time of observation seems unduly long. Perhaps this is subject to considerable error?" <sup>3</sup>

The actual report follows. The unusual grammar is characteristic of official teletype messages:

"Helsinki press 10th January reports observation of light phenomena vicinity Vaasa 3rd January. A brightly shining object with long tail moved west to east visible for 30 seconds. Another shining object seen Pietarsaari 5th January observed 10 seconds from north to south. Eyewitnesses state flames were ejected and grey streaks left in sky." <sup>4</sup>

The American military had these additional comments:

"Finnish press now using term flying saucer reference light phenomena. Last report was 20th December in Utsjoki northern Finland near Norwegian border.

"Evaluation press reports impossible however press claims many witnesses. May be revival of another series of alleged flying phenomena." <sup>5</sup> \*

\* *The reader is referred to the author's booklet: UFO's A History:1946: The Ghost Rockets.*

On a national level the UFO subject had not received a significant treatment in the American press since July of 1947, which was a good thing with military Intelligence in disarray over the mystery, however, abruptly the saucers were news again in a big way. Even the New York Times, with its branding of the aerial platters as ludicrous delusions only a week old, ran the news story on the saucer's reappearance under the sensational headline: PILOT KILLED IN PURSUIT OF FLYING SAUCER.

For an incident that had the experts puffing their cigarettes with chain-frequency, it had an innocent beginning.

Four P-51s of the Kentucky National Guard had been grounded at Marietta Army Air Base in Georgia on December 30, 1947. A week later some Kentucky Guardsmen volunteered to fly the four fighters back to their home base at Standiford Air Field in northern Kentucky. The leader of this ferry mission was a Captain Mantell who filed a visual flight plan for the trip north and about midday January 7, 1948, took off from Marietta in his Mustang warplane leading three other similar fighters. The flight of four P-51s formed up into two pairs and took up a northern course. The flight planned to maintain a low 4,000-foot altitude for the entire trip so nothing was done about the oxygen supply aboard the aircraft. Captain Mantell's wingman was a Lt. Hendricks. Close by were the other two P-51s piloted by a Lt. Clements and a Lt. Hammond. Support personnel returning to Standiford left Marietta Army Air Base shortly thereafter in a slow C-47 transport that had airlifted all the Guardsmen to Georgia the previous afternoon. <sup>6</sup>

At 4:15 CST the support personnel arrived at Standiford Field and were startled to learn that three of the P-51s in the ferry mission had not yet landed. Instead the aircraft were engaged in a chase of a strange object in the sky above the southwest horizon. That's all the airmen knew until 5:00 p.m. when Major Doyle of the Air National Guard unit received a phone call from Standiford Operations. The Major was stunned to find out that Captain Mantell was dead! <sup>7</sup>

Just before Captain Mantell's flight crossed the Kentucky/ Tennessee State line, a UFO alert had electrified the Blue Grass State. The Indianapolis News described the commotion thusly:

"Dozens of persons on the ground in the area of Madisonville, Ky., had been telephoning police to report seeing a circular object hovering overhead and giving off a brilliant red glow."<sup>8</sup> Civilians had notified the Kentucky State Police at 1:00 CST to report something odd soaring over Elizabethtown, Ky. Some ten minutes later phone calls from more excited witnesses came in from places like Lexington which suggested a high altitude for the UFO due to the widely scattered points reporting sightings at approximately the same time.

State police contacted military police at Fort Knox to tell them an "unusual aircraft or object, circular in appearance and over 250 feet in diameter," was speeding through the air on a westward course at a "pretty good clip" just south of the military installation. The MPs dialed the orderly room of Godman Field, Fort Knox's airstrip, to inform the commanding officer there, Colonel Hix. The clock on the wall showed 1:20 p.m. when the phone rang in Godman Tower. Chief Control Tower operator T/Sgt. Blackwell answered. A Sgt. Cook of Colonel Hix's office was on the line and he told Sgt. Blackwell about the UFO and requested a check with Flight Test Operations at Wright Field, Ohio, to determine if there was anything experimental in the air that might correlate with the reported aerial object. When contacted, a Captain Hooper at Flight Test Operations replied in the negative, saying that the only thing in the region they had was a

conventional aircraft on photo missions, however Flight Service did provide Sgt. Blackwell with more UFO reports from cities west of Fort Knox, Irvington and Owensboro, that matched the previously mentioned, sightings in regards to size and appearance.

