

## **Anatomy of a Hoax: The Philadelphia Experiment Fifty Years Later**

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**Abstract**— The "Philadelphia Experiment" concerns the allegedly paranormal disappearance of a Navy destroyer from the docks of the Philadelphia Navy Yard in the late Summer of 1943, followed by disclosures of official contact with extraterrestrial powers. Claims made by purported witnesses of this supposedly secret Navy test directed by Albert Einstein have been repeatedly found to be fraudulent. The author has now interviewed a man who served on a companion ship to the destroyer in question, and who was on the scene the night of its supposed disappearance, which he is able to explain in minute detail. Yet the features of the story are such that it survives in the UFO literature and that it is now being revived under a novel form for the benefit of a new generation of readers. Using this incident as a model of a successful hoax, the present article extracts thirteen parameters that have been instrumental in its remarkable survival over the last fifty years; it compares the features of this fabrication to other questionable episodes of UFO lore; finally, it attempts to draw up a list of suitable measures for their detection, challenge and ultimate exposure.

### **The Prevalence of Hoaxes**

One of the remarkable features of the study of the paranormal is the permanence and pernicious influence of hoaxes. Not only do spurious stories arise, as they would in any other field, but they are eagerly seized upon with little effort at initial verification, even by people who have an established reputation as objective researchers. Frank criticism of the process inevitably arises, but it is commonly mistaken for an attack upon the integrity or the intelligence of the advocates of the case who naturally feel defensive and harden their position. Those who continue to question the "evidence" tend to be assimilated with skeptics and their objections are often misrepresented.

The media contribute to giving such stories an aura of respectability, to such an extent that tall tales come to represent the only "knowledge" of the paranormal the public will eventually cite in everyday conversation.

Even more remarkable is the fact that some hoaxes tend to acquire a life of their own, and continue to be invested with believability among the public even when overwhelming negative data eventually create unanimous agreement among specialists about their lack of substance. This makes the work of the researcher vastly complicated, not only because the field becomes heavily tainted by the unreliability of these stories, but because one has to spend an in-

ordinate amount of time explaining the situation to outsiders and dispelling prior misconceptions.

From a sociological point of view, however, hoaxes are quite interesting. They provide rich insights into the preconceptions of both believers and skeptics. They illuminate the motivations of the authors of the plot and the eagerness of the spectators.

For any hoax to succeed it has to be believable and relevant. Those that endure, resisting even the absolute proof, the definitive exposure of the culprits and their methods, are endowed with additional qualities. They resonate with deep-seated imagery in the minds of the masses and of the educated public. They never fail to generate high ratings on prime time. They touch all of us, whether or not we like to admit it. Their victims are as likely to be found among the highly educated, even the scientifically trained, as they are among the masses. In the words of Norman Mailer, "if lying is an art, then fine lying is a fine art" (Mailer, 1991).

Proven or suspected hoaxes abound in contemporary ufology. The saga of UMMO in Spain provides an example of a story which is simply too good and whose implications appear too profound for believers to be swayed by rational arguments. Even absolute proof of trickery can always be superseded with the notion that a truly superior alien civilization might well plant fake photographs or false prophecies in order to test the faith of its followers on earth, an argument actually volunteered by the self-described Aliens themselves in some UMMO documents (Vallee, 1991). Sociologists have long observed that exposure, in such cases, may even serve to strengthen the core of a belief system, no matter how outrageous, although it does tend to scatter away the outer layer of sympathizers (Festinger, 1956).

In this regard, paranormal hoaxes are no different than their religious or political counterparts. Exposure of the *Protocols of the Sages of Zion*, a fabrication that began as a fake document concocted by the dreaded Russian Okhrana in 1905 and was successfully picked up and reframed against the Jews by Nazi propaganda in the Thirties with terrifying efficacy (Cohn, 1967), has not permanently dulled its impact. Indeed the *Protocols* have now reappeared as "channeled" material from space entities, thus endowed with that glow of supreme authority that many New Age believers find harder to question than a "mere" historical document, and absolving the human medium from any unnecessary burden of guilt (Ecker, 1992). If specific incentive to study the structure of hoaxes was necessary, this horrible example from recent history should be enough motivation for us to work hard at studying and exposing hoaxes in our own field.

The present article focuses on a particularly resilient fabrication that exhibits all the important features of a successful ufological hoax, enabling us to analyze it in detail. As we proceed with this study we will attempt to point out the possible parallels among various UFO stories or rumors exhibiting similar characteristics.

### **Fifty Years ago: The Philadelphia Experiment**

Mention UFOs casually in any cocktail conversation, and people are likely to bring up a number of "actual cases" they have heard discussed on television shows such as *Sightings* or *Unsolved Mysteries*. The alleged UFO crash at Roswell, the MJ-12 documents (which purport to emanate from an American Government agency that knows all about the nature and purpose of UFOs and their alien occupants) and various sensational abduction reports will probably be mentioned. Then, almost as an afterthought, someone may ask, "wasn't there a secret Navy test in the Forties, in which a whole destroyer actually disappeared?" Others may volunteer that Einstein had something to do with it, and that many serious researchers believed the incident to be the key to the nature of UFOs. You will be confronted once again with the tall tale of the Philadelphia Experiment.

The story, of which we have just celebrated the fiftieth birthday, is a good example of a hoax about which everything has become known, thanks to many years of diligent research by people who were first fascinated by the tale and gradually grew skeptical of its extraordinary claims. Its impact on the public over the fifty years that have elapsed since the initial incident has been significant: one hard cover book signed by widely-read author Charles Berlitz and veteran paranormal investigator William L. Moore has become the standard reference (Berlitz and Moore, 1979). It is "dedicated to the outriders of science whose quest for knowledge takes them to the most distant stars and to the innermost worlds." A feature movie directed by Stewart Raffill was released in 1984, starring Michael Pare in the role of a vanishing sailor. The dramatic nature of the story was enhanced by its impact on several early UFO researchers, including Morris K. Jessup. It was given an aura of further credibility by the obvious interest shown by the Office of Naval Research in the initial stages and by the secrecy surrounding it. Official secrecy, which often results from purely bureaucratic procedures, tends to be taken by advocates as evidence of cover up, making wild speculation seem legitimate. Contributing to the mystery was the enigmatic personality of the man who claimed to be the main witness and a direct link to space intelligences, Carl M. Allen alias Carlos Allende.

Our purpose here is not to expose the story one more time, but to dissect it into the key elements that have enabled it to remain alive and to influence the imaginations of so many people for so long. We will endeavor to hammer the final nail into the coffin by relating the previously unpublished testimony of a man who was on the scene in July and August 1943 and who contacted the present author to set the record straight. We will show how the Philadelphia Experiment, now regarded as a "dead horse" among ufologists, is being quietly reborn for the benefit of a new generation of believers under the trappings of the "Montauk Project."

