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THE A.I.P.R. NEWS

UPDATE: The Valentich Disappearance by Colin Mitchell & Lance Storm

Inside this issue:

UPDATE: The Valentich Disappearance by Colin Mitchell & Lance Storm (pp. 1-2). Many parapsychologists will argue that UFOs are not a paranormal phenomenon. Even mainstream paranormal belief scales only have a few items about strange life-forms, but no explicit reference to UFOs or ETs. Nevertheless, there is mounting evidence that UFO abductees report a greater number of experiences of the paranormal kind (ESP, PK) than is typical of most people. Colin and I give a brief report on Frederick Valentich's experience with a UFO whilst piloting his Cessna 182 over Bass Strait, off the Victorian coast. Valentich then disappeared under unusual circumstances. This case has never been explained.

Premonitions (Part 2) by James Barker (pp. 2-3). James Barker from Kingsley, WA, continues his report on some of his premonitions, and describes his official dealings with the skeptical *West Australian Skeptics Association*.

Sensing Michael by Robb Tilley (p. 3). Get a group of parapsychologists together over dinner of an evening, and talk soon turns to things paranormal, with a twist.

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On May 19, 2012, Colin Mitchell attended the Australian UFO Research Association (AURA) Seminar in Adelaide, SA. In this article, we update the so-called 'Valentich Disappearance' based on information Colin gathered at the seminar. For readers unfamiliar with this case, the following account is based on Australian UFO expert Bill Chalker's website article "PROJECT 1947". Twenty-year-old pilot Frederick Valentich disappeared over Bass Strait in Australia on 21 October 1978 while piloting a Cessna 182L light aircraft. He'd planned a return flight from Moorabbin Airport to King Island (a

235 km round-trip). He informed Melbourne air traffic control that he was accompanied by an aircraft about 300 meters above him, and he described the unusual aerodynamics and features of this aircraft. He reported some engine problems, and made unusual statements such as: "that strange aircraft is hovering on top of me again. . . . It is hovering and it's not an aircraft."

Valentich and his Cessna were never found, and an Australian Department of Transport investigation concluded that the reason for the disappearance could not be determined.

One paranormal theory has it that a UFO caused the

Valentich disappearance. This theory is based on: (i) Valentich's radio transmissions (he used the words "not an aircraft" and "hovering"); (ii) unexplained (metallic) sounds heard at the end of his transmissions; and (iii) a spate of UFO reports in that same area.

Here's what Colin learned at the AURA Seminar: First, Valentich was interested in UFOs. Second, Air Force buddies asked Valentich to pick up some crayfish from King Island, Bass Strait, for a dinner party the next day. It was his first flight over water at night time. He

“... One paranormal theory has it that a UFO caused the Valentich disappearance . . .”

got up at 6:00 AM, worked in the shop that morning, and then studied at his course in the afternoon. The flight was due to take off at 5:45 PM, but the actual take-off was at 6:19 PM. Third, Valentich said he was going to get some take-away food before take-off, but new light has been shed on the case, thanks to some 'inside' information from a mechanic who said the rear seats of the Cessna were removed and replaced with crates (presumably for the crayfish).

The implication of this news is that Valentich removed the seats before take-off, and that was the cause of the flight delay—not getting take-away food. Importantly,

removing the rear seats can destabilize an aircraft (although people used to do it against regulations).

Fourth, it was the only flight on which Valentich's girlfriend did not go with him—a fortunate coincidence, but it does deprive us of a corroborating first-hand eye-witness account.

Richard Haines (in his 1987 book *Melbourne Episode*) thinks Valentich became disorientated and flew back towards the Victorian coast from near King Island—the UFO episode happened on the way back to Victoria.

Given most of this information (not all of it new), one is

able to deconstruct the more unconventional interpretations of Valentich's disappearance, and opt for a 'normal' explanation: Valentich's interest in UFOs could reasonably be expected of a pilot—very few pilots would not be interested in them, but what does "interested" mean? Was he obsessed (as in, interested in extra-terrestrial life-forms who have mastered space travel) and therefore primed to imagine/expect unusual things, or was he just aware of UFOs as an aerial/aviation risk after being briefed in training, as UFOs are a topic that *should* be covered in pilot training because of the serious threat they may entail, just as pilots

At My Desk

On February 28th, Pope Benedict XVI formally resigned. Papal resignations are very rare—the last one was 600 years ago. Benedict's resignation set me thinking, as I'd known for a long time of St. Malachy, 12th-century Archbishop of Armagh, and his so-called *Prophecy of the Popes* (published later in 1595). Interestingly, the advance descriptions of the popes are most accurate before 1595, but less so after that date! Indeed, there may be a lot of 'shoe-horning' going on (as is the case with Nostradamus' prophecies), and many critics argue that it's all a hoax. What intrigues me most is that there is supposedly only one pope left, *Petrus Romanus* (Peter the Roman). It is prophesied that there'll be "many tribulations", and then Rome will be "destroyed and the terrible judge will judge his people". Very 'Old Testament' in scale, though not as cataclysmic as the Maya Calendar prophecy of the end of the world in December 2012! Skeptics often appeal to the Law of Large Numbers to explain successful prophecies: Given a sufficient number of prophecies, eventually there'll be a hit. No appeal to the Law necessary this time—no 'Peter', no 'Roman'. March 14th saw Argentina's Cardinal Bergoglio declared Pope Francis. Maybe *Petrus Romanus* should be interpreted metaphorically or symbolically, as quite often happens with guessed targets in parapsychology. ;)

* * *

Got something to say about parapsychology or the paranormal? Submit your contribution to:

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Enjoy this edition of **The A.I.P.R. News!**

—Lance Storm

UPDATE: The Valentich Disappearance by Colin Mitchell & Lance Storm (cont'd from page 1)

should understand the implications of bad weather? The idea that Valentich was a UFO 'buff' may mean he was highly suggestible and possibly imagined seeing a UFO, whether he was disoriented or not.

