

ASTRONAUTS & UFOs

Since the "astronaut UFO" genre is one of the main pillars of UFO evidence, this study claiming that the entire set of cases is invalid will obviously be received with skepticism and criticism from UFO buffs. Rational objections and arguments will be printed and answered in a subsequent issue of this magazine. Critics are urged to raise specific points not addressed in the study, or to cite and document facts which might modify or invalidate conclusions in the study.

-- The Whole Story!

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"Space World" magazine

Space flight has opened many mysteries. True, scientists prefer to list the puzzles solved and unknowns discovered, but as men venture beyond the earth it is inevitable that new mysteries will be encountered.

Somewhere out there, many observers believe, are intelligent species with technological civilizations far more advanced than that of Earth. Perhaps they are sending us radio signals we have not recognized. Perhaps they have left artifacts of past visits for us to find. Perhaps they are even now keeping the earth under surveillance.

If they are out there, someday we will meet them. As illustrated in science fiction, this meeting will probably occur in space.

Have such meetings already occurred? Have astronauts and cosmonauts already seen alien spacecraft? The UFO literature is full of tales of "space UFOs". Are any of them valid? What can a careful study reveal?

Hardly a UFO book or movie is complete without the standard assertion that "astronauts have seen UFOs too". While critics may attack the character or intelligence of many UFO witnesses, they cannot use these tactics on American and Russian space pilots. Where UFO photographs can be accused of distortion and forgery, photographs taken by astronauts and processed by NASA must be of the highest trustworthiness. Hence, most UFO scholars consider the family of astronaut UFO sightings to be one of the strongest bodies of evidence in the past thirty years.

The best of these cases include astronaut James McDivitt's sighting of an "unidentified spacecraft" near his Gemini-4 space capsule in 1965, a curious photo of a pair of UFOs with glowing propulsion fields taken by the Gemini-7 astronauts, reports of nearby objects from X-15 and Mercury spacecraft, tales of how the 1968-1969 Apollo moon shots were followed by UFOs on their way to the moon, and reports and photographs of objects seen by crewmen on the Skylab space station. Last year, the National Inves-

tigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) selected the "McDivitt UFO" photo as one of the four best UFO photos ever taken.

The "astronaut UFO" sightings must appeal to many serious researchers for a number of reasons. The witnesses and the photographs are unimpeachable as to honesty and authenticity. The conditions of the space missions can be calculated and recorded, and every object near the spacecraft can be determined by consulting the giant space radars of the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD), headquartered inside Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado. Extensive crew debriefings and on-board tape recorder transcripts may be available to obtain direct eyewitness testimony.

With all these facts and assumptions in mind, and mindful of the numerous 'unsolved' cases which might tell much about the UFO phenomenon, I began a special research program into this particular body of evidence. As an aerospace writer, historian, and researcher, I felt that my experience with astronautics, computers, Air

Force operations, and space missions might give me new insights into this most puzzling series of cases. I was not disappointed, and my results were startling.

The basic truths behind these sightings seems lately to have gathered an accretion of exaggeration, confusion, and outright fiction. The 1968 "Condon Report" on UFOs (conducted by the University of Colorado for the U.S. Air Force) found itself unable to penetrate three specific cases, which the analyst felt were a "challenge" to any serious investigator. Stories later began circulating about sightings of lunar surface lights and structures, and the discovery of artifacts on the moon, about near approaches of structured objects, and about attempts at radio contact between Apollo capsules and UFOs. Recent books on UFOs give lists of astronaut sightings which are out of numeric sequence, misdated, misspelled, and otherwise distorted.

My research has revealed a few examples of deliberate photo forgeries by UFO buffs or opportunistic authors. My investigations in the NASA

archives has revealed cases where UFO researchers withheld certain information freely given them by NASA officials, information which would have clearly explained many cases which the authors wanted to appear mysterious. So the time has come to take a new look at this whole phenomenon. What is the truth about "astronaut UFOs"?

The first step in any research might be with the Condon report, thought by many to have been commissioned as a "whitewash" of the UFO phenomenon. UFO enthusiasts are accustomed to hearing harsh criticism of almost all aspects of this study, but my own objections to the "astronaut UFO" section is from a novel angle.

My own research suggests that the Condon investigator, far from being the best man for the job, was clearly unqualified to evaluate the difficult cases. He was not familiar with the terminology of space flight or the basics of orbital flight trajectories, as I am. As a result, he ignored possible explanations while incorrectly eliminating other possible answers.

In other words, far from being a coverup, this chapter of the Condon report is superficial. It is entirely worthless as an endorsement of the unexplained and unexplainable nature of several astronaut sightings which I will discuss. I can prove this remarkable assertion to any investigator serious enough to consider all the evidence, much of which has never before been published.

The Condon report does give some details about the environment of astronaut sightings, but even here does not go far enough. More stress needs to be put on the visual and photographic limitations of space flight: the windows are far smaller than popularly realized (about half the size of this open magazine at arm's length), and for many years were subject to obscuration and smudging by seepage of sealant and by contamination by rocket fuel. At various points in the flight, the spacecraft was surrounded by clouds of debris (leaking fuel, dumped water, chipping paint, fraying insulation, ejected equipment, and more), while the inside of the weightless cabin was usually plagued with floating particles of dust and debris which often passed in front of cameras pointing out windows. Other satellites should have been visible, since few people realize that on any clear night

Despite the persistent rumors of 'secret space pictures', all photographs taken by NASA in space are in the public domain. That is, any picture taken by an astronaut or an earth resources satellite is available to anyone who wants to pay for it.

There are four tiers of photograph availability, but two are reserved for newsmen only. The structure is as follows:

A. The most popular space photographs taken are lithographed for general free distribution to anyone who asks for them. Several dozen new photographs are added to this list every year. Cost to NASA is a few cents per print.

B. The NASA Public Information Offices at various centers and at headquarters prints glossy photographs of timely news stories for distribution to the news media. Hundreds of these photographs are released every year, but only certified newsmen can receive them for free. PAO assigns numbers such as 72-H-395 (i.e., 1972 b&w #395).

C. Many thousands of other photographs and drawings may be of interest to the news media and are therefore filed at public information offices, but stock copies are not kept. Each request must be filled by actual photo lab orders, which costs NASA about one dollar per photograph.

D. Any citizen who wants copies of any photograph listed in 'B' or 'C' above can get it, but it is entirely reasonable for NASA to expect him to pay for it. News bureau photographs, along with all other flight photography—stills and movies—can be ordered from Bara Studios, P.O. Box 486, Bladensburg, MD 20710. The cost of any photograph ordered by stock number is several dollars apiece. Any cross-referencing or researching will also cost money.

Some ground photographs of astronaut accidents, autopsies, and medical examinations are not releasable for publication. On several Gemini flights, special photographic experiments were undertaken for the DoD, but these involved special cameras and exclusively earth surface targets. In neither case would it be possible to withhold any hypothetical UFO photographs from the public.

Astronaut photographs are indexed by a code which specifies year taken and frame number. S66-12387, for example, would be a NASA photo (not necessarily a space photo) taken in 1966. Beginning with Apollo, space photos were also indexed with a mission code, roll number and frame number (neither of which were repeated on later flights). For example, AS16-108-13005 was taken on the Apollo-16 flight, with the 108th roll of the Apollo project flight film. Movie film is indexed per magazine with similar numbers.

Every photograph ever taken by American astronauts for NASA is on file with Bara Studios and can be obtained by anyone willing to pay for them. Writers who produce 'secret NASA UFO photographs' which they claim are being hidden from the American public are doing a gross disservice to one of the most open and cooperative public information offices of any federal agency.

an observer on Earth can see a number of orbiting objects with only half an effort. Out of this "background noise", can we separate the "signal" which will indicate the existence of UFOs?

These problems all are of interest to space officials, and numerous studies have been made. Fragments might imply a structural failure (a rescue ship was almost sent to Skylab-3 because of the crew's observation of leaking fuel droplets). Debris inside the cabin can irritate eyes and damage the electronic gear behind the instrument panels. Other satellites might be dangerous due to the potential of collision or they might be of intelligence interest if they are from some other nation. Therefore, any mysterious space sighting might as easily be vital for

NASA to know about as it might be a true UFO. Careful investigations are called for.

What are some of the most famous cases, and what are the facts? Interpretations may differ, but productive thinking can only be done when all the information is at hand. Some of it is hard to find or understand; other information, available to some researchers, may have been deliberately withheld. Some classical cases may consist of made-up fantasies. You can soon judge for yourself.

Has there been any attempt to "cover up" space sightings (a common plea when no evidence is available, even in this age of sieve-like government secrecy)? Are astronauts "muzzled" about UFOs? Has fifteen



The "McDivitt UFO", prize-winning astronaut photograph taken on Gemini-4. Actually, McDivitt explained later after the flight that the sun was coming across the window as the spacecraft rolled, the sun rays struck a metal bolt, causing the flares in the camera lens'.
NASA photo 65-H-1013.

years of manned spaceflight uncovered any evidence at all which even remotely suggests that Earth is being visited and observed by advanced spaceships from another world? Let's look at the evidence.

On June 3, 1965, rookie astronauts Jim McDivitt and Ed White blasted off from Cape Kennedy (now again Cape Canaveral), squeezed into their Gemini-4 capsule. The two youngest-ever American spacemen were to spend four days in orbit, tripling the previous US record. They would be the first American space crewmen to have time to sightsee in space, once major experiments like a booster rendezvous and a walk in space were completed.

Approximately thirty hours into the flight (while White was asleep), McDivitt reported that he had seen an object in space near his space capsule. It appeared to be cylindrical with "an arm sticking out", possibly on a collision course. Interested NASA officials in Houston asked NORAD which other space satellites were near Gemini-4 at the time of the sighting, and NORAD came up with a list of about a dozen objects. All of them were pieces of tiny debris or small scientific satellites except one: the giant, "winged" meteor satellite, Pegasus-2. It seemed to fit the description radioed down by McDivitt, so

NASA announced that the object had been identified.

But Pegasus had been more than a thousand miles away, and McDivitt clearly saw an object much closer, much more detailed, and in an orbit very close to his own ("Collision course" to a pilot means that the relative angle of sight is unchanging, which would not be the case for any satellite crossing McDivitt's orbit). The object became a UFO when nobody could identify it. It has remained a UFO up until today, but not any longer.

McDivitt's hasty attempt to take a photograph of the object through his smeared window was apparently fruitless, since the object's motion combined with the slow stabilization spin of the spaceship carried it into the glare of the sun after about 30 seconds. The astronaut later recounted how he went through all the films of the flight (every roll of film is accounted for on a flight manifest, so they do not disappear) and found many overexposed or blank. This mission had been the first flight in which space photography was a major experiment, and the glaring sunlight of space had invalidated many pre-flight exposure settings. McDivitt did not find anything which looked like "his UFO".

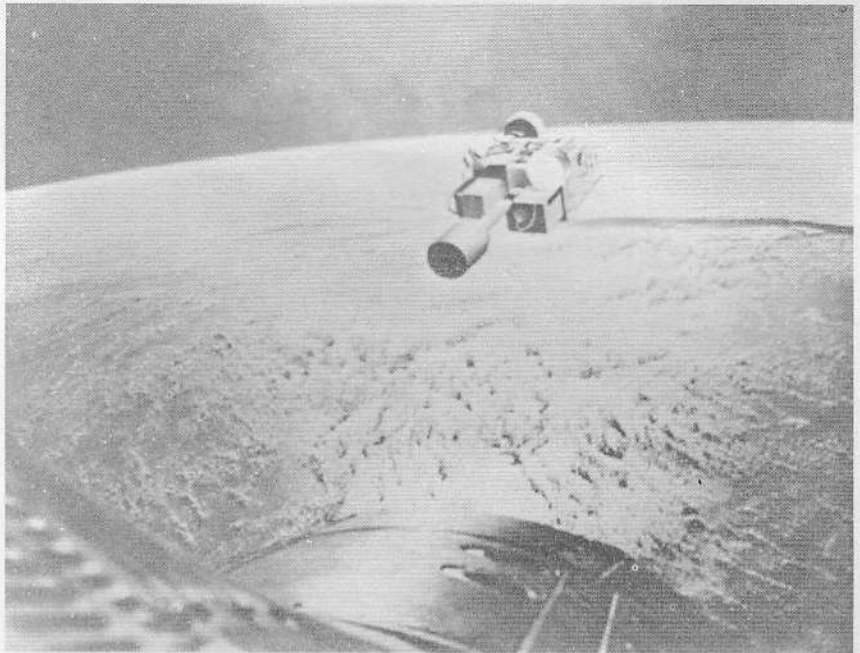
What was it he saw? Why has it become such a prominent UFO case?

And if the pictures did not turn out, where did NICAP get its "top four" photograph (which shows, not a winged cylinder, but a smeared blob)? We can answer these questions at last.

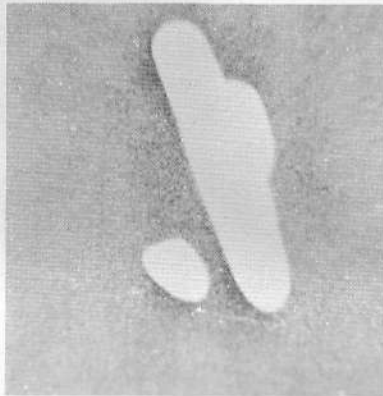
The first hint as to the true identity of this space UFO can be found in McDivitt's own words, given at a press conference a week after the flight when his memory was fresh: "It looked a lot like an upper stage of a booster". Gemini does have a booster just like it, and McDivitt had been carrying out maneuvers near it early in the flight. Why didn't the list from NORAD include the Gemini-4 booster rocket?