About 15 minutes to two o'clock, Sgt. Blackwell caught sight of something in the Southern heavens and turned to the other man on in the tower, PFC S. Oliver, to ask for confirmation. Private Oliver saw it, whatever it was, but could not believe his eyes. Sgt. Blackwell urged a closer look. The Private did and became convinced he wasn't imagining things. The two enlisted men then summoned their Detachment Commander, 1st. Lt. Orner, who was working in a ground level office. Lt. Orner was just finishing discussing the UFO in question with Kentucky State Police when Sgt. Blackwell called, so the Lieutenant didn't have to be asked twice to go and take a peek at the sky enigma. Lt. Orner went quickly to the tower and peered to the southwest where there was a "small white object" apparently stationary in the sky. Using field glasses, Lt. Orner was still unable to tell if the object was generating its own light or reflecting it. Of the image, he said: "...it partially appeared as a parachute does with the bright sun shining on the top of the silk, but there also seemed to be red light around the lower portion of it."<sup>9</sup>

Downstairs at the traffic desk was the Operations Officer, a Captain Carter, who heard Lt. Orner excitedly announce over the teletalk box at 2:07 p.m. that more observers were needed in the tower. Captain Carter rushed upstairs and took his turn with the field glasses. The commotion also attracted a Mr. Duesler and a Lt. Col. E. G. Wood. The two joined the others already in the tower. This was at about 2:20 p.m.

Captain Carter said of the object: "...it appeared round and whiter than the clouds that passed in front of it and it could be seen thru circus clouds." PFC Oliver remembered that there was speculation over what the sky object could be. To him the thing appeared like: "...an ice cream cone topped with red."<sup>10</sup>

Since no one could come up with an adequate explanation, it was finally decided that the Commanding Officer of the Air Base should be summoned. The CO, Colonel Hix, quickly arrived and took a look for himself. He would say:

"It was very white and looked like an umbrella. I thought it was a celestial body. I can't account for the fact it didn't move. I just don't know what it was. It appeared about ¼ the size of the full moon and white in color. Thru the binoculars it appeared to have a red border at the bottom at times, a red border at the top at times. It remained stationary, seemingly for 1 ½ hours."<sup>11</sup>

At this time those in the tower heard Captain Mantell's four plane flight roar pass Godman Field on its way to nearby Standiford. Captain Mantell had switched from the radio channel his wingmates were using, which was "C" channel, over to "B" channel, so he could contact Standiford Tower for landing instructions. At that moment Godman Tower's radio was open to "B" channel and Mantell's voice boomed out of the loudspeaker. Colonel Hix and the others stopped their scanning of the southern horizon to listen.

Captain Carter suggested that the passing P-51s be asked to investigate the UFO. No one offered any objections, so Sgt. Blackwell grabbed the radio mike and began to talk to Mantell, telling the National Guard aviator about the strange target to the south and requesting an aerial check on it if the P-51s had the fuel. Mantell replied: "Roger I have the gas and I will take a look if you give me the correct heading and any information you have on locating it."<sup>12</sup>

Although Mantell was agreeable to a little side trip after the humdrum flight up from Georgia, his wingman, Lt. Hendricks, was very low on fuel and begged to be excused so he could land at Standiford as scheduled. Permission was granted and Lt. Hendricks broke off from the formation.

As for the other two pilots, they were unaware of what was happening. Lt. Clements could see his flight leader's lips moving but had heard nothing of what Captain Mantell had said over "B" channel, and was still ignorant as Sgt. Blackwell gave Mantell a course heading of 210 degrees. Capt. Mantell banked to the southwest and "poured on the coal," with his two bewildered wingmates, Lt. Clements and a Lt. Hammond, lagging behind. Immediately Mantell started a sharp spiraling climb at 14,000 feet to zoom straight and steep on a 220 degree heading.