In conclusion we will attempt to draw general lessons from the survival of this blatant hoax over half a century. We have identified thirteen important fea-



Fig 1 U.S.S. Eldridge (DE 173) on September 12, 1943 (National Archives)

tures that made the story compelling. It is our hope that the safeguards drawn from the study can help us recognize patterns this outright fabrication shares with other tales that arc: capturing the imagination of paranormal researchers today.

### **Feature No. 1: A Very Precise and Amazing "Fact"**

Vague stories about merely curious or unusual happenings naturally fail to hold an audience's interest for very long. Folklore experts, psychological warfare specialists and Intelligence officers are aware that such vague stories are often leading indicators of important facts, but they know what to look for. The general public does not. Thus for a hoax to reach mythic proportions, as the Philadelphia Experiment does, it must be truly amazing by the boldness of its claims and it must have a well-defined localization in time and space.

There is no ambiguity on this score: according to the main witness a large ship, destroyer DE-173, identified as the *USS Eldridge* (see Figure 1), performed the impossible feat of disappearing from the Philadelphia Navy yard (see Figure 2) in late July or early August 1943. A secret experiment was conducted and "the result was complete invisibility of a ship, destroyer type, and all of its crew, while at Sea" (Steiger and Bielek, 1990).

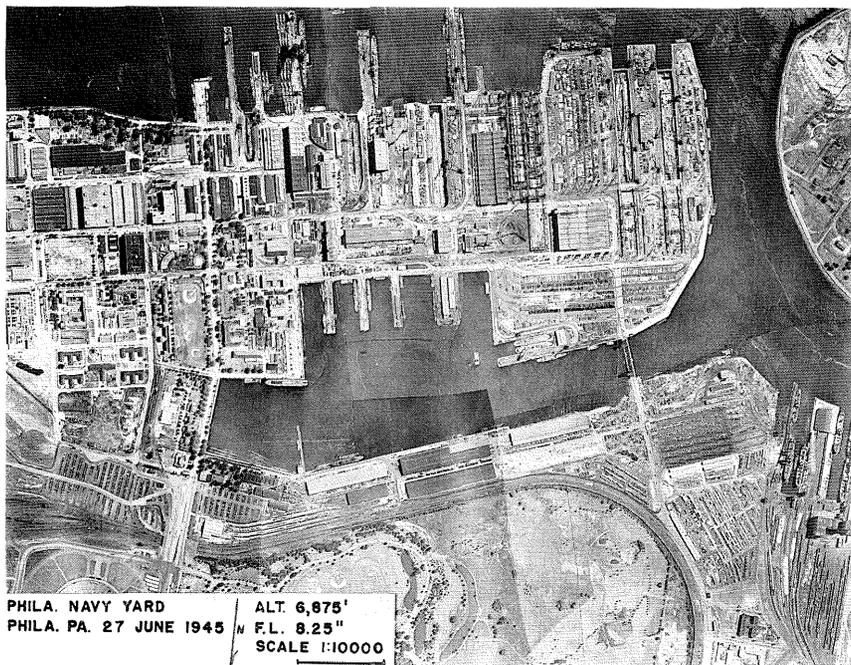


Fig 2 The Philadelphia Navy Yard during World War II

In a letter sent to me in 1967 the alleged primary witness wrote:

I watched it, saw it, observed its birth, growth, action and reaction upon the vehicle to which the \u00f0pel-field was being applied (Allende, 1967).

Sailors were said to have been affected by the field, to such an extent that some went insane, others developed mysterious illnesses. Two of the sailors even vanished from a local bar under condition\ that left the waitresses terrified and confused. Not only did the ship become invisible, but it was teleported to Norfolk, returning to Philadelphia in an impossibly short time. During its period of invisibility, some ufologists claim, the U.S. military was able to contact alien entities with whom they established cooperation (Berlitz and Moore, 1979, p. 159).

### Feature No. 2: Interesting Witnesses

The first revelation about the stunning "Navy test" in Philadelphia came in the form of a series of letters sent to writer Morris K. Jessup by a man named

Carl M. Allen. Mr. Allen, who also signed Carlos Miguel Allende, sent the missives from Gainesville, Texas but gave his address as RD. No. 1, Box 223, New Kensington, Pennsylvania. He claimed to have first-hand knowledge of the experiments in question. Alerted by Jessup, Navy investigators were said to have gone there and found nothing but a vacant farmhouse.

In the absence of a captivating primary witness, the most remarkable paranormal story generally fails to make an impact on the public and on the media. Reliable UFO observations are often disregarded by the press because of this fact. In the important Trans-en-Provence case (Velasco, 1990) the primary witness is a quiet retired worker who shuns publicity and speaks French with such a heavy Italian accent as to be difficult to understand. A very hospitable man, he remains accessible to serious researchers (believers and skeptics alike) but he declines to appear on television shows and refuses most press interviews. Such stories make for poor media material. Contrast this with a flashy contactee like George Adamski or a man with an extraordinary career as petty crook, race car driver and soldier of fortune like Swiss adventurer Billy Meier, and the difference is obvious. Thus the witness must have an interesting, intriguing personality, he or she must be someone about whom we are eager to learn more. In this regard, hints that the person has vanished, possibly because he fears for his life or guards valuable secrets, greatly enhance the tale.

Carlos Allende was in hiding for most of his existence. He corresponded with several people in the field, yet his whereabouts could never be pinned down. In 1967 he wrote to me from Dallas, Texas, giving a return address in Minneapolis. Other letters were mailed from Mexico. Allende remained an elusive figure until the summer of 1969, when he dropped by the Tucson office of the Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (APRO) and confessed the whole thing was a hoax, but he later recanted his confession. Bill Moore expanded on the mystery, devoting much of his book with Berlitz to the mystery of Allende: "it is still virtually impossible to say very much about him with any degree of certainty," he wrote, leaving the impression that the man might be a Gypsy initiate, while Steiger and Whritenour went one step further, asking boldly: "were Carlos Allende and his correspondents representatives of an extraterrestrial power which took root on earth centuries ago and has long since established an advanced underground culture?" (Steiger and Whritenour, *op. cit.*)

The mystery was eventually brought much closer to earth. In July 1979, researcher Robert A. Goerman, whose hometown happened to be New Kensington, Pa., discovered that one of his neighbors, seventy-year old Harold Allen, was in fact Carl's father. Born on May 31, 1925 in Springdale, PA, Allende had no gypsy blood whatsoever. He had three brothers, Frank, Donald and Randolph, and one sister, Sarah. Goerman's investigations cast an unflattering light on the life of Carl Allen. Although brilliant in school, he never really used his mind and never worked very hard at anything except what his brothers describe as "leg-pulling." Goerman concluded:

Carl Meredith Allen is an outcast by his own choice. He has nothing to show for himself but his marvelous tale of a disappearing ship and the "legendary book" he claims he co-authored (Goerman, 1980).