NORAD had been tracking the objects, but NASA had not asked about Gemini-4 and its own associated debris—it had asked about Gemini-4 and any other *earlier* satellites. Anyone familiar with computerized information systems (one of my professional specialties) can guess what happened: the computer was given a "query" which told it to compare Gemini-4 with the other satellites. The computer never knew where the Gemini booster was relative to the spacecraft, since it had not been asked. McDivitt had been visually tracking the thirty foot long cylinder at a range of only 75 miles a few hours earlier, but this large satellite never made the "NORAD list" because

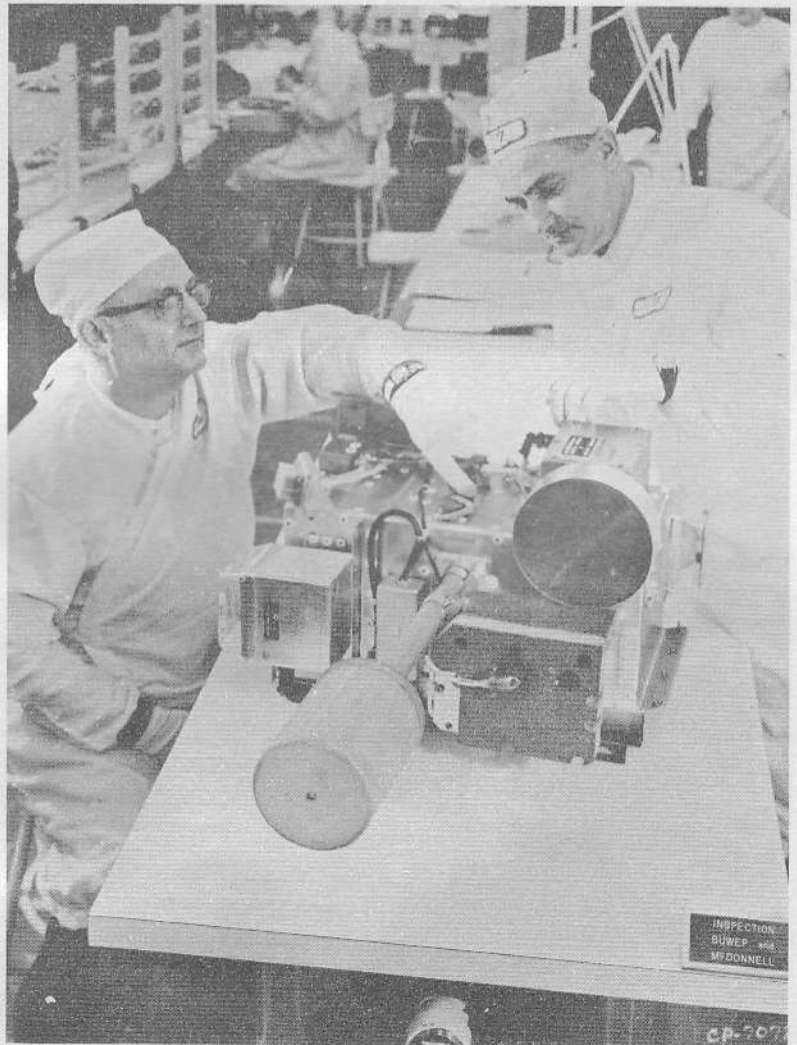
Artist's rendition of the astronauts' view of the rendezvous evaluation pod after it has been jettisoned from the Gemini adaptor section. Gemini radar locked on to evaluation pod.



Scott Carpenter took this photo of a subsatellite balloon jettisoned by his Mercury-7 capsule in 1963. Balloon did not inflate and looked like a limp sleeve. Compare with photo S65-45672. UFO researcher George Fawcett has convinced many that this actually shows a "classical domed UFO" accompanied by smaller scout craft; fictional statements by astronaut Carpenter have been quoted.



Actual Gemini-5 photo (blowup of S65-45672) of the pod at a range of several hundred feet. The glare and the graininess of the enlarged image give the subsatellite a "blob" appearance and even make it look like two objects. The potato-shaped grey blob is the pod's insulation blanket.



Space engineers at Cape Kennedy prepare the "rendezvous evaluation pod" sub-satellite for a joint flight with the Gemini-5 spacecraft in 1965.

This sequence of pictures illustrates the problem of identifying photographs of objects in the glare of space.



Gemini-4 photo of 30-foot long Titan booster rocket nearby in orbit; Fuzziness (a familiar space photo effect) is due to magnification. McDivitt later saw the booster again but failed to recognize it, giving rise to the most impressive UFO case in history. NASA S-65-35452.

nobody thought to ask about it! The list was incomplete!

What we do know from the complete Gemini-4 transcripts (including the *on-board* tape recorder as well as space-to-ground links), is that the UFO appeared at the same point in the Gemini orbit where the booster had been repeatedly spotted earlier in the flight. McDivitt had once described seeing his booster with straps hanging from it. Furthermore, on at least one occasion on the first day, McDivitt had at first been unable to recognize the booster when he saw it because it was close to the glare of the sun! This had been at a range of less than ten miles.

Yet another important factor unknown to the Condon report was that McDivitt was complaining to the flight surgeon about his eyesight during this phase of the flight. His eyes

were red and teary due to a reaction with the cabin atmosphere and an accidental massive urine spill. "I didn't think I was going to be able to hack it", McDivitt later had radioed to Earth.

This famous UFO case now becomes that of a pilot with watering eyes catching sight of an object in parallel orbit, an object which he had already misidentified a few hours earlier. As to the photograph, an investigator must go through all the film of the flight to realize how common such blobs of light (overexposures, reflections, glare, etc.) were. Both NASA and McDivitt have agreed that the sequence of movie frames are a view out the window, showing sunlight reflecting off a bolt against the dirty window glass. NICAP thinks differently because of the back of its copy of the photo is a handwritten

note (nobody known by whom) stating that McDivitt (nobody knows when) had communicated (nobody knows how) the fact that the picture showed "his UFO". (This was made clear by a telephone conversation between the author and Jack Acuff of NICAP on March 5, 1976).

Why has this case achieved such notoriety? It probably resulted from the enthusiasm of UFO believers, the naive openness of NASA public relations officials, and the publicity-seeking opportunism of some of the principals.

McDivitt himself did little to clear the case up, instead using it as a ticket onto national TV talk shows and news interviews (especially after his retirement in 1969). To add to the mystery, the former spaceman asserts, "I have never been able to identify it, and I don't think anyone ever will."

On a recent "UFO recording" released by Columbia, called "UFOs: The Credibility Factor", McDivitt clearly shows how his memories have changed or been changed to enhance the mystery of his experience: "They (NASA) checked NORAD...to see what they had up on radar and there wasn't anything within very close range of us." Readers can measure the credibility of this statement against the facts.

If McDivitt was fooled by his own booster ten years ago, is it too much to expect him to admit it now? What would that do to all of his public assertions of mystery? There is an easier way out, and McDivitt took it when I sent him an advance copy of my manuscript. After keeping it two months, he wrote back, "I was not able to read it very thoroughly and I cannot offer any extensive comments. I do not foresee the opportunity for me to provide any further review." There weren't any errors in my analysis, he implied, but it would be better kept quiet.

NASA never had any real doubts. "We believe it to be a rocket tank or spent second stage of a rocket," wrote a high space official on July 1, 1965. NORAD officials, confronted with my scenario, endorsed it: "Your comments on the NORAD role related to the case appear to be logical," wrote NORAD Public Information Officer D.W. Kindschi on Feb. 23, 1976.

So the "McDivitt case" is closed. The best space UFO case has now been identified. Do not expect to see any change in the UFO press, however. Such results are simply ignored.

Photographs made in space show negative effects, such as the "McDivitt UFO" aura, often. Spacecraft and astronauts may be engulfed in a strange aura caused by overexposure to sunlight brighter than ever seen on Earth. Blowups of photographs of known space objects show them appearing as "blobs" due to the enlargement process and to the coarseness of the grain. Ordinary space pictures are full of clouds of debris, constellations of man-made starlike points fluttering through space.

The Condon report was fascinated with the McDivitt case, and few UFO enthusiasts have not heard of it. But neither the Condon researchers nor the average reader had ever had all the facts. Now people can make up their

own minds. I have no doubt that McDivitt was seeing his own Titan booster stage.

Dr. Roach was also fascinated with another McDivitt sighting, that of a point of light crossing the sky. The object sounded just like the appearance of an artificial earth satellite, and that is exactly what McDivitt thought it was. There is no information to suggest it was anything else.

Another Condon favorite is a Gemini-7 case. The report of sightings of a cloud of debris right at the moment of booster separation (these particles included frozen fuel droplets, the booster itself, assorted insulation and structural fragments from where the explosive bolts were fired, and other smaller objects never identified and never cared about) is not very impressive. The crew, on their first space mission, saw a few pieces they had not expected (the pilot guessed—wrongly—that they "were in polar orbit"). Only a partisan digging for evidence, and desperate to find such evidence, would make much of this common event.

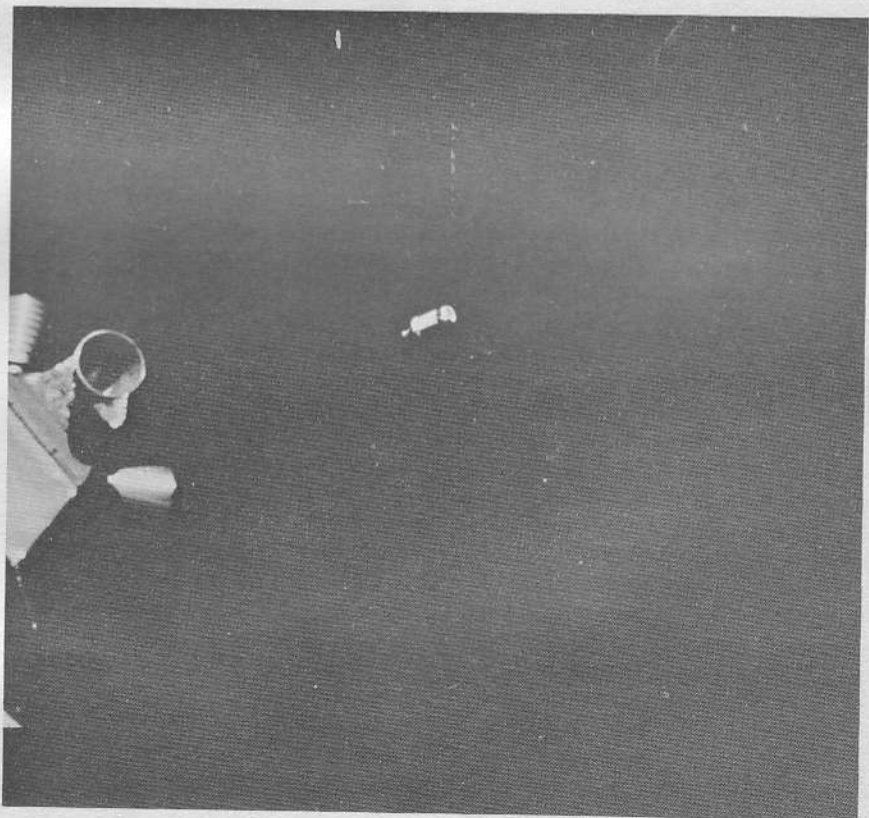
But a sign of desperation is indeed

found in connection with the Gemini-7 UFO case. It is not the desperation of government officials trying to cover up the truth about UFOs. Rather, it is the desperation of some outsider trying to manufacture counterfeit "astronaut UFO" evidence, an activity which should not be necessary if the "real" UFO evidence were as persuasive as many think.

It involves a photograph showing two very strange glowing objects. Each is hexagonal in shape, viewed at an angle, and supported by a dazzling "force field" below it. A cloud-covered earth is seen in the background.

This photograph has appeared in books, magazines, newspapers, and pamphlets. It is part of the travelling slide show of UFO lecturers from the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) and elsewhere. I have heard it described as "showing a typical UFO force field propulsion system", and "similar to other UFO photograph taken on Earth the same year".

The photograph is a forgery. It is a hoax. What the anonymous counterfeiter did (I have reason to suspect a



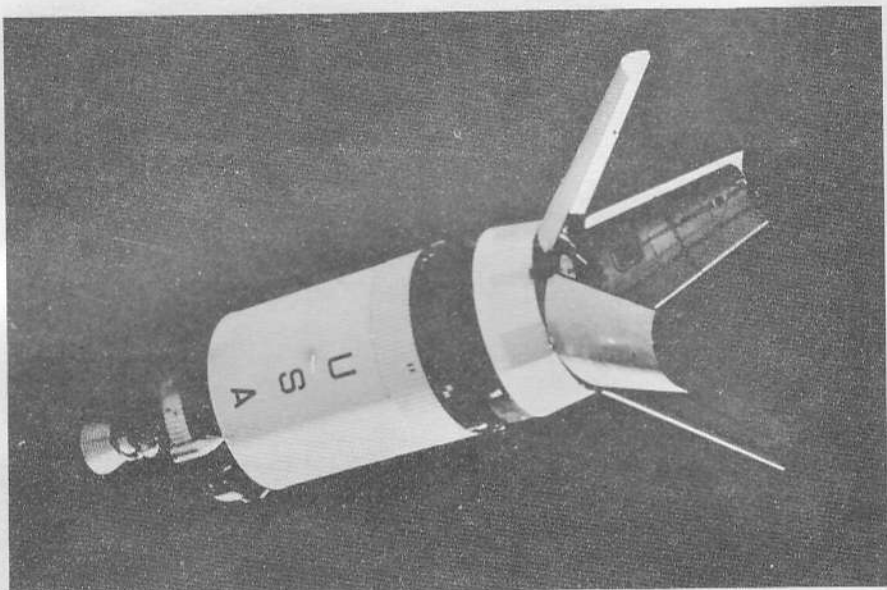
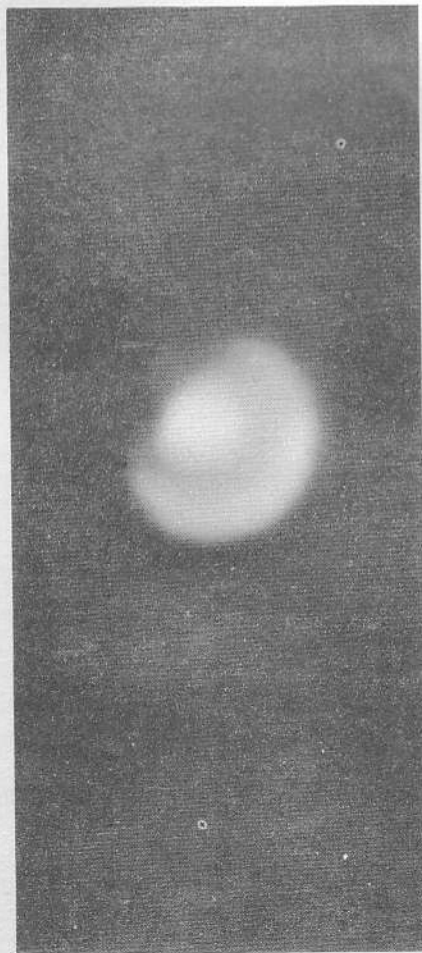
Saturn's booster drifting near Apollo on way to moon. Never more than a few hundred miles away, the rocket was seen by crewmen on Apollo-8, Apollo-10, Apollo-11, and most later moon flights. Misinterpretation or distortion of astronaut comments have been used to 'prove' UFO sightings.