About 2:45 p.m. Mantell radioed Godman Tower that he had spotted the UFO ahead of him and above, so that more climbing was necessary. One of the other pilots broke into Mantell's radio transmission to ask: "What the Hell are we looking for?"<sup>13</sup> As the trio of fighters gained altitude, the air began to thin out. Either Clements or Hammond, official records do not identify which, was overhead on the airwaves to say: "This is 15,000 feet. Let's level out."<sup>14</sup> Instead Mantell stepped on the gas, maintaining a climb heavenward at 360 miles per hour while radioing Godman Tower that: "The object is directly ahead and above me now moving about half my speed or approximately 180 miles per hour."<sup>15</sup> Godman Tower could hardly make out the dark specs of the P-51s and Lt. Col. E. G. Wood noticed that the UFO seemed to be at least a tenth the size of the full moon, a huge thing compared to the shrinking dots of the P-51s approaching it.

Mantell now felt he was no longer closing on the UFO to his reckoning. He radioed his opinion that the: "...the object was going up and forward as fast as he was... (and that he was) going to 20,000 feet and if no closer would abandon the chase."<sup>16</sup> Those are the last words uttered by Mantell heard by personnel in the tower that can be found in Air Force files. Captain Carter is the reputed listener.

Mantell's radio transmissions were being piped north by Godman Field to various Air Force Commands, an unusual procedure. Many Air Force personnel eavesdropped on the excited voices, which at times were mixed in an incoherent babble. Some said they discerned: "I'm closing in on the object. It's gigantic and it's metallic."<sup>17</sup>

Another radio transmission rarely quoted and of uncertain origin states that Mantell said the UFO would "rest" and then put on a "burst of speed." This enabled the UFO to stay ahead of his straining P-51. If true, it would explain why Mantell kept attempting to close the distance since he was being "lured" on ever upward.<sup>18</sup>

Lt. Clements and Lt. Hammond grew very concerned. They looked down and recognized the city of Bowling Green which indicated the extent their little side trip was assuming. Passing 22,500 feet altitude the pilots found breathing very difficult. Lt. Hammond just happened to be equipped with an oxygen mask because he preferred the mask radio mike to a throat mike, however there was little oxygen in the system. Lt. Clements, like Mantell, had no oxygen at all and 20,000 feet was the danger limit for flying without breathable air. Lt. Clements urged an end to the pursuit. Mantell answered back, asking that they chance a climb to 25,000 feet, there level off for 10 minutes, and only then start down. This didn't sit well with Lt. Clements who, with Lt. Hammond in agreement, nosed back down when they reached 23,000 feet. Mantell said something but his transmission was garbled indicating that brain-numbing anoxia (lack of oxygen in the blood) may have already started to take its toll of the flight leader's judgment. As Lt. Clements dived, he glanced back at Mantell's P-51 still climbing at full power toward a shiny spot in the sky near the sun.

As Lt. Hammond and Lt. Clements approached Godman Tower at 3:20 p.m. on their way back, they radioed that the UFO: "... appeared like the reflection of sunlight on an airplane canopy."<sup>19</sup> The four to midnight Control Tower crew began to arrive at this time and swing shift supervisor, Captain A. T. Jehli, was briefed that a "disc," or balloon, or some sort of strange object, witnessed by many personnel, including the CO, Colonel Hix, was being hunted down by military aircraft.

Lt. Clements and Lt. Hammond landed at Standiford where the former refueled and took on supply of oxygen, lifting off again at 4:05 p.m. Setting his P-51 on the original 210 degree course, he requested the latest information from Godman and was informed that the base weather station theodolite had lost track of the mysterious UFO behind some clouds. Zooming to 33,000 feet, Lt. Clements raced southwest for 100 miles trying over and over to raise Mantell on the radio. Reaching the Bowling Green area he contacted Godman Tower and reported no visual confirmation of anything strange in the atmosphere. There was no sign of Mantell's aircraft either. What had happened to Mantell?