As to the vacant farmhouse at RD #1, Box 223, New Kensington, it was simply never vacant, and the Allen family still owns the property. The "investigators" who claimed to have gone there may simply have been indulging in a little lie of their own.

About 1983 Carlos Allende showed up in Denver, where my friend Linda Strand, a science writer, interviewed him and took his picture (Vallee, 1991). She describes him as an odd character, a typical drifter who made off-the-wall statements and scribbled some marginal notes in her copy of the Berlitz-Moore book before walking off again. He offered no explanation of what he claimed to have seen.

### **Feature No. 3: Claims of Verifiable Evidence**

The appearance of verifiable evidence is essential to make a hoax credible. I say "the appearance" because, oddly enough, actually producing physical specimens does not always contribute to the strength of a story in the eyes of believers, perhaps because it deflates some of the mystery. Nobody has yet produced any residue from the allegedly massive UFO crash at Roswell, yet it is probably the most heavily-researched single case in history and the most-often quoted story on television today, while other cases where physical evidence is available for laboratory analysis are receiving only cursory interest from the media and from UFO groups. Similarly, Robert Lazar has yet to produce samples of "Element 115" which he claims is vital to the propulsion of captured flying saucers he describes as sitting in a secret hangar at Nellis Air Force Base, but the absence of this evidence has only served to exacerbate interest towards the story in ufological circles, while more fruitful avenues of inquiry were left untouched. Similarly, the field of abduction research is replete with claims of terminated pregnancies for which no physiological evidence has been produced so far, yet the reality of the claims is not doubted among mainstream ufologists. In one current interpretation, this complete absence of physiological traces is even taken as further evidence that the Aliens are truly advanced technologically. In the present case, letters from Carlos Allende strongly and repeatedly suggested that evidence could be found in the form of ship logs, secret reports and witnesses testimonies, but it was always just beyond the reach of independent investigators.

### **Feature No. 4: Dramatic Sequels**

The three elements mentioned above: a precise unusual claim, an interesting witness and the dangling of verifiable evidence are enough to establish a strong framework for a fake story but it would not cause the imagination of a wide

public to catch on fire if it stopped there. Instead, it would remain as one of the many tales that get buried in the pages of tabloids and specialized publications. We want to know "what happened next?" And it is in this regard that the Philadelphia story shines, with tragic developments, strange twists and evidence of official meddling.

First came the involvement of Morris Jessup, an auto parts salesman who had done graduate work in astronomy at the University of Michigan, but never completed his doctorate there. A dedicated and honest researcher, Jessup published a book entitled *The Case for the UFO* in 1955. On 13 January 1956 he received the first of over fifty letters from Carlos Allende, criticizing Jessup for speculating about Unified Field Theory and describing an interpretation of Einstein's physics resulting in the Navy experiment leading to the invisibility of the destroyer. Jessup was troubled but he could never get anything specific and dropped the matter. The only "proof" Allende could provide for his claims was a list of a few names of people who were with him aboard the Matson Lines Liberty ship, the S. S. Andrew Furuseth, but he recalled no exact dates.

In the Spring of 1957, however, Jessup was officially contacted by the Office of Naval Research (ONR) in Washington, D. C. They were in possession of a paperback copy of his book, posted in Seminole, Texas, heavily annotated by three different writers using different color pens. The annotations implied that the annotators knew everything about UFOs, including their origin and the secret of their propulsion. Major Darrell Ritter had brought the annotated book to the attention of Captain Sidney Sherby and Commander George Hoover, who was Special Projects officer. These men in turn had called Jessup, who was amazed at the scientific-sounding terms the three writers were using to describe their knowledge, which reminded him of Allende's letters. He brought his earlier correspondence with the elusive witness to the Navy's attention. At the instigation of Hoover and Sherby, the Varo Manufacturing company of Garland Texas, a military contractor, privately reprinted the annotated text of Jessup's book, reportedly producing 127 copies which quickly became collectors' items. In the Sixties and Seventies this "Varo edition" played the same role for UFO buffs as the MJ-12 documents and the "Dulce papers" are now playing: it was supposed to contain the final truth about flying saucers and the government's secret knowledge of them.

The Allende revelations became an obsession for Jessup. In connection with a car accident and marital difficulties, the murky disclosures that ONR seemed to take so seriously drove the disturbed researcher into even deeper emotional turmoil. On 20 April 1959 Jessup committed suicide. The proof that Carl Allen had impersonated all three annotators would not be available until 1980, when Goerman would publish the results of his interviews with the Allen family.

### **Feature No. 5: High-Tech Believability**

In order to engage the continued involvement of interested parties with a technical orientation, a UFO hoax must be endowed with an aura of high-falut-

ing scientific acumen. Thus Area 51 at Nellis AFB is said to be filled with anti-gravitational devices clearly beyond earth technology, using a trans-uranian element yet to be disclosed in the scientific press. The alien civilization on UMMO is said to possess even more remarkable knowledge. Boasting a base-twelve numerical system, the Ummites are comfortable with technological concepts that include self-repairing spacecraft and "universes interacting with their own images in the mirror of time" (Petit, 1991).

In an astonishing letter of fifteen pages of closely-scribbled script, Allende wrote to me about similar concepts of advanced physics:

Some day magnetodynamics will have so vastly expanded in scope that there will be, of necessity, the realization that it shall then have become not merely an infant discipline, as now, but an actual, TOTAL science... we shall, long hence, then have caught up with Dr. Einstein and his "FORCE-FIELD PHYSICS".

Claiming to have made several important discoveries in physics, and drawing from such examples of large-scale effects as astronomers' observations of colliding galaxies in Bootes, Allende went on to write:

The experimental object, once it had been subjected to repeated activations of the device emitting that large force-field and accompanying UV light, (...) did a most revealing thing: IT RETURNED TO ITS POINT OF ORIGIN. In doing so, it formed a super-dense force-field all around it (an envelope) and traversed a near 225 mile distance, INSTANTANEOUSLY.

One of Allende's conjectures was that the universe, too, would some day contract and return to its point of origin, as the DE173 had done under his very eyes. And he claimed that once Einstein had read the Varo edition of Jessup's book and the revelations contained in the Allende letters his health was affected and he died shortly thereafter.

Other writers have hinted at the presence of complex equipment on board the Eldridge. Thus a recent book claims that several large generators were placed in the hold, a forward turret was chopped off. Four transmitters were put on her deck, along with a special transmitter and an antenna (Steiger & Bielck, op. cit.).