The author and NASA photo analyst Richard Underwood show "space UFO" photos to Dr. J. Allen Hynek, director of the Center for UFO Studies, July, 1976. Hynek subsequently endorsed Oberg's conclusions.

Saturn booster S-IV-b and four open "SLA" panels. On moon flights the four "petals" fly free and, together with the empty booster, tumble through space a few miles from the Apollo capsule. They were often seen as bright flashing lights as they reflected the powerful sunlight. On Apollo-12, astronaut descriptions of these fragments were misinterpreted by UFO buffs and metamorphized into alien spacecraft.

"Mysterious" bulls eye object seen and photographed by Gemini-6 astronauts in December, 1965. Unfortunately for flying saucer buffs, it is not a UFO; it is an out of focus photo of the approaching Gemini-7 spaceship, nose on. NASA photo S-65-65296.



The view from inside early space capsules was limited and often plagued by dirty windows and bright reflections. Gene Cernan, Gemini-9. NASA photo S-66-38024.





Astronaut James A. McDivitt preparing for Gemini IV flight in 1965, on which he saw the most famous and perplexing space UFO in history.



Colonel Leroy Gordon Cooper in 1960. On his Mercury-9 flight in 1963 he reportedly saw a UFO also tracked on radar. The report seems to have been entirely fictitious.



"Thank God somebody is writing a sane article on UFOs" wrote Astronaut Richard Gordon when shown Oberg's manuscript. Gordon helped explain the hitherto mysterious sightings on his Gemini and Apollo flights.



Astronaut Charles "Pete" Conrad has been the target of counterfeit UFO claims on all four of his space flights between 1965 and 1973. After reading Oberg's explanations, he wrote: "I hope your story is widely printed".

New Jersey UFO group) was taken an ordinary photograph of Earth made from the Gemini-7 spaceship on December 4, 1965. The nose of the spacecraft fills the lower part of the frame, and on the nose, catching the glare of the sun, is a pair of roll control rocket thrusters used to adjust the attitude and spin rate of the Gemini. The original photo (NASA S65-63722, which I have personally

examined) was then retouched by the unscrupulous hoaxer to eliminate the edge of the nose from view, so the dark surface of the spaceship merged into the dark Earth beneath. This left the two now mysterious lights seemingly suspended in space, as it were. A normal space tourist photo was turned into convincing UFO evidence, and thousands of people were fooled.

American spacemen are not the only ones reporting UFOs, according to the popular press. Stories that allegedly come from Moscow tell about UFOs following Soviet manned spacecraft in the Vostok and Voskhod series ten years ago. But such secrecy surrounds the entire Soviet space effort that these stories cannot be checked out.

That very secrecy, however, is itself

a powerful argument against the validity of the rumors. So many ordinary things about the Soviet space program are secret (and long prison terms await anyone who even accidentally divulges such data) that it is incredible that so sensitive and significant a fact as a UFO sighting could ever leak out, even if such a thing had really happened.

The rules of evidence have been stretched and broken by UFO partisans. It is not up to me to "prove" that these sightings never took place. Nobody has as yet seen any evidence apart from a simple statement of fact that the sightings *did* take place. I will be happy to consider evidence when it becomes available.

Let's examine more of these "cosmonaut UFOs". In *UFOs From Behind The Iron Curtain*, the UFO magazine 'Clypeus' is quoted about an object seen by both Vostok-5 and Vostok-6, a fleet of disks seen by Voskhod-1, and "strange cylinders in space which were perfectly formed and had no apertures" seen by Voskhod-1, Voskhod-2, and Gemini-4 (sic!). UFOs have even been blamed for the malfunction of the Voskhod-2 autopilot. As I have said, these "reports" are hardly evidence, and can be far more easily manufactured than refuted.

Surely one of the most specious and ghoulish "space UFO" stories deals with the Soyuz-11 flight, on which the crewmen perished during their return to Earth. UFO literature has recently been circulating a "transcript" between the cosmonauts and ground control. The crewmen describe several glowing red objects and discuss them with flight controllers.

To anyone familiar with typical space-to-ground communications, this "transcript" is patently counterfeit. Someone's vivid imagination, emboldened by the knowledge that the men were dead and could not argue, must have created the entire incident.

Without further evidence, the entire class of "cosmonaut UFOs" must be rejected. Deliberate attempts to "muddy the waters" and to manufacture fantasies are common in this UFO genre, as in others.

In investigating photographic evidence of UFO sightings by American astronauts, I worked closely with Richard Underwood at the NASA Johnson Space Center (formerly the

Manned Spacecraft Center) near Houston. Underwood is an experienced photointerpreter who has examined every single photograph brought back from orbit and beyond, and his incredible memory can identify a decade old photograph, describe the situation, and find the citation in the old record books within minutes. The office of this photogrammetric engineer is full of stacked film cans, light tables, world and local maps, and piles of letters from ex-astronauts and ordinary citizens alike.

Has he seen any UFOs? Underwood answered that with a smile: "I've never found anything in these pictures that puzzled me for long, and I'm kind of disappointed. It would be terribly exciting to find evidence for someone else's spaceship!" When UFO writers hint broadly about a "NASA coverup" or "space censorship", they are essentially calling Dick Underwood and his colleagues a pack of liars.

Distortion and withholding of the truth is not a stranger to Underwood's

office, however. When a UFO researcher named Alan Sandler was working on a book and a movie ("UFOs: Past, Present and Future", to be advertised as a "documentary") he visited Underwood's office and looked through dozens of rolls of film, writing down orders for prints of anything that looked interesting. This is a standard service provided by NASA to journalists.

Sandler chose a set of photographs for his movie, photographs which Underwood advised him probably only showed dust particles in front of the camera, debris outside the spacecraft, or glare on the windows (this was easy enough to prove by looking at pictures ahead of and behind the shots in question). Two photographs were particularly upsetting.

They both showed a black background with a string of lights in the middle of the photograph. In the book (with the same name as the movie, although written by another author, Robert Emenecker) the two shots are

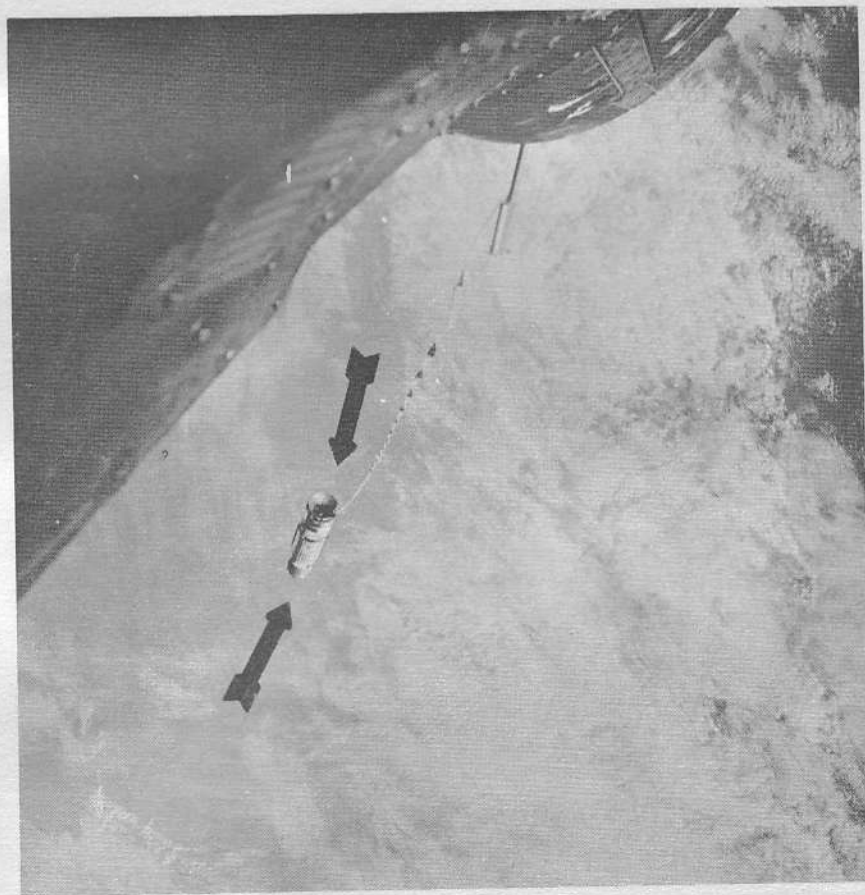
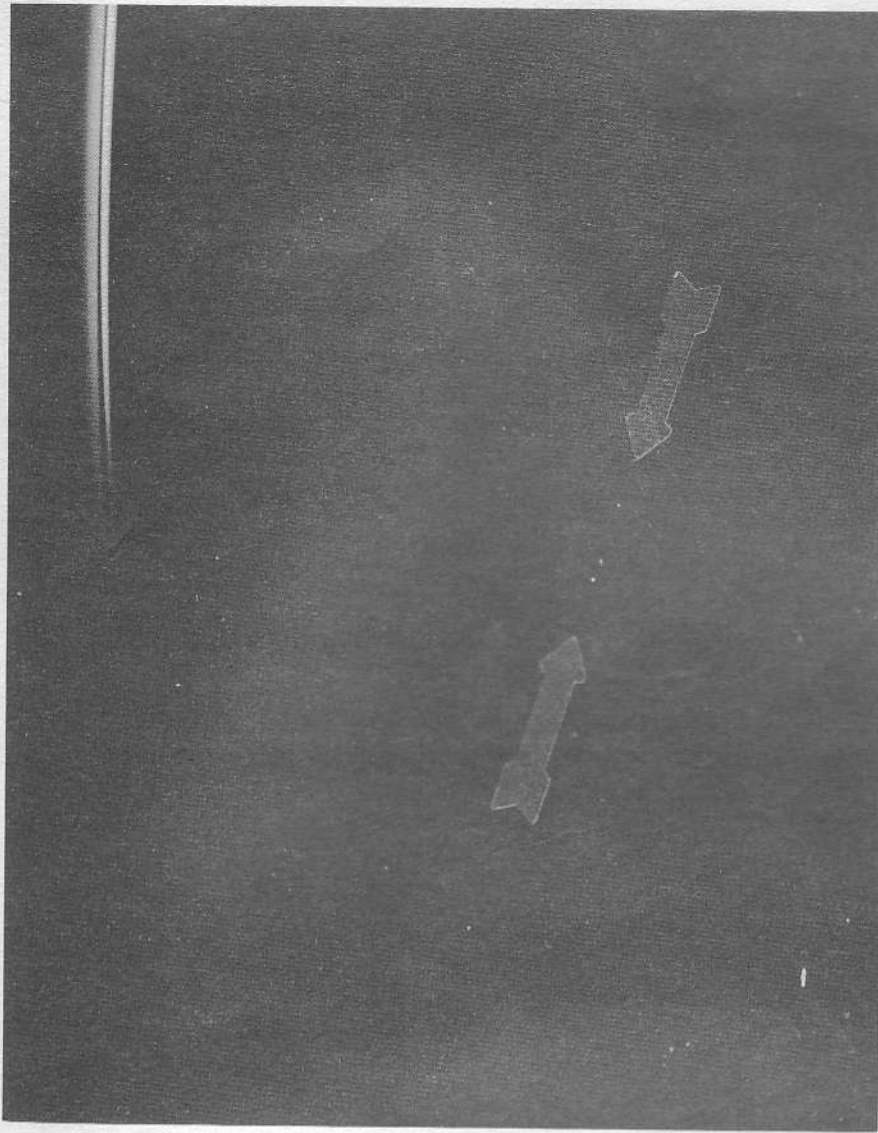


Photo of Agena-12 from Gemini-12. This is part of a sequence of photos which takes the Agena from light into dark. After dark, only the running lights are visible. One researcher has widely published this latter photograph as a "UFO", said by NASA to be Agena tracking lights". NASA photo S-66-63101.



"Said to be ranging lights" on Gemini-12, according to Sandler. Compare with earlier photo showing Agena in the sunlight. Deliberate slanting of evidence.

reproduced with the caption: "Shot during Gemini XII on November 13, 1966, and said to be Agena Ranging Lights prior to docking". The erroneous implication of these twisted words is that this is another NASA excuse for some remarkable UFO photographs. Said to be ranging lights, indeed, sneers the book!

"That's exactly what they were!" Underwood told me plaintively. "They are part of the complete sequence of twenty photographs showing the Agena as it moves from the sunlight side of Earth into the shadow".

As Underwood and I stood in the photo laboratory inside building No. 8 at the historic Houston space center, the sequence was right there in front of our eyes on the glowing viewing board. How did the "UFO researcher" react to this explanation, I asked.

He continued to explain: "I took the whole sequence with me to Hollywood along with other films which NASA was providing. I showed the sequence to Sandler. He wasn't interested. Unfortunately he went ahead and used the photographs anyway". Thousands more people were deceived.

The flight of Gemini-11 began a long battle between astronaut Charles "Pete" Conrad and UFO believers. The astronauts had taken three even more remarkable photographs. "Pete" Conrad had spotted a moving object outside his window and had snapped off a few frames of film, varying the exposure on each shot in an attempt to get at least one good view which would show something.

Per a request from NASA, NORAD soon reported that the object had been

a Russian cosmic ray laboratory called Proton-3. According to Air Force computers, it would have crossed Gemini's orbit several hundred miles behind the spacecraft. Yet this object was in a different direction and was much too close. It was a UFO!

Despite these objections, NORAD was right for the wrong reasons. The object was indeed Proton-3, even though the Aerial Phenomenon Research Organization (APRO) and its research director, Dr. James Harder, has made much of the discrepancy and considers this the best Gemini UFO ever seen.