A Mr. W. C. Mayos, living on Lake Spring Road outside Franklin, Ky., heard an odd roaring at 3:15 p.m. that sounded like an aircraft engine under great stress. He put his head back and gazed up into the azure where he saw a P-51 circling in a lazy fashion. The plane was so high he could hardly make it out. One expert would later surmise that Mantell had blacked out, and was close to death having succumbed to suffocation. On the ground, Mr. Mayos watched in fascination as Mantell's plane faltered, slipping into a dive, the aircraft doing a slow rotation on the way down. At full throttle the P-51 gained more and more velocity in its earthward plunge. The scream of the dive increased as the pursuit craft's speed approached the sound barrier. About half way to the ground the stress was too much as the P-51 tore apart with a loud boom. The tail section and one wing ripped free.

A Mrs. C. Phillips, a resident of a farmhouse just outside the city of Franklin, bolted from her chair in her living room and rushed to the window at the sound of the explosion. She watched in horror as a big mass of metal slammed to earth just 200 yards away.

Witnesses dragged Mantell's body from the wreck. The pilot's shattered wristwatch had jammed to a stop at 3:18 p.m. Patrolman J. Walker of the Franklin Police Department rushed to the scene and took charge.

It took over an hour for word of Mantell's fate to reach Standiford Field, at which time news of the tragedy was relayed to Maxwell Flight Service and the rest of Mantell's unit. Air Force investigators immediately arranged for a flight to Bowling Green where, when they arrived, a State highway patrol car whisked them to the crash site five miles southwest of Franklin. Witnesses were rounded up and questioned while their memories were still fresh. It was now 6:15 p.m. At this stage there was no way of knowing if Mantell had met death by accident or by a hostile act. Was Mantell "shot down?"

A Lt. Col. J. F. Brady who drew up the report on the Mantell crash leaked a little emotion in an otherwise straight-laced summary with the following line: "So much for the accident— now hold on to your hat!"<sup>20</sup> What he was referring to were some events reported just after the crash at Franklin. About 230 miles northeast of the site of Mantell's wrecked plane and some 150 miles northeast of Godman Field, two other UFO incidents were to cause some excitement that evening.

Near Wilmington, Ohio, is the Clinton County Air Base. At 7:35 p.m., on January 7th, the same day as the Mantell UFO chase, a S/Sgt. J. P. Haag was walking near the Clinton Control Tower when he became aware of an unfamiliar point of light in the southwest. He checked the weather and noted a low velocity southwest wind was blowing. The sky to the southwest was overcast, but right overhead it was clear of clouds. He guessed the overcast height at 5,000 feet and the cloud layer some 1,000 feet thick. Seen with the naked eye the puzzling light appeared to be about five miles away and between 15,000 to 20,000 feet high. It looked to be stationary and appeared to be casting off a crimson glow that resembled a plane on fire. This possibility sent him scurrying to the control tower. Upon reaching the control room, atop the tower, he used field glasses to take a better look at the red light. A careful observation convinced him the phenomenon was not a comet or a meteor; furthermore, the light was now "dancing," an odd straight up and down motion that occurred some three to four times. A color change from red to green, when the thing moved, was also discernible. After it stopped "bouncing" the light sped to the southwest on a