### **Feature No. 6: Involvement of Visible Scientists**

The involvement of highly-visible scientists or personalities like Albert Einstein is a key feature of the hoaxing mechanism in ufology. Much is being made of the purported connection between Robert Lazar and Dr. Edward Teller at

Nellis Air Force Base, for instance, although Dr. Teller has denied anything but casual acquaintance with the man. Promoters of the UMMO story have capitalized on the involvement of Dr. Jean-Pierre Petit, a French astrophysicist who has become a staunch supporter of the story (Petit, 1991). The Philadelphia Experiment promoters are not content with using the name of Albert Einstein and John Von Neumann for the same purpose. The Berlitz-Moore book drags in Dr. Townsend T. Brown, said to be an academic protégé of a "Dr. Biefeld" who is said to have conducted experiments in antigravity with him. As my correspondent Robert Hauser has pointed out, however, only two "Biefelds" are cited in the American *Who's Who in Science*. One received a degree in chemistry from Denison in 1930, the other in physical chemistry in 1948, also at Denison. Dr. Brown attended Denison in 1924-25 and could not have been a "protégé" of either man (Hauser, 1987).

The list of great scientists allegedly involved in the Philadelphia Experiment does not stop there. John Von Neumann figures prominently in Bill Moore's claims. More recently, a man named Al Bielek has come out with sensational claims: he was one of the sailors involved in the experiment described by Allende. He added that the scientific principles involved had been pioneered by Nikola Tesla, Dean John Hutchinson of the University of Chicago and an Austrian, Dr. Emil Kurtenauer. Bielek did not consciously remember this for a long time, he says in his lectures and interviews, because he was brainwashed into forgetting his part in the secret project, but he says he rediscovered it as his memory gradually returned after he saw the movie in 1988.

### Feature No. 7: Official Secrecy

There is an undeniable thrill associated with the discovery of things that are kept from us by authority figures: parents, movie stars, the military, big corporations or governments. Investigative journalists, who were raised to the status of culture heroes in the Seventies after the revelations of Watergate, have served as models for eager researchers in the UFO field where the lies emanating from the military establishment are especially obvious. Requests patiently filed under the Freedom of Information Act have led to interesting findings in many cases.

A good hoax can use this situation to great advantage by dragging official agencies into this scheme. The authors of the UMMO fabrication went so far as to involve the Madrid station of the CIA in their plot. They wrote to the Agency, claiming they could teach its analysts how to recognize Aliens walking among us on the earth. This gave both a sense of importance and danger to their activity and it provided believers with an almost irresistible thrill.

A correspondent of mine who used to work at the explosives research office of the Naval Sea Systems Command saw a classified file which contained correspondence from the Navy to Albert Einstein regarding his work for them during World War Two. When the head of the office tried to get the contents of the folder declassified so he could write an article for the in-house Navy mag-

azine, his request was denied. Such facts lend credibility to hoaxes claiming that the government "knows more than it is telling," which is certainly true, and that it must have the answer to the UFO problem, which is an unwarranted conclusion. By using evidence of government secrecy as a springboard, the hoaxer can "fill in the blanks" in a sequence of events which involve classified situations, and any far-fetched story can be made believable. The involvement of ONR in the Jessup story endowed Allende's claims with a veneer of official interest that suggested deeper, darker motives among top-level military researchers.

### **Feature No. 8: Relevance to a General Audience**

Many true activities of the paranormal field are so complex and so intricate that they fail to capture the imagination of the public. The interested layman has very little opportunity to become personally involved in such research. The PK experiments conducted at Princeton University, for instance, demand a keen understanding of statistics, not to mention physical theory, for even a rudimentary grasp of the work being conducted. Similarly, remote viewing experiments involve complex controls that are rarely mentioned when the press alludes to what it calls "psychic feats."

On the contrary, when Carlos Allende claimed that he had witnessed the disappearance of a large vessel he could be readily understood by a vast audience. His revelations involved a situation anyone could clearly visualize: one instant the destroyer was in the harbor in Philadelphia, the next instant it wasn't there any more. Sailors were caught in an incredibly powerful "force field." Some became ill, others became crazy. This was the kind of tale to which teen-agers, science-fiction buffs, military personnel and even the "average Joe" drinking beer at the corner saloon could easily relate. Even more importantly, this was the kind of story that would lend itself to adaptation and convenient filming by camera crews, a tale that was both intriguing, dramatic and visual, as opposed to most scientific endeavors which are either boring, complicated or too abstract for a general audience.

### **Feature No. 9: Validation by Credible Researchers**

Many eager UFO researchers became involved in the Philadelphia story after Jessup's death. Ivan T. Sanderson, a well-known naturalist, author and researcher of the paranormal, had always been interested in the case through his friendship with Jessup. His correspondence with other authors contributed to keep the story alive. Such researchers as Stanton Friedman and Gray Barker commented on the case. The latter even suggested that Morris Jessup had been assassinated, and his death disguised as a suicide.

UFO writer Jerome Clark, now a vice-president of the Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) penned one of the articles in a collection entitled *The Allende Letters* (Steiger, 1968). He argued that "we can no longer ignore the strong

possibility that UFO entities are regularly passing in our midst, often in forms that are invisible to the human eye" and he mentioned the Allende letters in support of his theory. Noting that "the peculiar interest of the Navy in his letters and the later Varo document indicate an element of truth in his writing," Clark speculated that "the creation of an invisibility ray is within the grasp of terrestrial science. Then what about extra-terrestrial science?"

As late as June 1993 a group of sophisticated parapsychologists in the San Francisco Bay Area sponsored a lecture by J. Randolph Winters in which the Philadelphia Experiment was prominently mentioned. Reporting on the speaker's presentation, their newsletter disclosed that "he began to range into equally mind-stretching areas: the role of reptilian aliens, time travel, and government cover-up in the famous Philadelphia Experiment anti-radar invisibility project during World War II, where a U.S. naval ship disappeared, teleported, and returned" (Klimo, 1993). Even Carlos Allende would be at a loss to recognize his own fabrications in what has become a hodge-podge of reptilian invaders and faulty radar tests that lead to unforeseen invisibility and actual teleportation, surely one of the most spectacular examples of miscalculation in the history of physics.

### Feature No. 10: Media Amplification

Most important technical developments take place in secret and are kept from inquisitive reporters. Computer companies rarely talk about the features of future products until they are very close to releasing them, if only to avoid tripping the sales of their existing line or compromising patent applications. Central banks use the strictest precautions before changing lending rates, and many prominent individuals pay hefty retainers to public relations firms to keep their name and their affairs out of the newspapers rather than promoting their activities, simply because confidence and trust are more important ele-

TABLE I  
Chronology of Events

1943 August	Philadelphia Navy "test"
1956 January 12	Allende writes to Jessup
1956	Fifty-five letters from Allende to Jessup
1957 Spring	ONR - Varo involved
1959 April 20	Jessup's suicide
1967	Allende letters to J. Vallee
1968	J. Clark article "Allende letters" by Steiger & Whritenour
1969	Allende at APRO
1979	Berlitz & Moore book
1980 October	Goearman article
1983	Allende in Boulder
1984	Raffill movie
1989 September	Al Bielek claims to be a witness
1990	Steiger & Bielek book
1991	Montauk experiment publicized
1992 November	Dudgeon testifies

ments in business than publicity or ego gratification. Once the deal is signed, routine public disclosure generally follows.