Few researchers have noticed, and none had recognized the significance of the fact, that the Proton-3 satellite was only hours away from burning up in the atmosphere. As its orbit decayed toward a fiery doom, it circled Earth faster and faster, running ahead of the schedule predicted by NORAD.

The simple truth, often ignored or distorted by many writers, is that NORAD does *not* "track everything in space" like the radar screens of some air traffic control center. Instead, objects which pass through the beams of a handful of worldwide radar sites (at a range of a thousand miles or less) are observed and catalogued, and their orbits are calculated. These calculations are then projected forward in time (the mathematical term is "extrapolated") to plot where the spacecraft should be if its orbit hasn't been changed.

Gemini's orbit had been changed by a rendezvous rocket firing. Proton's orbit was changed by its decay. I ordered microfilm copies of the last few NORAD predictions from the Tracking Reports Section at the NASA Goddard Space Center in Greenbelt, Maryland, and as soon as I read them I knew the answer.

The predictions were off by several hundred miles per day! Each new projection made a correction to the previous one. Using a combination of these figures, a new altitude difference between Gemini and Proton could easily be computed. It was entirely close enough to coincide with the astronauts' sighting.

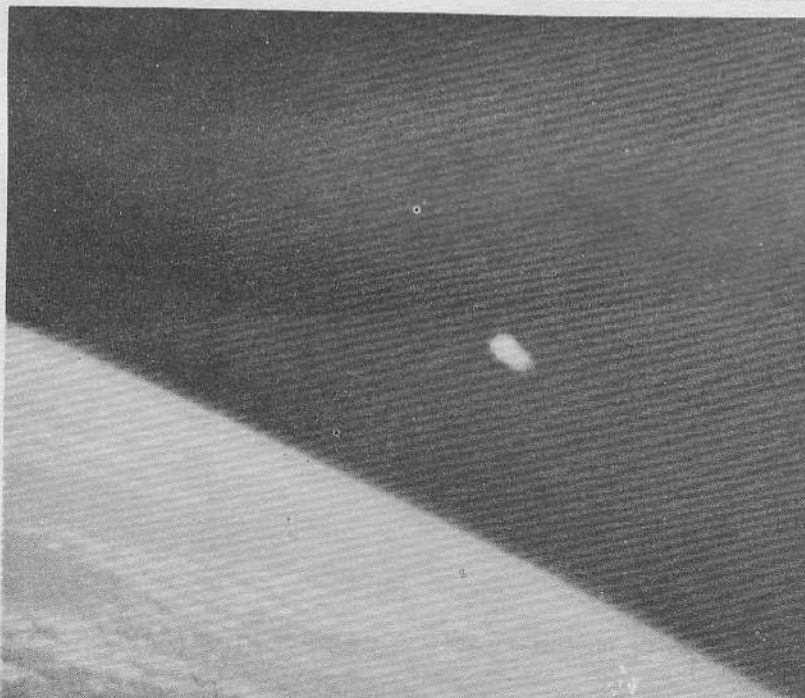
Furthermore, the astronauts had made a visual as well as a photographic record. Their eyewitness testimony describes a satellite that looks like Proton-3 looked, as shown by exhibits in Russian museums: a stubby cylinder

with four large triangular canted solar panels. (Conrad compared the sight to the strap-on boosters of a Titan-3 rocket.) Even the photographs show this when studied with real Proton-3 photographs close at hand.

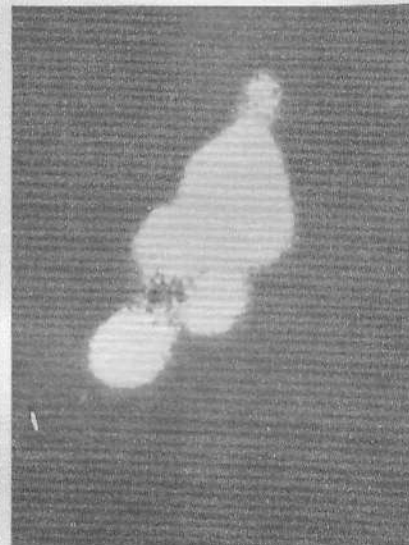
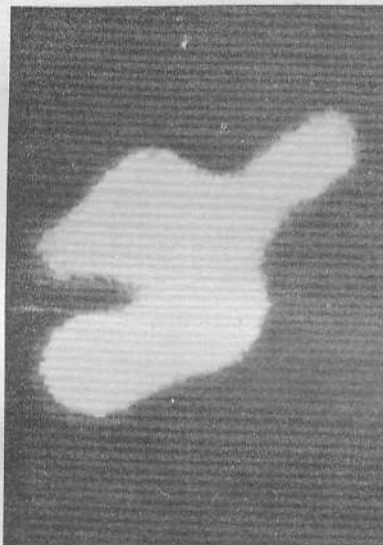
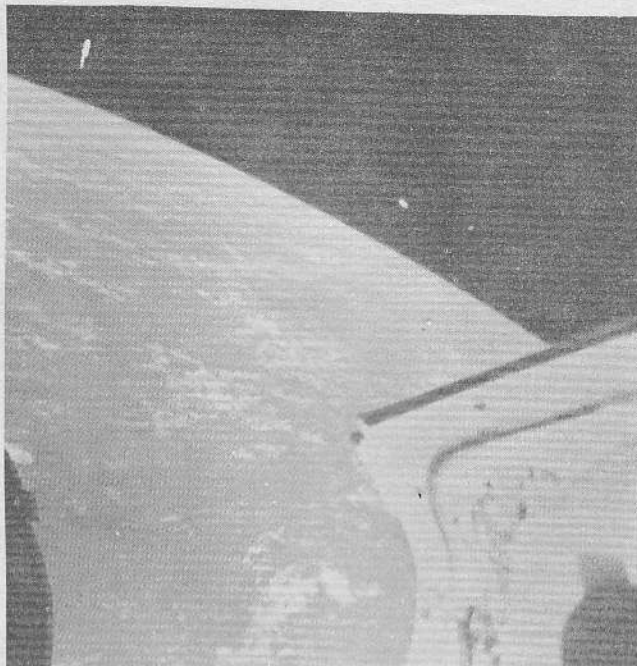
Astronaut Conrad and the UFO people clashed again over his next space mission, Apollo-12. According to the Research Director of APRO, Dr. Harder, Conrad reported that he was being followed by a UFO on the way to the moon. Conrad claims that it was just a joke about the large panels which enclose the lunar module during launch but are jettisoned later in the flight and which tumble through space a few miles from the Apollo all the way to the moon. Harder says that Conrad, under pressure from a secret government agency, is lying.

These are Conrad's words: "They've been after me for years because we were followed by a UFO on the way to the moon. That, of course, was untrue. The guy who came up with it was going by our transcript where we saw debris from our own rocket and we were joking with the ground crew about it. He took this out of context. . . I called the ground and said, 'hey, gang, we're being followed, there's some flashing object out there'. Some scandal sheet took that and

Fragment in focus at range of 3 to 5 feet—Sandler calls it "unidentifiable", and Mallan and Barry also use it. Photo is enlargement of one in upper right, Gemini-12.



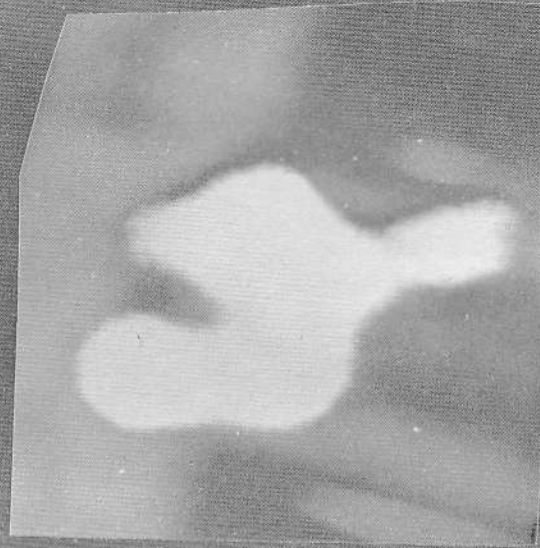
Debris from open hatch on Gemini-12.



Blowups of Gemini-11 photos of Proton-3. Sun glare and extreme magnification contribute to bizarre appearance.

made a helluva story out of it. But it was nothing like anything I was connected with". Conrad has left NASA and lives in Denver, presumably beyond the reach of any NASA sensors. He describes a phenomenon common to all Apollo moon flights; the claim that he saw a UFO is also common, but hardly as valid.

Conrad confirmed these quotations in a letter to me dated April 12, 1976. "I hope your paper is widely printed," he added. Referring to Harder's claim of coverup, Conrad could only say: "I think you have more than your share of Kooks."



Gemini-11 photo of Proton-3 (arrow) and extreme enlargement of image. UFO magazines often print fuzzy blobs without indicating that object was highly magnified. Film artifacts cause "blobbiness". NASA photo S-66-54661.

Let's take a moment to look at the Apollo-12 flight more carefully. It probably rates as one of the most "UFO-ridden" space flights ever made, and probably did more than any Apollo mission to encourage the stories of astronaut sightings of UFOs. What lies behind all these stories? Who started them? What is the "official" NASA position?

Apollo-12 was launched on November 14, 1969, on the second moon landing mission. The crew consisted of Gemini-11 veterans "Pete" Conrad and Richard Gordon, and space rookie Alan Bean (Conrad

had also flown into space on Gemini-5.) Taking off during a thunderstorm, the craft was twice hit by lightning which threatened to abort the mission.

Instead, the flight proceeded successfully to the first pinpoint moon landing four days later. Astronauts Conrad and Bean flew their Lunar Module in to a precision touchdown near the Surveyor-3 automatic moon probe. During a scheduled moon walk, the men retrieved samples from the robot craft. The return on Earth was "routine", if flights to the moon can ever be considered routine.

On the outbound leg, Conrad had radioed to Earth that the Apollo was "being followed". This message, transmitted over the open radio link, was heard by hundreds of newsmen and by millions of Americans. It immediately gave rise to new UFO stories.

According to the account best known to UFO believers (published in *Saga* magazine, May 1970, entitled "Apollo 12's Mysterious Encounter with Flying Saucers", written by T.G. Beckley and H. Salkin), the astronauts watched two flashing lights near their Command Module about 150,000 miles out from Earth. At first, the



Apollo-11 UFO, 1969. Object tumbled past window immediately after Apollo pulled away from Saturn booster. Metamorphosis of obvious spacecraft insulation fragment into "odd-shaped UFO" is courtesy of Bob Barry of the fringe "20th Century UFO Bureau".

ground thought it was their S-IV-B booster rocket but quickly calculated that it would have been in a different direction. Next, they suggested that the lights could have been pieces of the Lunar Module "garage", called "SLA Panels", which are quite large and highly reflective. Conrad, so the UFO story goes, remarked that this was unlikely since one of them had suddenly taken off at a high velocity, something that a piece of space debris simply could not do. Finally, the

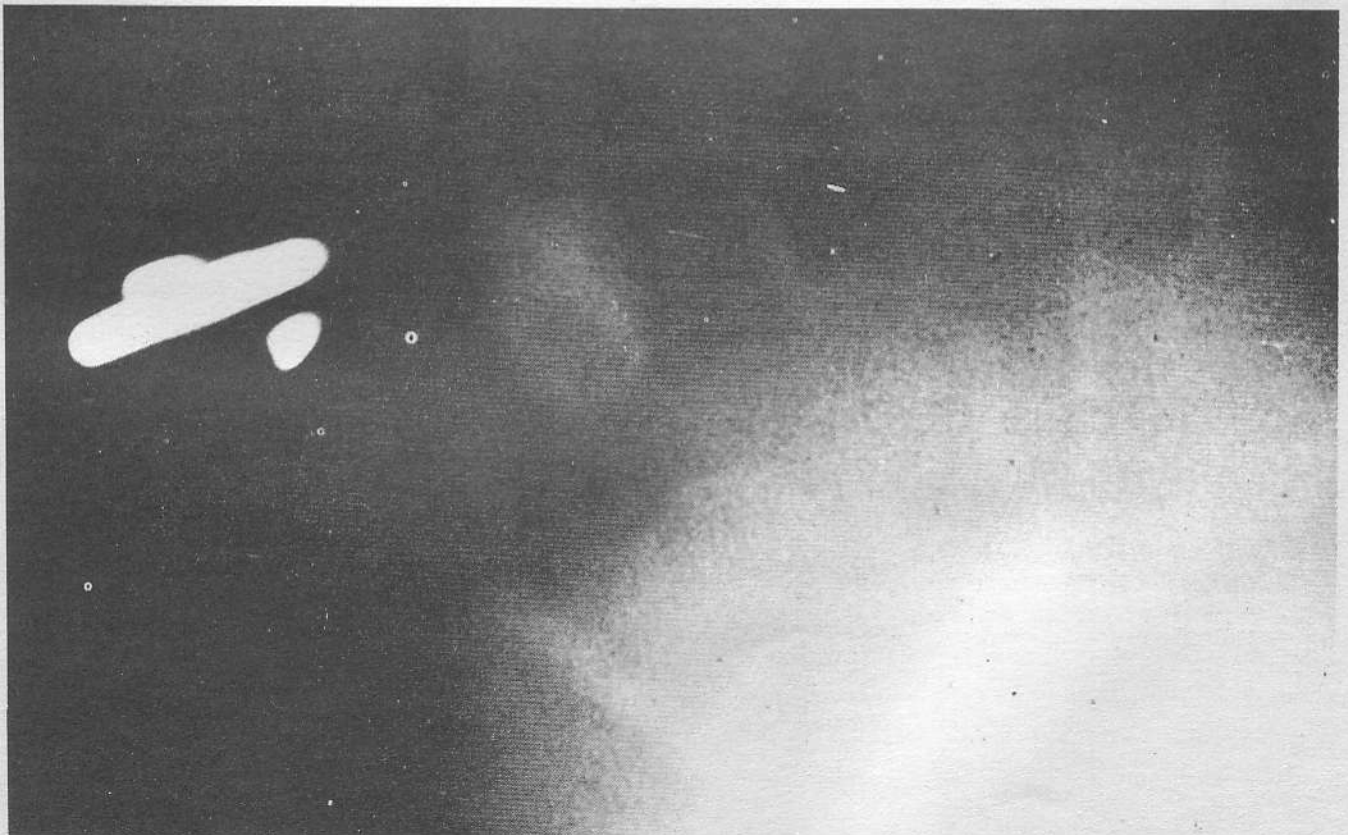
astronauts decided to ignore the apparently harmless escort and carry on with their mission.