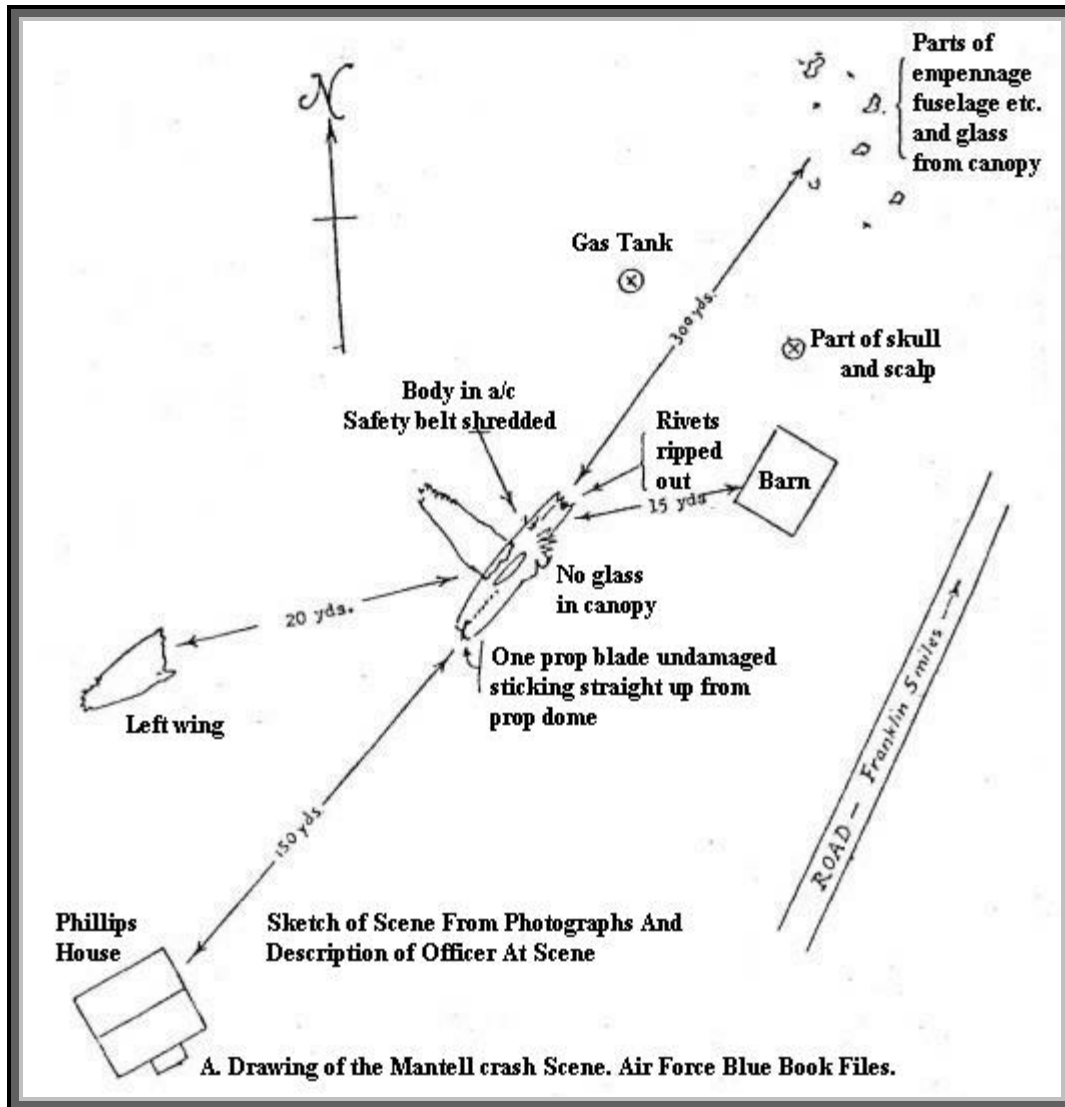
course of 210 degrees. It was screened momentarily by clouds but the phenomenon could still be discerned since the rays of light it threw off were strong enough to penetrate the overcast. It paused a few moments on its way to the southwest and then it fled quickly over the horizon at 7:55 p.m. No sound was heard.

A Cpl. J. H. Hudson, on duty in the control tower, also watched with binoculars and in a signed affidavit detailed his own version of the UFO's appearance and motion. He estimated, for example, the UFO's nearest approach at four miles and stated that the UFO was white in color when first sighted, but soon changed to a red hue. No shape was discernible until the UFO suddenly dropped down, at which time it assumed a cone-shape with the point-end down. The dimensions of the object appeared to be some 40 X 100 feet. When it ascended, the UFO reversed its position to a point-end up, or "pyramid" configuration. The shifts of position left a green mist trailing behind. The whole UFO seemed to have a glowing aura of burning light. There was no argument among the witnesses as to the fast elevator-type motion of the UFO. One witness compared the sight to a flare being violently tossed about by a thermal air current. When compared to the stars, there was a decided difference, the object brighter and of a distant hue.