Not so with most UFO stories. Researchers hardly take the time to gather a few basic facts as they rush before the cameras with their breathless tale: presumably the information is so vital that the world must be told about it immediately. Oddly enough, however, those elements of the story that would enable a *bonafides* scientist to check its validity are generally withheld. Independent researchers are left with sensational claims they are not in a position to validate. Such is the case with the Billy Meier photographs in Switzerland (where negatives have never been available although thousands of UFO pictures have reportedly been taken) and the equally sensational Linda Napolitano abduction in New York, which prominent ufologists have labeled "the case of the century."

The proper term for such handling of information is "dangling": the story is immediately presented before our eyes, but we are not permitted to cross-examine the witnesses or to test the truthfulness of the assertions. The American public has even seen alleged Intelligence officers appear on television behind a suitably private screen, their voices carefully disguised, to reveal such shocking secrets as the reality of the MJ-12 documents or the physiology of the Aliens. Few people seemed to notice (or indeed, to care) that identification of the informants in question would be child's play for any Intelligence agency employing them. The obvious conclusion — that the case was another hoax — was never drawn.

The Philadelphia Experiment was similarly amplified through a book and a movie long before the facts could be checked out, and at a time when Carlos Allende still claimed that full disclosure of his experience would put him in terrible danger.

The motivation of the media in amplifying such stories has little to do with the duty to keep the public informed of important scientific developments. It is simply driven by the need to increase ratings by presenting a constantly-renewed stream of colorful, controversial characters to a capricious audience.

In promoting the story the media will not hesitate to distort it to fit the requirements of a dramatic script or a suitably impressive camera angle. Thus, as pointed out to me by some of my readers, some popular shows were not content with making the Eldridge invisible, but made it vanish physically. Presumably such a sudden disappearance would have created an emergency as 1,900 tons of water rushed to fill the void, resulting in large waves that would have swept through the entire Navy yard. This unavoidable consequence of the "experiment" is not discussed anywhere.

Media amplification has two effects: dissemination to a wide public and creation of a permanent record. In the words of Curtis MacDougall "in book form (a hoax) is admitted to libraries, where it remains unaltered to trap the unsophisticated regardless of how many other books are written to debunk it" (MacDougall, 1958). The same can be said for videotape and computer mail, which are fast becoming the media of choice for the spreading of spurious, untraceable rumors.

### **Feature No. 11: Relevance to Believers**

Giving believers something to do is very important to the success of a hoax, because we tend to attach more credence to an event which represents our personal investment in time, energy and money. "How can I get involved?" is a question often heard from would-be paranormal investigators. The obvious answer is to get a degree in science and to be prepared for long and possibly tedious analyses, the study of transcripts and the compilation of statistics. This is not the answer most UFO enthusiasts are seeking: they want action, the thrill of the chase and the opportunity to uncover sensational answers quickly. That motivation has driven hundreds of sightseers to visit locations like Gulf Breeze or Nellis Air Force base for a chance to see strange lights in the sky, while very few people have done the basic research work necessary to find out what the lights in question were.

Interest in a UFO story dies quickly unless it acquires a constituency. A good hoax has to lead to specific tasks or missions in which the believers can invest mental energy, physical activity and leisure time. In some contactee cases, like the "Pleiades" hoax, there is a cult one can actually join. Without going that far, a good fabricator can create excitement by spreading around some artifacts (photographs, letters, official-looking documents, tape recordings, bits of physical objects) all of which demand time, skill and effort for analysis. In that regard the UMMO hoax is a work of genius, since it generated all of the above, from bizarre metallic cylinders to actual landing traces, photographs and thousands of pages of scientific-sounding documents. Many of the believers continue to analyze this mass of "evidence," traveling endlessly to meetings, interviewing and investigating each other, and visiting the locations mentioned in the documents in the hope of finding validation.

The Philadelphia Experiment succeeds almost as well in this regard. There are many records that can be checked and elusive witnesses to be tracked down. There are scientific-sounding claims to be verified and official archives of the U.S. Navy and the Merchant Marine that need to be consulted to find the whereabouts of the various ships mentioned by Carlos Allende. Additional witnesses could be sought, wild speculation seemed warranted.

Hundreds of researchers became involved, contacting the National Archives and other government offices for lists of names and other items that would permit them to reconstruct the official history of the Eldridge. Much new information was obtained in the process. Others chased down copies of the Varo edition, analyzed its contents, and argued for and against the extraterrestrial origin of the writers. Still others attempted to catch Carlos Allende, with no success. The Philadelphia Experiment became a veritable cottage industry.

### **Feature No. 12: Adequate Socio-Economic Framework**

As an "underdog" on the run, Carlos Allende had a degree of believability he would not have enjoyed if he had been, say, a drugstore owner in Toledo or a manager of a Safeway store in Tucson. In the late fifties and especially in the

sixties the American public was beginning to realize that sailors and other military personnel had occasionally been used as unsuspecting subjects in a variety of experimental situations ranging from epidemiology and bacteriological modeling to deliberate exposure to nuclear radiation to mind control. The Vietnam war, with its extensive use of defoliating agents, napalm and other chemicals, brought this into focus. As an alleged victim of a secret Navy experiment, Allende could count on the sympathy of his audience. A man claiming to have barely survived where others perished is assured to have at least the benefit of the doubt before any audience.

The involvement of Morris Jessup, another underdog, a marginal but clearly honest and dedicated researcher in a difficult field, added believability to the situation.

At a time when large defense budgets were being questioned by an increasing segment of the citizenry, it was appropriate to demand to know how the Pentagon was spending taxpayers' money. The peak of interest in the Philadelphia Experiment occurred during the "Great Society" era when social programs came into prominence. At the same time the Black Budget went through a period of huge inflation to support the heavily-classified surveillance satellite program. There was a general feeling that money was going somewhere in large amounts and that Washington was lying about its destination. From that realization to the thought that Allende was right about a radical, secret departure in physics, the distance was not very great. These conditions are once again met today, with huge, undocumented amounts of money going into the development and covert testing of novel weapons such as non-lethal platforms and low-observable systems while overt, official Washington talk is of reduced deficits, tight availability of cash, better social programs and lower Defense expenses. This very paradox appears to create an ideal framework and an atmosphere of credibility for new hoaxes on the model of the Philadelphia Experiment.

### **Feature No. 13: Hints of Secret Contact**

In ufological lore, the stories that capture the imagination of the widest audience are not limited to the documentation of a single phenomenon, no matter how remarkable. Rather, they hint at a larger backdrop that manifests through mysterious phone calls, visits by "men-in-black," unmarked helicopters and strange cars following the witnesses. Another manifestation of the same backdrop comes through the mail as anonymous letters or packages. We have already seen this efficient method in use in the UMMO hoax. Sometimes the information appears in the researcher's mailbox, like an undeveloped film in an unmarked canister that is said to have launched Bill Moore and his friend Jaime Shandera on the track of the Majestic Twelve group, another fabrication that has fascinated American ufology for several years. It is in similar fashion that the "evidence" which is said to corroborate the Philadelphia Experiment arrived in Bill Moore's mailbox.