In lunar orbit, new (or perhaps the same) UFOs dogged the spacemen. During the descent to the lunar surface, millions of television watchers on Earth saw bright objects crossing the field of view of the Apollo TV cameras. Similar objects were seen during the launch from the moon and during the final approach to Earth.

Here, then, is a major case for

"astronaut UFO sightings". Besides the three astronauts, millions of Americans saw the TV images and heard the voices of the crewmen wondering what the objects could be. They were obviously unidentified, they were flying in space, and they were objects of some sort. Hence, they were *UFOs*.

The "Fawcett List" of space UFOs says that the astronauts "said a UFO accompanied them all the way to within 132,000 miles of the moon,



Mercury-7. "Domed UFO" on Scott Carpenter's flight in 1963. Smears and glares change from one frame to the next while astronaut was snapping pictures of limp balloon sub-satellite. Hans Holzer's "Ufonauts" (1976) assigns object to John Glenn's flight, invents fictitious commentary and continues weaving myths unfettered by facts.



Two objects drifting out of open hatch (lower right) of Gemini-12. Both specks are out of focus and hence are within several feet of camera. --which had a very large depth of field. Object on right, in focus, is a scrap of paper. NASA photo S-66-62871.

preceding them all the way." The origin of that mileage figure is obscure, but it lends unwarranted authenticity to the report.

Observatories in Europe also watched the two UFOs, other sources reveal. Embellishing the story, another UFO source claims that "Next day, the 15th, at 21.15 hours, one bright

revolving light approached the Apollo 12 spacecraft." Fawcett, not to be outdone, also claims that the astronauts photographed the UFO (or UFOs).

One of the loudest proponents of the Apollo-12 UFO is APRO research director Dr. James Harder. At a UFO symposium at the University of

California at Santa Cruz on November 8, 1975, Harder claimed that one UFO "followed Apollo 12 on three orbits around the moon". Further, "NASA suppressed the UFO incidents for fear of panic", but Harder was able to discover the sightings because it "was disclosed by a member of the space team" who he refused to identify.

Since all the material Harder used to "prove" the existence of the incidents were public information (Harder could have read it in *Saga*, which is hardly a top secret government report), his reference to a coverup and to secret inside information were clearly only gimmicks to impress the news media with the value of his "information".

NASA, meanwhile, says that no such UFO event took place. The lights, according to Dale Myers (Associate Administrator for Manned Space Flight; quoted in a letter dated Feb. 5, 1973 to Mr. Donald Ratsch of APRO), were spacecraft fragments: "During all of our Apollo lunar missions, objects have been sighted by the various crews. Subsequent to the crew sightings, the flight controllers determined the observations were probably either the S-IVB booster, the spacecraft lunar adapter (SLA) panels, or smaller objects such as mylar foil particles. Because of their large size and highly reflective surfaces, the S-IVB and SLA panels should be visible at great distances in the space environment..."

Astronaut Conrad, as quoted earlier, claimed that the flashing lights were obviously SLA panels but that he was joking with the ground. He denounced the *Saga* story explicitly and gave his opinion that Harder was a "kook". Astronaut Gordon has publicly stated that he has never seen a UFO on any space flight. Alan Bean, the only one of the three still on active NASA duty, issued a statement soon after Harder's latest charges went out over the news media late in 1975. In a UPI dispatch:

"Astronaut Alan Bean...said that at no time during his mission did he ever see an unidentified object. Bean said that there were some metallic parts which floated behind their spacecraft after the Apollo-12 lunar module lifted off from the moon. He said these small pieces were visible until they (the astronauts) made an engine burn. The metallic objects were parts of the insulation which came off the lunar module during the launch phase and lunar orbital phase. 'At no time did we see anything which was not of our spacecraft, either during lunar orbit or during the voyage to and from the moon,' Bean stated."

To Harder and his "NASA coverup", these statements are just more lies designed to confuse the American public. So let's go back to

the key Apollo-12 UFO encounter and try to determine just who is confused.

Late on November 15th, 1969, about 150,000 statute miles from Earth, the Apollo crew was talking to capsule communicator astronaut Gerald Carr about some lights they were watching out their window.

Apollo: The object is very bright and it is obviously something that is tumbling. It is tumbling (at) one and one half rev(olution)s per second, or at least it is flashing at us (at) about that (rate)...

CAPCOM: Roger. We are standing by.

CAPCOM: (Apollo) 12, (this is) Houston.

Apollo: Go ahead.

CAPCOM: As best we can tell, looking at things down here, on those SLA panels, we assume they weren't imparted with any great amount of delta-V (velocity change)—like anything more than one or so feet per second when they separated (thirty-three hours ago). Your SLA panels would probably be only about 300 (nautical) miles (345 statute miles) away from you right now.

**** The following reply by Conrad has been claimed by UFO believers to indicate that the lights (the so-called "SLA panels") have suddenly pulled away from the Apollo, something that a tumbling piece of debris could not do. To clarify the meaning, punctuation and a few extra parenthetical words have been added by the UFOlogists:

Apollo: That could be true, but gee whiz, when I (just) turned around I saw one of those "SLA panels" leaving the area at a high rate of speed, and it looked to me like it was leaving us pretty (fast)—at a pretty rapid clip, like it got a lot more than a foot per second or so.

CAPCOM: Well, since we don't really have any idea how they left, or what their trajectory could be, it's kind of tough really to say just what the heck that could be.

Apollo: Okay. We'll assume it's friendly anyway, OK?

The UFO reasoning, as worded by APRO member Brad Sparks, goes as follows: "After the SLA panels separated and the S-IVB's tanks were emptied (on Nov. 14) they could not change their velocity simply because they had no form of propulsion to do so. But Conrad saw one of the "SLA panels" (on Nov. 15th) suddenly leave

its position at a "high rate of speed", an impossibility, unless it really was a maneuverable spacecraft of some sort. But where does one find a maneuverable spacecraft nearly 150,000 miles from the earth? The answer: (excepting Apollo 12 itself) in November of 1969 there weren't any. The conclusion is inescapable: One (possibly two) maneuverable spacecraft *not* of man-made origin were following our Apollo 12 on November 14 and 15, 1969."

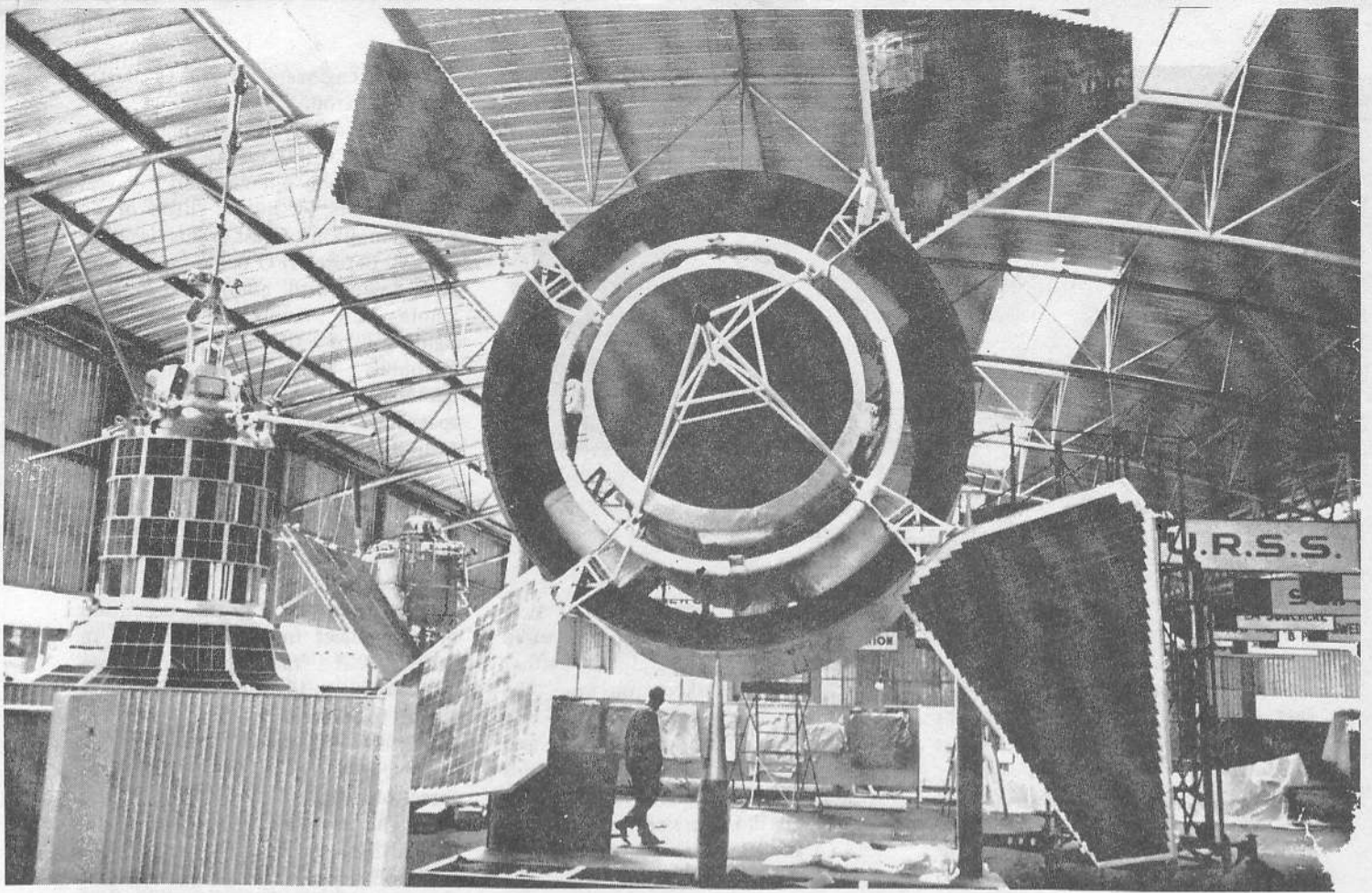
To anyone familiar with the flight plan of an Apollo moon flight, Conrad's words imply nothing of the sort. Two facts must be brought to mind. First, Apollo and the Capcom were discussing the present position of the SLA panels based upon their initial separation velocities from the spent S-IVB rocket stage. Second, the SLA panels break free after the Apollo pulls off from the booster; the astronauts then perform a maneuver called the "turnaround" the Command Module returns to the booster to dock with the now-exposed Lunar Module, before pulling the LM free from its "garage".

Striking the UFOlogist's punctuation and clarifying words from the communication, and putting it in proper perspective, what Conrad was saying was:

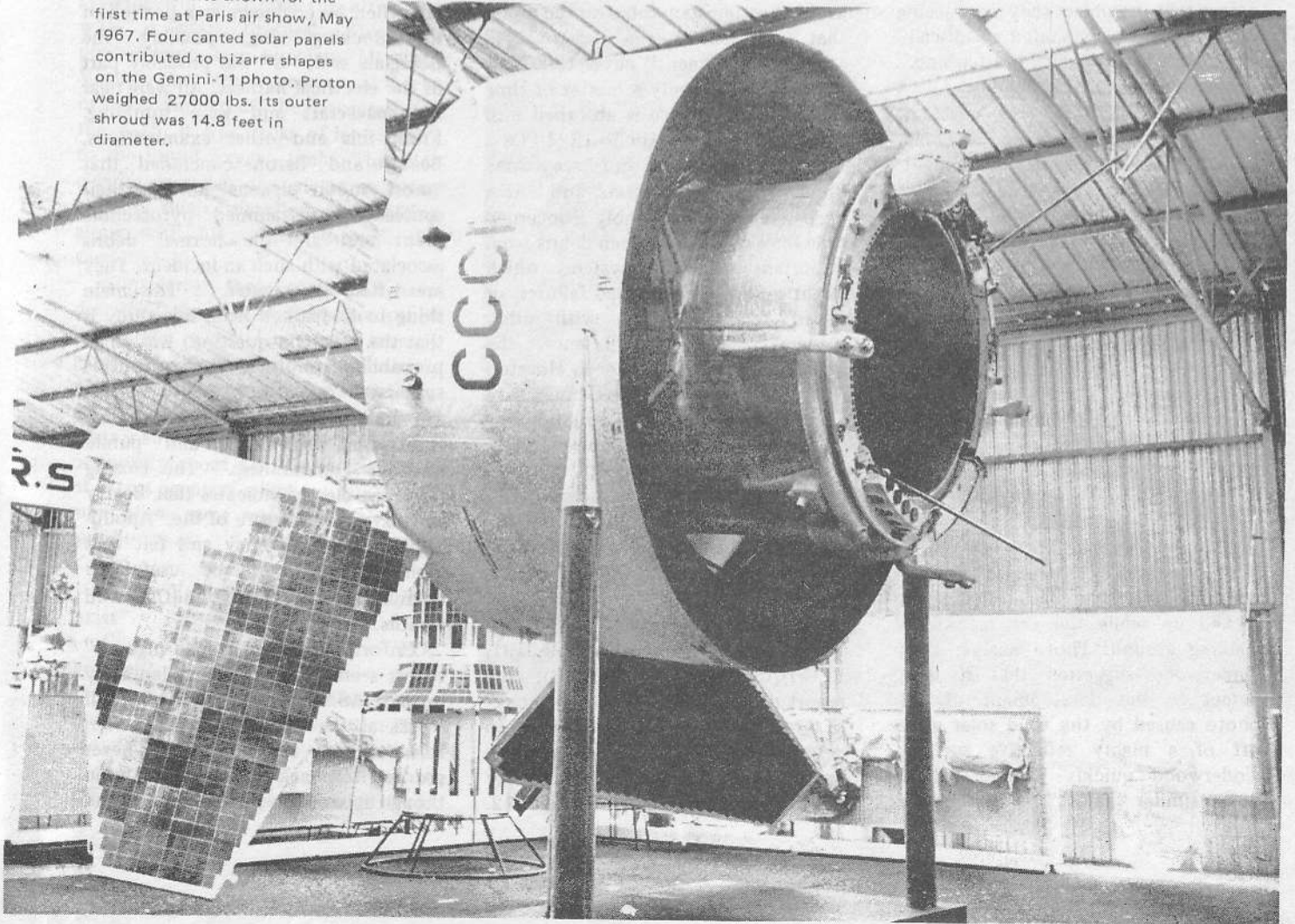
Apollo: That could be true (that the SLA panels were flying off at one or so feet per second), but gee whiz, when I turned around (right after they flew free, thirty-three hours ago) I saw one of those SLA panels leaving the area (of the LM "garage") at a high rate of speed, and it looked to me that it was leaving us pretty...at a pretty rapid clip, like it got a lot more than a foot per second or so.