T/Sgt. Le Roy Ziegler on duty in the tower basically agreed with the other, witnesses calling the UFO a "circular thing, bright and star-like, only bigger than a star."<sup>21</sup> Not sure of its exact size, he still felt it to be very large. He said he noticed red and yellow colors. Surprised at the motion he said that it: "... seemed to go up and down and side to side at what seemed to be very great speed."<sup>22</sup> He also saw a faint exhaust trail which was visible only when the UFO was moving.

Since 4:35 p.m. news of the Mantell crash had flashed over the communications network in the Kentucky/Ohio region. Control tower personnel all over were eavesdropping on official exchanges of information about the disaster. At 7:45 p.m. Patterson Operations was on the air to Olmstead Flight Service discussing the Mantell case when two air traffic observers at Lockborune Tower at Columbus, Ohio, to the southwest of Clinton, interrupted to say that something strange had appeared near their airbase and had just left the area. Godman Tower, wide-awake after the events of the afternoon, heard that remark and intervened itself over the interphone to announce they now had visual contact with something too.





The Lockbourne story:

A R. L. Stirr spotted what he thought to be an emergency flare to the southwest seemingly hovering over the Lockbourne Power Plant. The light also caught the eye of a civilian technician by the name of Boudreaux at about 7:15 p.m. It seemed odd and Boudreaux observed it carefully for 15 minutes. The thing left "bluish streaks" to one side and briefly vanished while an aircraft had landed. The VHF/DF operator at the end of the one runway saw the thing too and listed its first appearance as 7:25 p.m. Prior to its departure, the thing was noticed to have dropped very close to the ground at a local geographical feature known as Commercial Point, hovering there for about ten seconds and then shooting skyward back to its original altitude where it leveled off and became obscured by some clouds in the overcast, but not before taking up a heading of 120 degrees as its departure course. The speed of the UFO was estimated to have reached 500 miles per hour. It was as silent as a night hawk. The color of the thing was amber and the glow was so intense it tended to block out the object's profile. An exhaust trail of amber hue was left behind when the UFO moved forward.

Another person who rushed to the Lockbourne Tower was F. Eiseler, an airways operator, an official that kept tabs on the weather and position reports of aircraft. When the light had vanished momentarily and reappeared, Eiseler saw it at its new position some 15 degrees above the horizon in the southwest. It was his opinion that the UFO was outshining any of the stars being equal to a runway light in brilliance. Moreover, he said he saw the "tail," a thin ruddy red wisp that

changed to an amber-yellow at various times. The UFO seemed round and shifted in an elliptical clockwise course. He agreed that it seemed to be five miles away.

All of the Lockbourne observers were mystified because the cloudy overcast prohibited the possibility any celestial body was responsible for the light.<sup>23</sup>

Their concern gained credibility when the voice of Air Force Flight #9944 boomed out of the radio speaker at Lockbourne Tower at 7:53 p.m. A C-45 over Columbus, cruising at 5,000 feet, reported something odd. Air Force records state:

"Lt. C. W. Thomas and Lt. Sims 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 3,000 feet. It seemed stationary. 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."<sup>24</sup>

Helping to add to the strangeness of the episode was a report from another aircraft in the same area which was in the landing pattern for the airstrip. The aircraft in question was piloted by a Captain McGee who told authorities:

"At about 7:25 p.m. on January 7, 1948, I turned to runway 23 for a overhead approach at traffic altitude (1,800 feet). Just prior to break away, I saw a very bright white southwest of the field. I began my 360 degree approach. It struck me that the light was very unusual and it was not on the ground so I looked in its direction again from my base leg position. It appeared the same as though it were about 3,000 feet in the air. While on my approach it flashed on and off again immediately."<sup>25</sup>

After deplaning Captain McGee went to Lockbourne Operations where he heard of the Eisele and Boudreaux sightings. He then contacted the two men in the tower and was told the light had reappeared after his C-45 had set down. McGee went to the door and looked out. Sure enough the light was there.