"It is finally possible to announce what appears to be a breakthrough in this all-important area of the mystery," wrote Moore in the book he co-authored with Berlitz, adding: "In a secure safety deposit box there exists a photocopy of a newspaper clipping which was received from an anonymous source" (Berlitz & Moore, 1979).

The clipping, undated and without identification as to the newspaper of origin, is entitled *Strange Circumstances Surround Tavern Brawl*. It seems that a fight erupted in a Philadelphia bar in 1943, the Navy Shore patrol called the police for help, and officers found the place empty of customers:

According to a pair of very nervous waitresses, the Shore Patrol had arrived first and cleared the place out — but not before two of the sailors involved allegedly did a disappearing act. "They just sort of vanished into thin air... right there" reported one of the frightened hostesses, "and I ain't been drinking either!"

Damage to the tavern was estimated to be about six hundred dollars. By tying a larger, unverifiable mystery (a destroyer that became invisible) to a small, strange incident that can be verified but comes to us through an anonymous source, the unsuspecting reader gains the impression that the entire story has now been validated. Why was the clipping sent anonymously to Bill Moore? Could it be that any association with this episode is so terribly dangerous that the sender would be likely to face assassination if he revealed his identity? If this is true, then those in the know must remain in the shadows, helping brave investigators by putting hints and bits of evidence in their path. I am indebted to Mr. William Banks for pointing out to me that here again, the parallel with the whole saga of MJ-12, the alleged Roswell "UFO crash" and the Linda Napolitano abduction claim is compelling enough to deserve further investigation.

Tracking down and exposing such spurious embellishments to the original hoax can take a very long time. It involves luck as well as perseverance. And luck was on our side when I was able to meet with one of the sailors who were in that tavern in the Fall of 1943, and who told me the whole story.

### **What Actually Happened in Philadelphia**

In an earlier assessment of the Philadelphia Experiment data, the author offered the tentative conclusion that the story was, in part, based on fact: the Navy may have been involved in technically-advanced, classified tests in the Fall of 1943 (Vallee, 1991). These developments could have been misunderstood or deliberately romanticized by people like Allende, just as today we find tests of advanced flying platforms at Nellis Air Force Base being misinterpreted by believers. Furthermore I hypothesized that the experiments had to do with a radar countermeasures test. Indeed a Raytheon advertisement published

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Fig. 3 Dudgeon's Honorable Discharge from the Navy.

thirteen years ago suggested that the corresponding technology was now out in the open (Raytheon, 1980). This hypothesis, however, failed to explain a few of the facts that highlighted the story. In particular it did not account for the observed disappearance of the destroyer from the harbor, for the mysterious devices brought on board under extreme security precautions, or for the alleged disappearance of two sailors from a nearby tavern. I called out to any one of my readers who might have additional information. That is how I came to correspond, and later to meet face to face, with Mr. Edward Dudgeon.

"I am a sixty-seven year old retired executive. I was in the Navy from 1942 through 1945," began Mr. Dudgeon's letter (Dudgeon, 1992) explaining his purpose in contacting me (see Figure 3.) He confirmed that the idea of an actual, secret technical development was correct, but he said I was wrong about a radar test. The truth, as he patiently wrote to me, was simpler.

I was on a destroyer that was there at the same time as the Eldridge DE 173.... I can explain all of the strange happenings as we had the same secret equipment on our ship. We

were also with two other DEs and the Eldridge on shake-down in Bermuda and return to Philadelphia.

My correspondent suggested a meeting, adding "I am not looking for any compensation for this or media exposure. I just want someone to know what I know before it is too late."

A few weeks later I met with Mr. Dudgeon, who produced his identification and his discharge papers from the U.S. Navy. Over the next two hours he gave me the details of his story and answered my questions.

"You must realize that in forty three, the Germans had been sinking our ships as fast as they came out of the harbors into the Atlantic, which they called "the Graveyard." I was just a kid then. In fact I falsified my birth certificate in order to join the Navy in 1942. I was only sixteen at the time, turning seventeen in December of 1942."

"What was your training?" I asked him.

"I studied electronics at Iowa State. The Navy sent me to electronics school after boot camp. I graduated with the title of "electrician's mate third class" in February of 43, and then I went aboard ship in June 1943."

"Can you give me the name of the vessel?"

"Oh yes, the DE 50, U.S.S. Engstrom. It was a diesel electric ship, as opposed to the DE 173, the Eldridge, which was steam electric. These ships were run by the electricians. Our ship was put in dry dock so they could install high-torque screws."

"Why the special equipment?"

"The new screws made a sound of a different pitch, which made it harder for the submarines to hear us. They also installed a new sonar for underwater detection, and a device we called a "hedgehog" which was mounted in front of the forward gun mount on the bow. It fired depth charges in banks of twenty-four to thirty in a pattern, and could cover 180 degrees as far as about a mile away. That was one of the secrets. Your book Revelations was wrong about making the ship invisible to radar: the Germans hadn't deployed radar at the time. We were trying to make our ships invisible to magnetic torpedoes, by de-Gaussing them. We had regular radar and also a "micro-radar" of lower frequency. They could detect submarines as soon as they raised their periscopes or came up for air. We could pick them up in the dark or in fog as far as one or two miles away. That's when the Germans began to lose their U-boats."

"How does this relate to the Eldridge?" I asked Mr. Dudgeon.

"The Eldridge and the Engstrom were in the harbor together," he answered. "In fact four ships were outfitted at the same time: the 48, 49, 50 and the Eldridge, in June and July of 1943. The Navy used to de-Gauss all the ships in dry dock, even the merchant ships, otherwise the vessels acted as bar magnets which attracted the magnetic torpedoes."

"What was the procedure for shakedown?"

"All four ships went to Bermuda, which was a relay for the convoys to North Africa. There were several other destroyers *like*. They would send us out to train us to convoy. We also had a base in the Azores. The destroyers would go halfway and return to their respective base. The shakedown was scheduled for up to eight weeks but we only took five weeks to become proficient. We were there from the first week of July to the first week of August."

"What was your exact assignment on board?"

"I was electrician's mate third class petty officer. Our job was to make the ship speed up, slow down or reverse according to the bridge signals. Eight months later I was promoted to second class. Eventually we were sent to the Pacific. I served on that ship for a year and a half, from June 1943 to November 1944. Then I was sent to a special school at Camp Perry, Virginia."

"Whatever happened to the *Eldridge*'?"