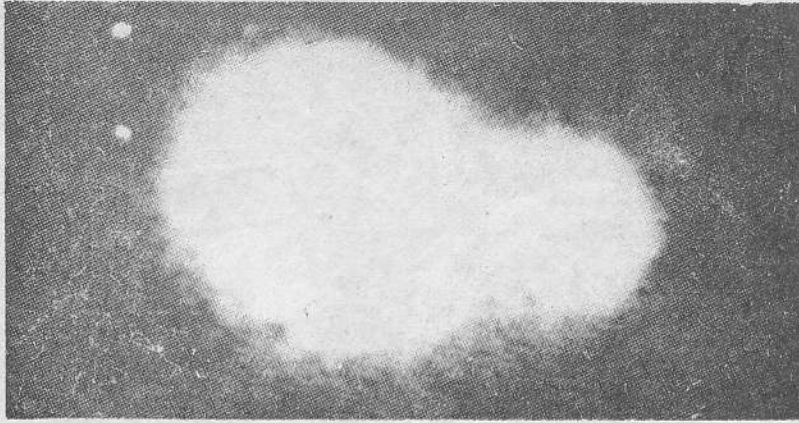
The UFO believers' reasoning—and the entire basis for Harder's and for the *Saga* article's Apollo-12 UFO sighting—is phony. The most generous description of it would be a mistake, a misreading of the transcript's meaning in an attempt to "prove" a UFO incident that never really happened outside of the fertile imaginations of certain UFO believers. Conrad's statement, Gordon's statement, Bean's statement, and the NASA letter must stand validated on this case: Apollo-12 was not followed by a UFO on its to the moon.

But how about on the way back? "A light of indistinct shape" was spotted just prior to re-entry,



Proton satellite shown for the first time at Paris air show, May 1967. Four canted solar panels contributed to bizarre shapes on the Gemini-11 photo. Proton weighed 27000 lbs. Its outer shroud was 14.8 feet in diameter.





Published newspaper story on UFOs captions this photo: "These two UFOs were photographed on July 19, 1969—the day before Apollo's historic moon landing—during Buzz Aldrin's scheduled lunar photo session. Note the similarity to the shot snapped three years earlier during Gemini-12."

according to UFO sources. *Saga* reports that "...at 11:47 a.m. on November 24th, the spokesman for Apollo 12 reported in a startled voice that they were all watching a bright red object flashing brilliantly against the earth." This incident was carefully analyzed by Brad Sparks of APRO (I am indebted to his letter to *Saga* of August 28, 1970, a letter *Saga* editor never bothered to answer), who objects that "the astronauts did not report that the object they were seeing was red, and they stated specifically that 'it's a steady light', not flashing." It was seen between them and the dark earth, somewhere off the coast of India by a guess of the crewmen. Perhaps it was a ship's searchlight, perhaps a fire, perhaps a violent lightning storm... there is no reason to suspect that it was a craft in space. The astronauts lost sight of the light as they turned the Apollo to take a series of photographs of the sunrise.

The wild fantasies printed in *Saga* do not end here. Beckley and Salkin claim that the astronauts had been "startled by unaccountable seismic disturbances on the lunar surface." This event never occurred; there were no such earthquakes during their visit.

Beckley and Salkin refer to "a mysterious blue halo encircling one of our spacemen." Sparks of APRO considers this to have been lunar dust kicked up while the crewmen were walking around. Photo analyst Dick Underwood suggested that it is a defect in the development of the photo caused by the vivid solar glare off of a highly reflective surface; Underwood quickly located half a dozen similar "haloes" on other space

photos taken during the 1960s. Whatever it was, this "halo" appeared only in the photo, and was neither seen nor remarked on by the astronauts.

Houston radio commentator and UFO enthusiast Frank Haley has his own theory about why the Apollo-12 TV camera did not work on the moon (NASA says Bean accidentally pointed it toward the sun). Says Haley, "The camera was intentionally shut off to avoid showing something on the moon that disturbed the astronauts" ("Haley's Comment" newsletter, Mar. 22, 1976). It is only a matter of time before this nonsense is absorbed into the lore of the "Apollo-12 UFOs".

But Apollo 12 *did* see some unidentified flying objects, and NASA engineers were justifiably concerned that they could have been debris from important spacecraft systems which might indicate unexpected failures, or which might interfere with other spacecraft equipment. Hence, the Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston (now the Johnson Space Center) gave a contract to Lockheed to study the objects seen on the TV pictures and on some movie film.

The Lockheed report was quietly issued on March 18, 1970, about the same time that the sensationalized and fictionalized *Saga* story was being printed. Titled "Unidentified Visual Phenomena Associated with Space Flight" (NASA Contract NAS 9-5191, LEC/HASD No. 671-80-013), the report documents the "moon pigeons" (a term "coined by NASA engineers to describe unexpected objects seen in operational photography that defy positive identification") of Apollo-12.

Contract engineers were F.D. Beatty and J.G. Baron.

"Unidentified visual phenomena associated with space flight were rather common operationally," reveal the authors," but... "little or no documentation of past events has been made." Before UFO believers jump up and down with confirmation of a whole new family of "astronaut sightings of UFOs", the authors announce their intention of demonstrating that "such events were spacecraft debris associated with an earlier pyrotechnical operation, or ice, or window reflections. Cases for each of these theories have been presented and exhibits of similar occurrences are included. Positive identification was not possible... The quality of the imagery precludes a precise definition of the object under question... In general, it takes much more information to identify an object that it does to detect it."

Sixteen millimeter color magazine 1165M, exposed on Apollo-12, shows three objects, called "A", "B", and "C". The objects appeared during the LM jettison maneuver in lunar orbit. "A" is believed to be a small segment of the docking channel; "B" was identified by engineers as a portion of the docking ring, possibly the fiberglass seal; "C" was probably part of the electrical harness. All were near the spacecraft and were tumbling. From this and other examinations, Beatty and Baron concluded that "most 'moon pigeons' have as their source a programmed pyrotechnic event and are the normal debris associated with such an incident. They are often spectacular... The main thing to be learned from this study is that the event (in question) was, in all probability, a normal result of routine spacecraft operations... These data will undoubtedly be of use to the engineering, scientific, and public relations communities." The closing reference clearly indicates that Beatty and Baron were aware of the "Apollo-12 UFOs" controversy and felt that their study would be useful in demolishing any UFO buffs' wild rumors.

Unfortunately, the "moon pigeons" report seems to have been filed away in the NASA archives. Baron, who still works at the Johnson Space Center, told me early in 1976 that he never got any feedback on his report, even though it was fun doing it and it had

EXCLUSIVE NASA PHOTOS

***These Are The Photos
Taken When Your TV
Screens Went Blank!***

This photo was snapped only moments after Aldrin's other Apollo 11 shot. Here the two UFOs have begun their separation and a halo-like force field between the two is clearly shown.

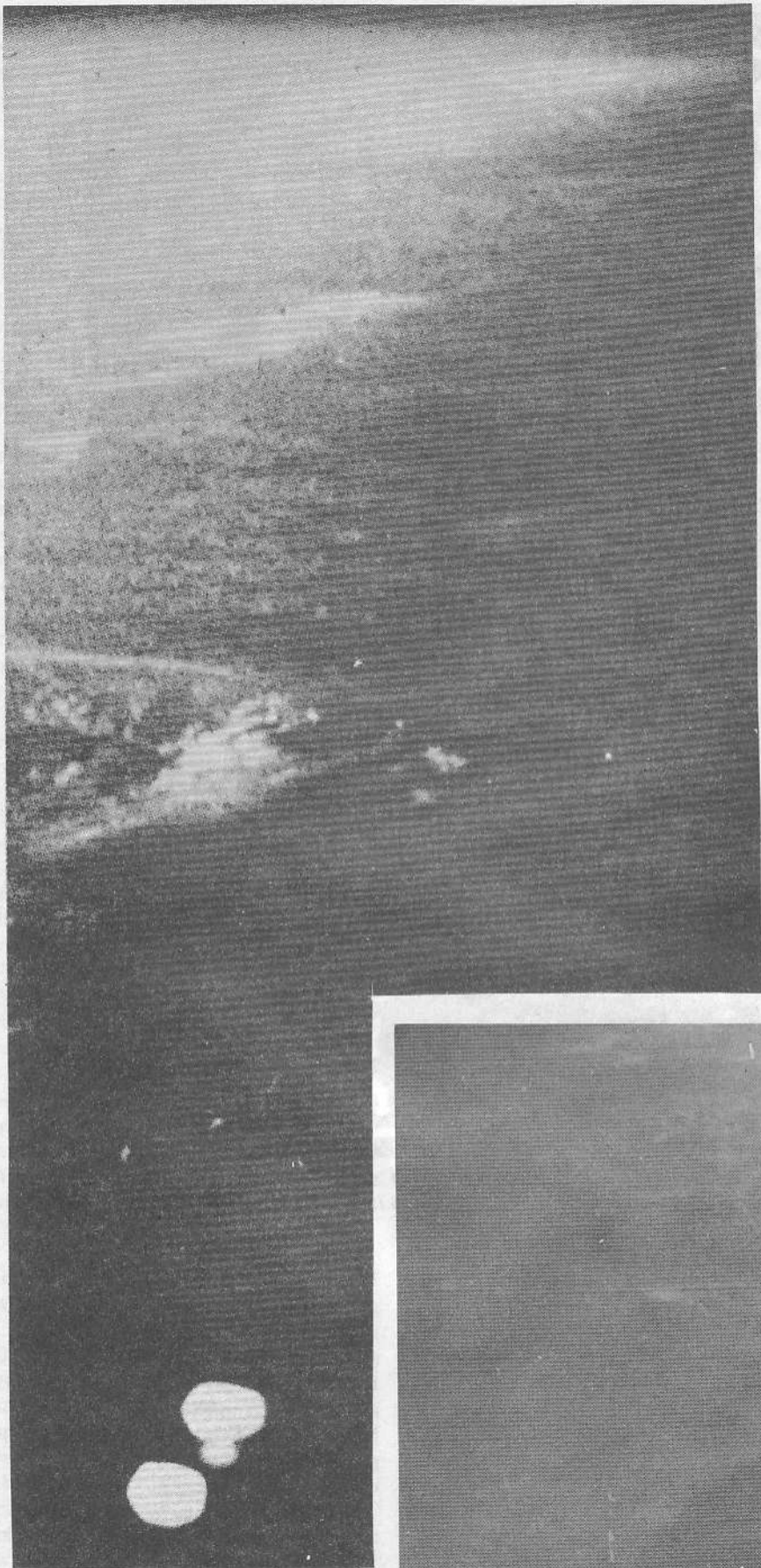
pretty obvious implications for UFO reports. NASA apparently decided to let the UFO writers spread their rumors, hoping that the stories would fade away if ignored.

What had happened, though, was a new shot in the arm for "astronaut UFO cases". The explanations could never catch up with the misinterpretations and wrong impressions engendered by the overheard conversations and viewed images from Apollo-12. Millions of Americans were practically eyewitnesses to a "space UFO", and were suitably impressed.

"Exclusive NASA Photos" and NASA censorship is another part of myth. These Apollo-11 spots are highly magnified window reflections in Lunar Module above the moon (Aldrin turned the camera on by accident while checking equipment.)

When presented with the *Saga* story and with APRO's (and MUFON's) account of the "maneuvering alien spacecraft at 150,000 miles from Earth", the average citizen could only assume that it might indeed be true. If NASA was denying it, well then, the government has been known to lie to us in the past.

It is a vain hope to imagine that the truth will ever catch up to the Apollo-12 and other UFOs. As detailed here, the Apollo-12 UFO never existed. Somehow, millions of people believe that it did. There is sufficient blame



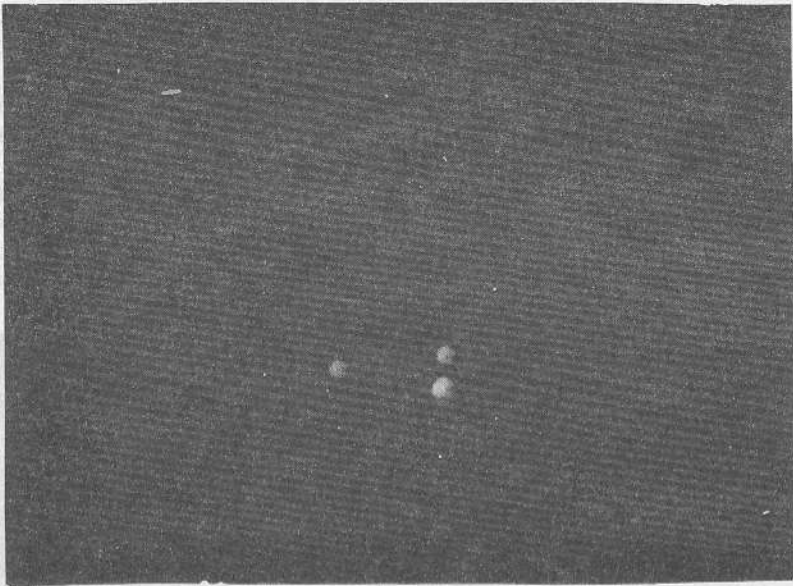
for this delusion to be generously distributed to UFO buffs, NASA public affairs officers, sensation-seeking news media, and lazy readers. And the "astronaut UFO" genre is not yet complete. Let's return to some more examples.