Besides the pair of aerial sightings, the most damning testimony to a conventional explanation was that of the previously mentioned A. Pickering, Lockbourne's VHF/DF operator.

His affidavit tells us that the UFO made three 360 degree turns and then glided over to another position where it resumed its circling. Each orbit took half a minute and compassed a couple of miles in diameter. When the UFO shifted to a new position, it left a visible trail that streamed behind approximately five times the object's diameter which was believed to be the size of a C-47 transport. Now a critical element in these accounts is the estimates of distance between the observers and the UFO. Without reference points and not having the slightest idea of what was being observed, any guesses would be highly inaccurate. This bears heavily on a possible celestial explanation, to say nothing of an aerial flare, a reflection, or an aircraft. Subsequent interviews, long after the dust had settled on this case, tend to resolve the distance question and contribute to the high strangeness of the UFO incident.

Pickering granted an interview in 1977 and dwelled at some length on his experiences that January evening in 1948. He described his duties, one of which was the monitoring of electronic devices in a small shack way out at the end of one of the runways at Lockbourne. He recalled the blackness that night due to the heavy overcast that lay like a dense lid over the airfield some 1,200 feet high, the ebony effect increased by the need to work without interior lighting that would only bleach out the phosphorescence glow of the dials and meters on his VHF/DF equipment. With the limited air traffic that night due to the poor weather, Pickering laid down to rest on a cot and idly



gazed up through a skylight at the black swirling vapor of the overcast some 1,000 feet above. Suddenly to his astonishment something huge, round, and a glowing red color, popped through the cloud ceiling almost directly overhead. Instantly he feared a falling, flaming aircraft. Reflexes had him up off the cot at once and fumbling with his radio mike, but Lockbourne Tower was alert and a voice abruptly yelled over the "swank box" the exclamation: "What the Hell is that?"<sup>26</sup> Within seconds Pickering realized that no aircraft was in trouble but that something very weird was out there in the darkness. The "thing" hovered, then it began to maneuver in the manner previously described. Pickering watched the show with gooseberry eyes.<sup>27</sup>

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.

When the UFO entered the overcast for a time, Pickering felt it may have wanted to hide from an aircraft that had just arrived in the area.<sup>28</sup>

Officially it was later suggested that the planet Venus had danced over Columbus that night because: "...it is incredible that it could have been anything else."<sup>29</sup>

By this time official apprehensions surfaced. Air Force files reveal that investigative agents: "...contacted Olmstead Flight Service Center and gave them all the information available to deliver to the Air Defense Command at Mitchell Field, Hemstead, New York.

"Later we received a call from St. Louis, Missouri, Tower advising that a great ball of light was passing directly overhead -- Scott Tower also verified this."<sup>30</sup>

"We then received a call from Air Defense Command through Olmstead Flight Center advising us to alert Coffeerville, Kansas, Ft. Smith, Arkansas, and Kansas City, Missouri, and that they had plotted the object as moving WSW at 250 miles per hour."<sup>31</sup>

In addition an unofficial source was referred to:

"St. Louis ATC advised of an article printed in the Edwardsville Intelligencer, Edwardsville, Ill., describing an object over the town at 0720 of aluminum appearance without 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. . ." <sup>32</sup>

The forementioned Lt. Col. Brady who was typing out this document added: "...and you can bet he (the editor) was no more confused than I am at this moment."<sup>33</sup>