"We separated with her after shakedown. The DE 48 and the *Eldridge* stayed in the Atlantic, based in Bermuda until early 1944, then they went to the Pacific theater too. The DE 49, which was our sister ship, and the DE 50 headed through Panama mid-September 1943 and were in the Pacific theater thereafter. There was nothing unusual about the *Eldridge*. When we went ashore we met with her crew members in 1944, we had parties, there was never any mention of anything unusual. Allende made up the whole thing."

"What about the luminous phenomena he described?"

"Those are typical of electric storms, which are very spectacular. St. Elmo's fire is quite common at sea. I remember coming back from Bermuda with a convoy and all the ships being engulfed in what looked like green fire. When it started to rain the green fire would disappear."

"Did you hear of Einstein being involved with Navy experiments at the time?"

"No. I believe that Einstein worked with the radar development group, but he wasn't involved in running actual tests. At least I never heard of it."

"How were the classified devices actually installed?"

"After the Navy commissioned the ship and we were ready to go to sea, the National Bureau of Standards brought a master compass in a box that looked like a foot locker and we made several runs at sea in different directions to calibrate the ship's compass against the master. That's the mysterious "box" that various reports have mentioned.

"Who was Allende? Did you ever meet him?" I asked, showing Mr. Dudgeon the various letters I had received from the man.

"I never did meet him. From his writings I don't think he was in the Navy. But he could well have been in Philadelphia at the time, serving in the merchant marine. He could also have been aboard a merchant ship we escorted back to the Philly-Norfolk area during a storm."

"What about the claim that generators were placed into the hold?"

"Aboard all diesel-electric and steam-electric destroyers there were two motors that turned a port or starboard screw. Each motor was run by a generator."

"What was the procedure when the Navy de-Gaussed a ship?"

"They sent the crew ashore and they wrapped the vessel in big cables, then they sent high voltages through these cables to scramble the ship's magnetic signature. This operation involved contract workers, and of course there were also merchant ships around, so civilian sailors could well have heard Navy personnel saying something like, "they're going to make us invisible," meaning undetectable by magnetic torpedoes, without actually saying it."

"What about the smell of ozone?"

"That's not unusual. When they were de-Gaussing you could smell the ozone that was created. You could smell it very strongly."

"What security precautions were taken?"

"Our skipper warned us not to talk about the radar, the new sonar, the hedgehog, and the special screws. But you know how it is, information will always leak out. Another classified device we had was the "foxer," which we immersed in the sea off the fantail and dragged half a mile to a mile behind the destroyer. It gave off signals resembling the sound of a merchant vessel's screw. This attracted the German subs which fired acoustic-seeking torpedoes at it, giving away their position and wasting ammunition."

"How long had all this secret equipment been available?"

"About six to eight months, as far as I can tell. By the time we sailed out, submarine warfare had turned in our favor along the East Coast."

"This doesn't tell us how the *Eldridge* disappeared into thin air, or what actually happened in the tavern in early August 1943."

"That's the simplest part of the whole story," Mr. Dudgeon replied. "I was in that bar that evening, we had two or three beers, and I was one of the two sailors who are said to have disappeared mysteriously. The other fellow was named Dave. I don't remember his last name, but he served on the DE 49. The fight started when some of the sailors bragged about the secret equipment and were told to keep their mouths shut. Two of us were minors. I told you I cheated on my enlistment papers. The waitresses scooted us out the back door as soon as trouble began and later denied knowing anything about us. We were leaving at two in the morning. The *Eldridge* had already left at 11 p.m. Someone looking at the harbor that night might have noticed that the *Eldridge* wasn't there any more and it did appear in Norfolk. It was back in Philadelphia harbor the next morning, which seems like an impossible feat: if you look at the map you'll see that merchant ships would have taken two days to make the trip. They would have required pilots to go around the submarine nets, the mines and so on at the harbor entrances to the Atlantic. But the Navy used a special inland channel, the Chesapeake-Delaware Canal, that bypassed all that. We made the trip in about six hours."

"Why did the ships have to go to Norfolk?"

"Norfolk is where we loaded the explosives. Those docks you see on the aerial photographs are designed for ammunition. The Navy loaded ships twenty-four hours a day. They could load a destroyer in four hours or less. I know

that's where the *Eldridge* went, and she wasn't invisible, because we passed her as she was on the way back from Virginia, in Chesapeake Bay."

"In other words, the process was: out of dry dock, down the canal, loading ammunition in Norfolk, back to Philadelphia, out to sea to set the compasses and test radar and sonar gear?"

"Exactly. The *Eldridge* never disappeared. All four ships went to Bermuda in July 43 and came back together in early August. During that time we were also caught in a storm that created a display of green fire accompanied by a smell of ozone. The glow abated when it started raining."

### **The Montauk Project**

Today most students of ufology (including such early proponents of the Al-lende letters as Jerome Clark) are in agreement that the Philadelphia Experiment hoax, which rested on very flimsy data to begin with, should have died a long time ago. It did not even involve any clear indications that might be directly relevant to ufology, since none of the witnesses described unusual objects in the sky or unusual beings. The case should have died a peaceful death in the sixties. Yet it has survived and thrived in a peculiar niche of the paranormal to this day. After a UFO lecture, or during a talk show, it is a common experience to have a member of the audience eagerly raise the question, "what about the Philadelphia Experiment?" And the whole "mystery" is now rebounding in a new form through the Montauk project, an alleged time-travel experiment. Here again there is a secret setting (an Air Force Base in New York rather than a Navy base in Pennsylvania), a book, alleged witnesses, and a videotape.

There is even a workshop on "Time Travel and the Alien Presence — a report on the Philadelphia Experiment and the Montauk Project" by Al Bielek, Preston Nichols and Duncan Cameron for \$150 in tuition, plus meals and shared lodging at \$100, or \$70 for camping. In the catalog of forthcoming events of the Rim Institute for 1993 one can read an advertisement which claims:

The Montauk project has been called one of America's greatest modern mysteries. The story began with the pioneering work of Wilhelm Reich and Nikola Tesla, took form in government-sponsored weather control experiments in the early 1940s, and crystallized in the ill-fated Philadelphia Experiment on invisibility during World War Two. The Philadelphia Experiment was closed, but long-term research continued. The Montauk project, running through the seventies and early eighties at New York's Montauk Air Force Base, was an attempt to explore, chart and ultimately manipulate the flow of time.

The key witness for these new revelations is Preston Nichols, who "regained the blanked memories of his role as chief technician for the project only after years of struggle." Alfred Bielek, co-author of the Philadelphia Experiment (in the book by Brad Steiger) claims to be one of two sailors who "fell through time" from the 1940s to 1983 and who later served as a consultant at Montauk. Duncan Cameron, "the foremost psychic employed by the Project," also fell through. In a very convoluted story, Al Bielek claims to have been born as Edward Cameron, who was Duncan Cameron's brother. Then alien technology was used by secret government agencies to erase him from his own time track and to give him the body and background of Alfred Bielek, born in 1927. Advertising the seminar run by Bielek and his fellow time-travelers the Rim Institute brochure concludes: "their story, whether accepted or not, is guaranteed (sic) to stretch the limits of your reality."