Another example of selective omission of facts occurs in the

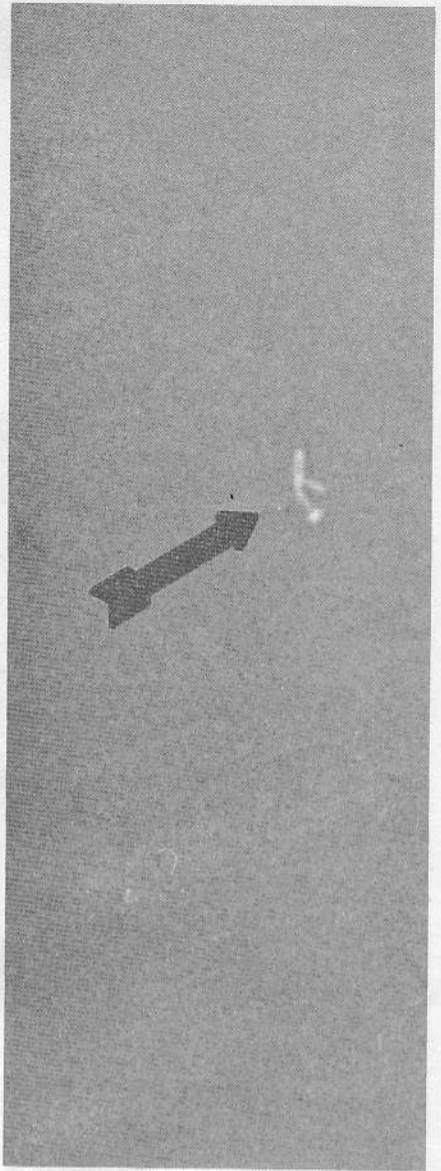
Gemini-7 photo of sunlight glinting off roll thruster rockets on nose. Photo forgers airbrushed the nose/Earth boundary out, making the two lights appear to be floating in space. NASAphoto S65-63722.



Forgery can be reprinted in spite of copyright regulations because this is a NASA photo. Even retouched, it cannot be copyrighted.



Another view of Sandler's Agena ranging lights on Gemini-12, presented as a UFO.



NASA photo (right) SL3-118-2140 and variations (below) as published with erroneous captions.

"Fawcett list" of astronaut sightings. George Fawcett is a respected and level-headed UFO researcher in Maiden, North Carolina. But an example of his work gives a different impression:

"Gemini-XII: Jim Lovell and Edwin Aldrin saw four UFOs linked in a row. Both spacemen said the objects were not stars" (quoted from *The Edge of Reality*, Hynek & Vallee, 1975, page 64).

From the GT-12 Astronaut Debriefing, page K/3,4, Lovell relates: "During the last EVA we discarded, in addition to the ELSE (life support system), three bags. About 2, maybe 3 or possibly 4, orbits later at sunrise condition, we looked out again and saw 4 objects lined up in a row and they weren't stars I know. They must have been these same things we tossed overboard."

The original distortion of this entirely ordinary event, according to the Condon Report, is the responsibility of UFO writer, John Keel. Fawcett took it and embellished it.

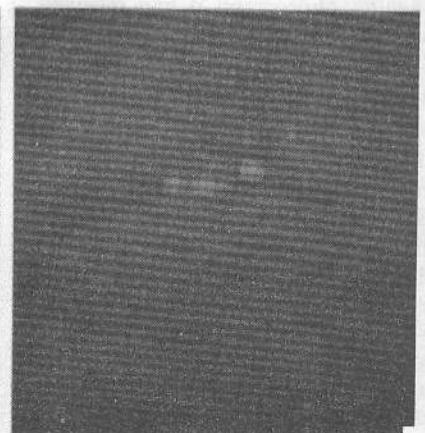
Another of Fawcett's favorites is Mercury-7: "Scott Carpenter reported that he had what looked like a good shot of a saucer." Elsewhere he claimed that Carpenter "took a photograph of a classical saucer-shaped UFO with dome that followed his capsule."

In fact, the photographs show an entirely ordinary object: a space balloon ejected from the capsule for

tracking practice. The balloon did not inflate but spun in a limp oblong sack. The flight schedule and the voice transmissions confirm this unexciting explanation—and confirm Fawcett's fantasizing.

An example of the difficulty of "disproving" an "astronaut UFO sighting" is the Mercury-9 case in 1963. Well established in the UFO lore, the story claims that on the 15th orbit, over Muchea, Australia, the astronaut (Gordon Cooper) saw a green object. More than one hundred people at the tracking station saw the bogie on a radar screen (this wasn't

Shot during Sky Lab III second manned Sky Lab Flight 263 day of 1973—1645 Zulu Time.
NASA Photo #SL3-118-2140 (4 shots taken)
Listed as unidentified object or satellite by NASA Photo Evaluation Lab.



sensational enough for fictional "fact" writer Frank Edwards: he had *two* hundred people actually *see* the object).

The source of the story seems to have been an NBC newsmen in Australia. But the problem seems to be that Cooper has never heard of it. He has been out of the space program for seven years, and talks freely about UFOs to reporters, to the Columbia "UFO recording", to Mike Douglas, to friends and associates. Somehow he knows nothing about "his" space UFO—and he has no reason to be silent. *His* space UFO never existed.

Confronted by this evidence, Fawcett (letter of May 10, 1976) insists that "I sincerely believe *some* of the astronaut sightings are bonafide, based on some of my sources of information." John Keel, too, recalls (letter of March 26, 1976) that "ex-NASA engineers have told me all kinds of fascinating UFO tales..." Always these writers fall back on "secret reports" and "private information" when their published reports and open articles disintegrate in the face of the truth.

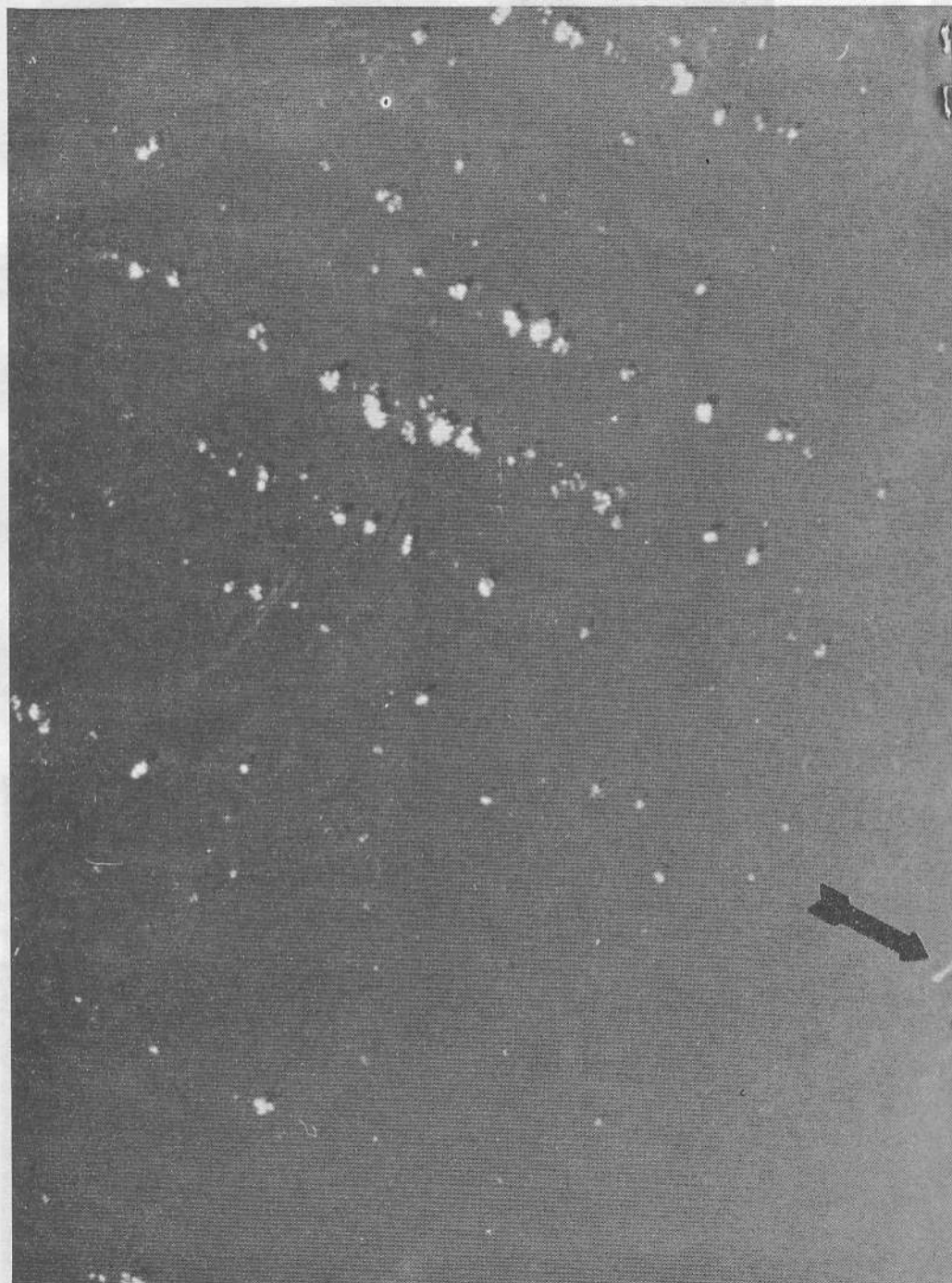
On October 18, 1973, the famous Mansfield, Ohio UFO sighting occurred, for which Captain Lawrence Coyne and his helicopter crew later were to receive the 'Best UFO Case of the Year' award (and check) from a weekly tabloid's 'blue-ribbon panel' of UFO experts. A few months later, Coyne said he was told by the panel chairman, J. Allen Hynek, (the respected head of the Center for UFO Studies) that Skylab astronauts had photographed the same UFO from space. (Hynek ultimately denied this.) A reputable magazine, "Army Reserve" published the story with an intriguing photograph it had received from NASA and which it labeled "NASA: Skylab", clearly indicating that this was the astronaut photograph which had buzzed Coyne.

It would have been a neat trick for the Skylab astronauts to have photographed anything on October 18th, since they weren't even on board the space station. The previous crew had returned to Earth a month before and their relief crew was not scheduled to blast off for another three weeks. The photograph printed in the magazine was clearly labeled on its backside as taken by Scott Carpenter on Mercury-7 more than ten years before. It showed a limp balloon Carpenter had

ejected from his spacecraft in an attempt to get visual tracking practice (this photo is often referred to as the "classical domed UFO" shot). UFO researchers and magazine editors had clearly not made even a minimum of effort to verify these transparent errors and mistakes, but instead passed on the false data to the public. Thousands more were deceived.

Late in 1973, a strange object did appear in Skylab space photographs. Taken on Conrad's Skylab flight in June, the object was not noticed by UFO researchers but by government photo analysts.

Rather than "sweep the UFO under the rug", the officials took the other tack: it might be a mysterious Soviet Satellite and could be of great value to



"UFO" seen from Skylab-2. The elongated object is actually an airstrip in the Brazilian jungles. Enlargement of NASA photo SL2-16-109.

military intelligence. A prompt and energetic investigation was launched.

The object looked like a long cylinder with two square paddles resembling solar panels at each end. By measuring its angular size on the negative, analysts were able to determine that it was about 20 feet long a mile away or 2000 feet long a hundred miles away.

A careful investigation revealed the surprising answer: the UFO was actually thousands of feet in length, but its altitude was zero! It was an *airstrip* in the Brazilian jungles! Further checking showed that the object appeared at the same spot in Skylab photos taken months later; the airfield was also found on an international aviation chart.

Recent UFO books and articles have resurrected the X-15 rocket plane sightings of fifteen years ago. This has prompted the NASA Headquarters Public Affairs Office to reissue a photograph taken by a belly camera of the spacecraft at an altitude of about 60 miles (photo 76-H-139).

Published reports speak of "fleets of UFOs" at a range of 30 feet from the X-15. But even a casual reader with any familiarity with spacecraft systems will recognize the effect for what it was: "fireflies". This is a phenomenon seen by many Mercury, Vostok, and later spacemen, as flecks of paint chipped off the spacecraft. On the X-15, it was flecks of ice clinging to the liquid oxygen tanks. The pilot clearly describes the pieces as being close-in, small, tumbling, and drifting along with his vehicle through the vacuum.

Considering these cases as I have described them (and there are other lesser ones which I have also investigated to a successful conclusion), what can we now say about authors who present such evidence of "astronaut UFOs"? While speaking ominously about a NASA coverup and of secret agencies which muzzle spacemen, these same researchers list such quotations as:

John Young: "Odds are UFOs exist".