Hopes for an easy solution were slim, it seemed. Any information of possible use was pounced on. An article in the local newspaper about the recent appearance of a comet was given a mention and then discarded. A better lead was provided by the Maxwell Flight Service that learned: "...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 SSE, at a speed of 10 miles per hour at 25,000 feet. This was observed between 1630 and 1645 (4:30 - 4:45)."<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, a resident of Madisonville, Ky., had contacted Godman AFB to say that he had used an eight inch Finch telescope to inspect a cone-shaped object over the city he estimated was a 100 feet from top to bottom and some 43 feet across, sailing southwest at a slow 10 miles per hour at 20,000 feet altitude. The time was given as 1:10 p.m. (There may have been some confusion with Dr. Seyfert's report.)"<sup>35</sup>

As it turned out the very first wire story on the incident ignored balloons and leaned toward a planetary rescue of officialdom's peace of mind. According to the Associated Press dispatch dated January 7th, personnel at Godman Field, including the base commander, Colonel Hix, had seen a "UFO," quoting the CO as saying: "It was to the south and near the sun, very white and looked like an umbrella."<sup>36</sup>. Another quote attributed to an unnamed Army officer stated that the UFO "didn't move."<sup>37</sup>

Annexed to the story was a statement by a University of Louisville professor, Dr. W. L. Moore, who had made it known the planet Venus was near the sun when the UFO was reported.<sup>38</sup>

With so many sightings of a bright light low in the southwest, Venus was a prime candidate. On the other hand, the "cone-shaped" descriptions lend themselves to a balloon explanation but such plastic giants were not well known at the time.

Pickering, like the other witnesses at Clinton, was ordered to Wright-Patterson Air Force Intelligence headquarters for intensive questioning. This happened to Pickering three times. Agents at Dayton asked him questions in relays and often used tricks to trip him up. Hassles often developed over minor discrepancies and when it was all over, Pickering was warned not to discuss the UFO incident with anyone. Since he was in the Civil Service at the time, he meekly complied with the imposed censorship.<sup>39</sup>

It goes without saying there was a startling alternative to balloons or comets. Perhaps a super machine had lurched about the heavens that day, ducking in and out of the clouds, a hostile device of a mysterious origin?

The next day a note of caution was evident in a wire service story:

"National Guard Headquarters emphasized, however, that in its opinion there was no connection between the plane's explosion and the flying object it was seeking to investigate.

"Meanwhile, Godman Field Commanding Officer, Col. F. Hix, revealed a group of Louisville scientists will join him in watching the skies for a possible reappearance of the 'flying saucers' reported over Kentucky Wednesday."<sup>40</sup>

And watch they did, for at least six more months when another UFO paid a visit, but that is an August story and will not be discussed here.

#### Mantell Portion of 1948 History Footnotes

Pp 1-12

1. New York Times. 1 January 48. Editorial page.
2. Ruppelt, Edward J. *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1956] p46.
3. Air Force BLUE BOOK file #99.
4. "Restricted Correspondence." From: USMILATTACHE AMLEGATION, Helsinki, Finland, sqd Burrill. To: Dir of Intelligence, GSUSA, Washington 25, D.C. 13 January 48. Air Force BLUE BOOK files.
5. Air Force BLUE BOOK files #99 and #100.

6. Unless otherwise stated, all references concerning the events of January 7th are to be found in Air Force BLUE BOOK files: #30, #32, #33, #33A, #33B, 33C, #33D, #33E, #33F, #48A, #48B, #48C, and 48D. Further footnotes on this case will given in a shorter form: Air Force BLUE BOOK files: "Events of January 7th, #30 - 48D."
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8. Feola, Eloise. "Fighter Pilot Is Killed After He Chases A UFO." (Indianapolis, Indiana) Indianapolis News. 15 March 67. p.1.
9. Air Force BLUE BOOK files: "Events of January 7th, #30-48D."
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30. Air Force BLUE BOOK files: "Events of January 7th, #30-48D."
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32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Air Force BLUE BOOK file #33G.
36. Air Force BLUE BOOK files: "Events of January 7th, #30-48D."
37. Ibid.
38. Fort Knox, Kentucky. 7 January 48. (AP)
39. "New Information on the Mantell Case." APRO Bulletin. July 1977. pp.5-7.
40. Fort Knox, Kentucky. 8 January 48. (INS)