That last statement, at least, has the ring of truth.

### Countermeasures

What can the individual scientist do when trying to introduce rational research into a field where stories like the Philadelphia Experiment clutter the literature, and where exposure of such hoaxes is not welcome? An initial skeptical attitude is healthy, but keeping an open mind is essential. After all, many such stories do have a basis in fact, even if tenuous. As we have seen, the events surrounding the Eldridge were highly technical, highly secret, involved life-and-death decisions, and could logically trigger the imagination and the amazement of outsiders who gained partial acquaintance with them.

Beyond the basic need for an open mind and a rational attitude I can offer six tentative guidelines that I have found useful in my own approach to such stories.

- (i) Disregard self-described experts. Many of the pundits of ufology keep their notoriety alive by pandering to each other and to a small coterie of a few hundred readers of their magazines, forming a tiny "hard core." There are very few scientifically-trained individuals within this group where mutual admiration is the rule, and the sociology of the field is such that reinforcement of the dominant extraterrestrial hypothesis is more highly rewarded than exposing hoaxes, bringing novel knowledge or highlighting contradictions.
- (ii) Disregard the media. Television reports of UFO events (in shows like Sightings, Hard Copy, Geraldo, Unsolved Mysteries) are geared to ratings, not to knowledge. They select apparent enigmas and they downplay mundane explanations to generate a sense of wonder in their viewers. The data they present is so heavily biased as to be unusable, even when they deal with real events.
- (iii) Look for logical flaws. They are often flagged by the perilous and loaded term therefore. Most of the mistakes that have been made in ufology over the last fifty years have resulted from a simple fallacy

based on the misuse of that simple word. Examples are many: something crashed at Roswell (true) and was obviously covered up by the U.S. Air Force (true) *therefore* it must have been a flying saucer (false deduction). UFOs do not match what we expect terrestrial devices to do (true), *therefore* they must be from outer space (false deduction). And in the present case, a destroyer left its place in the harbor under highly secretive circumstances (true) and moved to another location in an "impossible" time (true given the witnesses' limited knowledge of the facts) *therefore* it must have been subjected to artificial invisibility, dematerialization or time travel (false deduction). The list of such basic logical flaws is endless.

- (iv) *Identify and remove irrelevant drama.* The remarkable feature of the present hoax is that the principal actor, Carl Allen, was only peripherally involved in the events he sensationalized and had no direct knowledge of the equipment he described. Yet he managed to create the entire myth almost single-handedly. He originated the drama of Jessup's involvement, the ONR study and the excitement of his own elusiveness. Einstein's death had no connection to the Allende letters. None of these "facts" had anything to do with the actual events in Philadelphia. In the same vein, Bill Moore amplified the spurious dramatization through his allegation that the "tavern brawl" clipping had mysteriously arrived in his mailbox and was "securely kept in a safe deposit box," irrelevant details which had nothing to do with the phenomenon under study. An undated clipping obtained through a strange conduit and kept in a secure place is no more reliable or important than the same clipping merely tacked to a wall, yet the mind is often fooled by such indicators of incipient mystery.
- (v) *Discover and test independent sources of information.* Are there witnesses? Hundreds of people work around harbors. Surely some of them remember the events. Historical records do exist and provide a framework for later research.
- (vi) *Disregard any claims of secrecy.* Some of the facts surrounding the subject of UFOs are classified, if only because the objects represent spurious signals that trigger classified sensors. There may well be a massive cover-up of relevant data, as ufologists claim. But most of the secrecy around stories like the present one exists only in the minds of those who seek to enhance the thrill of the chase or live their own romantic myth as intrepid investigators of the unknown. If one runs into actual security barriers there is always time to assess their nature and purpose. There certainly was genuine secrecy in Philadelphia because of the devices installed on the destroyer, as there is today at Area 51 of Nellis Air Force Base, where it is not difficult to guess at the general nature of the answers even if specific technical details remain obscure. In the present case, Vice-Admiral William D. Houser, former deputy chief of Naval Operations, has confirmed to us the procedure for

shakedown and loading of the ships as well as the use of the canal as described by Mr. Dudgeon. In conversations with the author, he cautioned that none of the electronic systems on the destroyers at that time were high-tech devices; the Navy was trying anything that could provide an advantage over the German submarines. The reason for all the secrecy was simply that the U.S. military didn't want the enemy to know what they were trying, not that any of the devices were beyond the state of the art.

The investigation of genuine UFO events follows an altogether different pattern. In the author's experience the most fruitful cases often occur in open country, there is no security perimeter to be defeated, and the actual site, although remote, is generally accessible and the witnesses can be located without heroic episodes.

### Conclusions

Few tasks are as important in the field of paranormal investigation as the detection and elimination of hoaxes. An area of research that does not police itself is eventually policed by others with utterly devastating consequences, as recent examples of fraud in academic research have shown. Popular ufology, which thrives on rumors, poorly-investigated reports, shoddy scholarship and outright fraud to the detriment of those genuine facts that are potentially relevant to science, provides a long history of colorful hoaxes that have come to define the field in the mind of the general public and have tainted it with a negative image in the view of scientists and educated laymen.

The problem with hoaxes is that they are charming, tantalizing, entertaining, and often correspond to what we would like to be true, as opposed to what is actually true. We have seen that the Philadelphia Experiment had all of these characteristics. This hoax, which should have died a long time ago under the combined efforts of several researchers, is an example of a story that simply refuses to die. It is surrounded with such an aura of mystery that it continues to be successfully exploited. Like some of those exhausted gold mines in the hills of Colorado which were drained of every ounce of metal in the nineteenth century, yet revive periodically in the offering circulars of unscrupulous underwriters as penny-stock mining companies with new fancy names, certain UFO stories always find gullible new investors. Even in 1993 the tale of the disappearance of the DE173 has lost none of its peculiar charm.

Hoaxes have been defined as "deliberately concocted untruths made to masquerade as fact" (MacDougall 1958). In a recent theoretical article on hoaxes, Marcello Truzzi notes that "there has been little deductive effort in social science specifically to describe or explain hoaxes" (Truzzi, 1993). He points out that according to Curtis MacDougall a hoax's success is the result of two sets of psychological forces acting within the victim: under the rubric "why we don't disbelieve" MacDougall lists ignorance, superstition, suggestion, prestige. Under "incentives to believe" he lists financial gain, vanity, chauvinism,

prejudice, pet theories, the thirst for thrills, and cultural climate. We have seen that such factors were indeed at work in the infrastructure of the present story.

MacDougall also remarked: "When a hoax achieves the longevity to qualify for classification as either myth or legend, hope of stopping it almost may be abandoned." After fifty years we may well have reached that point in the matter of the Philadelphia Experiment.

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