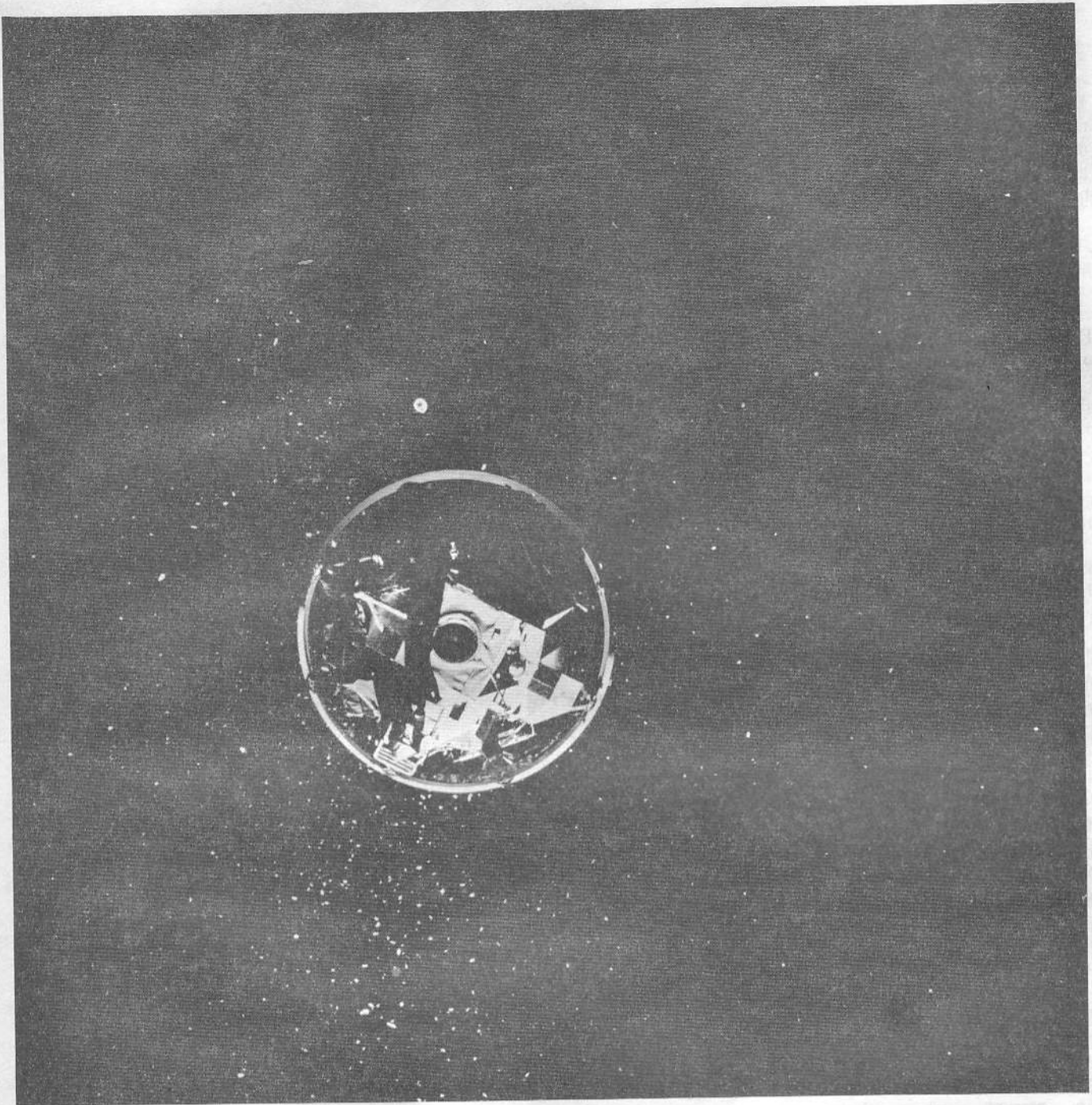
Edgar Mitchell: "We all know UFOs are real".

Eugene Cernan: "I believe UFOs belong to someone else and that they are from some other civilization".

Gordon Cooper: "I believe that UFOs, under intelligent control, have



Flake of ice floating off of the X-15 rocket plane. Some investigators call this a "large UFO". NASA photo 76-H-139.



Clouds of debris surround the Saturn booster rocket following Apollo separation. Blow-up photos of individual pieces of debris inside and outside the cabin have been called "UFOs". NASA photo AS17-148-22687.

visited our planet for thousands of years".

None of these men claim to have seen UFOs in space. By now it should be obvious to open-minded investigators that no other astronaut claims to have seen any either. Suggestions that they have really done so are either misconceptions, misrepresentations, or frauds on the part of UFO writers.

Yet another case in point has just been given, and it deals with the John

Young quotation. Young, in Seattle in 1973, said that the chances were good that there were intelligent civilizations on other planets (AP, Nov. 27, 1973). The newsman started the article with the lead, "John Young says that the odds are that Unidentified Flying Objects do exist", even though none of Young's quoted words indicated that at all. Before you could say "UFO flap", the UFO writers had a new authority:

John Young says, "Odds are UFOs exist".

It seems clear that astronauts as a class of the population do not possess any special knowledge about UFOs which they may have gained from their own experiences. They are about as well informed (or more truthfully, as badly misinformed) as the average citizen. To quote them as above with the suggestion that they are special authorities on UFOs is a misleading

and intellectually dishonest tactic. Three time space veteran Wally Schirra, who according to UFOlogists saw "glowing masses", actually lightning-lit clouds, over the Indian Ocean) has written, "I do not know enough about this subject to render an opinion of any kind. The only information I have is that which has been released to the public through the years by the various news media". UFO writers would have us believe that this is part of a vast conspiracy of lies which only they can penetrate.

The actual answer to the "shapeless light" that was seen on Apollo-12 illustrates the way NASA faces real space mysteries. The crew was puzzled by the sighting but reported it to space officials who made no effort to conceal the incident. If NASA were trying to cover up actual UFO sightings by astronauts, this was a good candidate for one—and it would never have been publicized.

Astronaut Dick Gordon revealed to me the unpublicized solution to the publicized mystery. In a letter dated

September 15, 1976, Gordon wrote: "I vividly recall the incident which occurred when a light of indistinct shape and size was spotted on our return to earth. . . (it) did appear to be in the Indian Ocean. In our discussions and debriefings that occurred later, Rusty Schweikart provided the answer. He simply said, 'how about the moon's reflection?' and, of course, that is what it was. . . How often those of us in aviation have seen the moon's reflection on the water in the course of a normal flight. We simply did not put it together in returning from lunar distance, where we had the black background of space, the dark night of the earth, and the moon behind us."

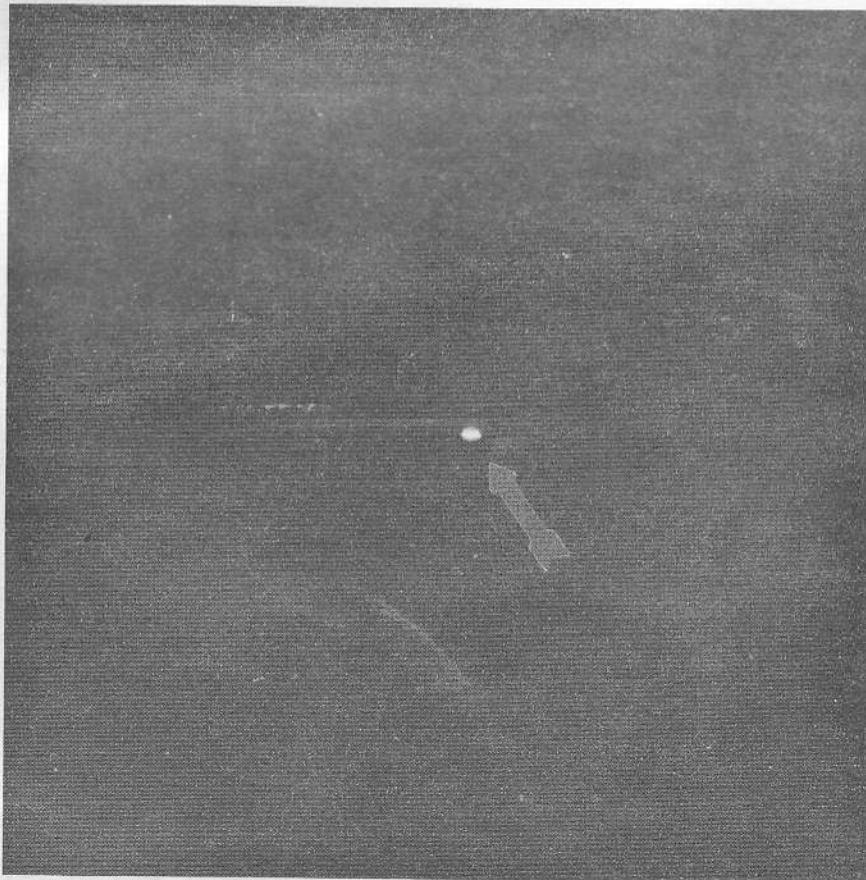
Other spacemen have been asked to answer these questions.. They have been forthright in their denials: "I never have personally seen anything I could identify as a UFO", says John Glenn, now a Senator from Ohio. Astronauts Grissom and Young said, "We have never seen any UFOs". Richard Gordon, who was with

Conrad on Gemini-11 and Apollo-12, writes that "I never saw a UFO". Astronaut "Deke" Slayton claims that "I don't recollect anyone reporting any UFOs on any of our flights".

"Buzz" Aldrin went to the moon on Apollo-11, on which the UFO press lists at least three separate UFO incidents. There were no UFOs: "There are people who say there's a government conspiracy to cover up the existence of flying saucers," Aldrin told a Reuters reporter in 1973, "That's a lot of hogwash."

The LM pilot on the next flight, Apollo-12, was Alan Bean. Following a new press conference in 1975 when James Harder repeated his stories of Apollo-11 and Apollo-12 UFOs, Bean told UPI that at no time during his mission did he ever see an unidentified object. "At no time did we see anything which was not of our spacecraft, either during lunar orbit or during the voyage to and from the moon," Bean stated.

A common source of space and other UFOs is shown here. The aura and the lens-shaped disc is actually a sunrise photographed from Skylab. NASA photo SL3-118-2177.



The APRO Bulletin (Feb. 1976) continued to generate new astronaut UFO fairy tales with the anonymous revelation from "Mr. X", who heard the Apollo-11 astronauts describe "three disc-shaped shadows that were pacing them across the surface of the moon." The best answer to this fabrication is in a letter from NASA Assistant Administrator for Legislative Affairs Robert F. Allnutt, to Congressman Bob Casey, dated January 29, 1970: "Conversation between the Apollo 11 crew and Mission Control were released live during the entire Apollo 11 mission. There were between 1000 and 1500 representatives of the news media present at the Houston News Center listening and observing, but not one has suggested that NASA withheld any news or conversations of this nature."

The evidence is clear. There is, out of all the dozens of "reports of astronaut UFO sightings", no residue of authentic cases, no 20% or 5% or even 0.01% of "true UFOs" behind all the "noise". My research is compelling in its conclusion: after fifteen years of manned space voyages including space stations and landing on the moon, spacemen have brought back not a shred of evidence—verbal, photographic, or otherwise—for the existence of extraterrestrial spacecraft, or "UFOs".

That evidence, if it exists at all, must be sought elsewhere. The performance and standards of conduct of the UFO groups and of UFO writers cannot be cause for optimism that such evidence, if it exists, will be recognized and correctly evaluated. The lesson of the "astronaut UFOs", then, teaches us nothing about UFOs, but a lot about UFO investigators.

Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects (Condon Report), Bantam Edition, 1969, Chapter 6: Visual Observations Made by Astronauts/Franklin E. Roach. Pages 176-209, with bibliography through 1967. Good background material including unpublished valid solutions to a number of cases. Incorrect solution to Gemini-XI case. Inadequate analysis and unjustified endorsement of Gemini-IV case.

The Edge of Reality, by Hynek and Vallee. Henry Regnery & Co., 1975. Page 63-64 in a section called "The

Scientists at Work", we find the phony Fawcett list. List has incorrect dates and many flights out of sequence. On July 1, 1976, Dr. J. Allen Hynek reviewed my evidence and endorsed it, and repudiated the Fawcett list, which he reported that he included in his book as a curiosity only. That is, just because he presented it as fact to thousands of readers was no reason for anyone to conclude he thought it was true. This appallingly irresponsible attitude towards rules of evidence seems to infect the whole UFO field.

Sightings by 26 Astronauts Confirm: UFOs Spied on Skylabs (sic) Many Other Space Shots—UFOs Watch Every Move NASA Makes, Say Astronauts Who Were Tailed on Space Shot, "National Tattler", March 17, 1974. This is an embellished version of the same Fawcett fantasies. Weekly tabloid newspaper "conformed to the highest standards of modern reporting. Tattler and its staff are dedicated to total, truthful coverage..." In fact, staffer Robert Abborino made no effort to check any of Fawcett's outrageous claims.

UFOs Past, Present and Future, by Robert Emenegger, research by Alan Sandler. Ballantine, 1974. Chapter 15, "Nasa", pages 100-106. Extensive transcripts of space communications cover up the fact that Sandler carefully selected evidence and must have knowingly omitted information which would have explained many cases. An excellent photo section is included.

UFO Report, People Press, 1975. "NASA Hiding UFOs From You", by Robert D. Barry, pages 4-10. Barry is associated with Carl McIntyre's fundamentalist Christian group, and is one of the wilder UFO writers. Even the mass media has learned to disregard his fictional descriptions of non-events. Here, he explains "why NASA called in the CIA to keep these photos secret", without explaining how, in that case, he got copies. He uses the forged Gemini-7 photo proudly.

Flying Saucers—Here and Now!, by Frank Edwards, Lyle Stuart, New York, 1967. Astronaut fantasies wholly or in part created in the fertile (and unlimited by reality) mind of 'newsman' Frank Edwards are found on pages 13, 180, and 197. Through such entries a journalism student can trace the actual growth of the myth.

APRO Bulletin, March-April 1970

and February 1976 and others. This flying saucer club newsletter best typifies the disregard for impartial investigation of evidence which provided the climate in which the myth of "astronaut UFOs" could grow and flourish.

The Star, March 2, 1976, page 7. Sequence of headlines: On the front page, "Astronauts Say: We Saw UFOs in Space". On page 7, "Top Astronauts Confirm: We spotted two UFOs". In the article, McDivitt talks of his UFO, and Cooper discusses his experiences as a fighter pilot in Germany—and makes no mention of the space UFO associated with his name. The headlines, as can be expected in such a newspaper, are deliberately misleading.

SAGA magazine, May 1970: *Classified TOP SECRET—Apollo Astronauts Reported Two UFO Sightings*, by Beckley and Salkin, p. 13 ff. Complete story of Apollo-12 UFOs, plus enough false information to "discredit" the true explanation. Quotes "space expert Gary Henderson", another active spreader of the myth. Refers to long-discredited stories of "secret dead Russian cosmonauts" probably created by Frank Edwards.

Houston Post, Nov. 30, 1975, page 1D: "Just One Astronaut Claims Seeing UFO", by Jim Maloney. This sensible and sane investigation (McDivitt stuck to his story) clearly did not excite the national news media and was relegated to the obscurity of a local newspaper.

Science and Mechanics, June 1969. Cover Story: "This UFO was photographed by astronaut Gordon on Gemini 11 flight" (the cover photo shows a tremendously enlarged out of focus image of a piece of insulation floating a few inches in front of the camera). Page 44, Lloyd Mallan: "Are UFO Space Crews Spying on our Astronauts?" Description of the late L. Mallan's interviews on Gemini-11, provides some new information but cements some old misconceptions. Also embellishes Condon Report "unknowns".

Lockheed-NASA Contract NAS 9-5191 (March 1970), "Technical Report: Unidentified Visual Phenomena Associated with Space Flight", F. Beatty and J. Baron. Discusses the fragments seen and photographed on Apollo-12, and traces them to spacecraft effects.