Removing the seats suggests his Cessna lost its natural balance, and so it might have tipped up, or even turned up-side-down. Consequently, he might have seen ordinary everyday things, but misinterpreted them as being extraordinary because of his distorted viewpoint. Being a relative novice, flying at night, possibly flying in the wrong direction, would not have helped his interpretation of his environment because he would be seeing things (e.g., city lights) he did not expect to see, and he would have to seek an alternative (even UFO) explanation in order to understand them.

However, Valentich never referred to the "hovering" "aircraft" as a UFO—from the radio conversation transcript we read in Valentich's own words:

"... they saw a bright green light above the plane seemingly flying in tandem with it..."

Is there any known traffic below five thousand [feet] . . . he's flying over me two, three times at speeds I could not identify . . . it's a long shape. . . it's chasing me. . . It's got a green light and sort of metallic like, it's all shiny on the outside. . . It's just vanished. . . Melbourne, would you know what kind of aircraft I've got? . . . My intentions are . . . to go

to King Island. . . That strange aircraft is hovering on top of me again. . . it is hovering and it's not an aircraft.

Valentich sought clarification as to whether there were other aircraft in the area; he sounds perfectly rational and in control; there is no evidence in his words that his Cessna is inverted or unbalanced (e.g., he does not refer to turbulence). Also, if flying upside-down meant Valentich saw his own reflected Cessna in the waters of Bass

Strait, or misinterpreted man-made lights, this 'up-side-down' theory has been ruled out by aviation authorities, as the Cessna 182 has a high wing with a gravity fed fuel system, making prolonged inverted flight impossible.

It is interesting to note that testimony from three eyewitnesses near Apollo Bay also fails to support the idea of the Cessna flying upside down—witnesses say they saw a bright green light above the plane, seemingly flying in tandem with it. However, Valentich could not have continued on to King Island because the witnesses say they saw his Cessna flying just off the Victorian coast—i.e., Valentich may well have been disoriented as Haines claims! No evidence thus far undermines the theory that Valentich went down somewhere in Bass Strait. ♣

Note

1. <http://www.project1947.com/forum/bcoz6.htm>

Premonitions (Part 2) by James Barker

My name is James Barker from Kingsley in Western Australia. I'm a 53 year old retired IT Project Manager—retired due to arthritis. In 2007 I approached the West Australian Skeptics Association (WASA) to enter their Skeptics Challenge, which states that they will pay \$100,000 to anyone who can demonstrate paranormal abilities, such as ESP, or predict the future. I told them how I have dreams that come true, and have done so since childhood.

By 2008, I was getting a little frustrated with WASA, so in one email, instead of detailing my dream, I just asked whether they would believe me if my predication of a 9/11 type terrorist attack in New York in 2012 came true. My actual dream, as detailed to friends, and to people like Dr. Lance Storm (AIPR) and placed on a website years ago, was me seeing a terrorist

attack at the Empire State Building in 2012.

In January 2012, I also posted the prediction back on the website¹ once it was back up and running.

Three weeks prior, I even emailed my nephew a warning to stay away from the building, after I realised he was only working a few blocks from it.

This dream came true on August 24, 2012—anti-terrorist police shot dead the gunman Jeffrey T. Johnson (a disgruntled accessories worker) who shot his co-worker Steven Ercolino in front of the Empire State Building.

Police also injured nine others in the shoot-out. Initial reports on CNN misprinted the response from the White House and said it was a "terrorist shooting" though the NYPD declared that it wasn't 'terrorism'. The following is taken from the

webpage on the day of the shooting (though later corrected):

President Barack Obama learned about the incident around 9:30 a.m. from top aides, the White House said. The shooting did appear to be linked to terrorism, authorities said.

Why did I see this shooting, in New York, in the year 2012, and not others at different times? Maybe the fact that my nephew, who was in high school five years ago with no plans to live or work in the US, happened to start working there in 2012.

Again, it just seems to be too much of a coincidence, especially the fact that he was working only a couple of blocks from the shooting. The time gap of five years is fascinating, and

certainly makes you wonder about the mechanics/physics of time.

In January 2008, my daughter and I went on a cruise on the SuperStar Virgo out of Singapore, sailing the Malacca Strait.

On the first night, I struggled to get to sleep, until eventually I dropped off in the early hours of the morning. I then had an extremely vivid dream of talking to a man in my cabin who told me he was a swimmer/swinger (I couldn't understand his accent). I asked his name which he said was Rubbin or something that sounded like that, and that I was the first person he had spoken to. The name Rubin (pronounced Roo-Bin) seemed to be very significant, but I can't find any reference to it as a name or as a word in Hindi.

I told him that I was dreaming and wouldn't remember his name, so tried to write it down. As I awoke, my daughter, who was on the sofa bed in the next room, woke up screaming. She told me she had seen someone in our cabin.

I was so concerned by this dream that I tried to contact Star Cruises and find out if someone had died in that cabin. At the end of the cruise I emailed the dream to WASA and to Star Cruises, even suggesting they be very careful.

It was a very hard thing to do because I thought Star Cruises would probably think I was a nut. At this time, there was no record of anyone drowning or falling overboard from the SuperStar Virgo—and I'd done a lot of searching online.

Approximately 14 months later, in the same geographic area where I had the dream, an Indian man fell overboard and drowned. Star Cruises will not tell me if this man stayed in the same cabin that my daughter and I were in. The man was in the age group I specified. Statistically, that is pretty good. I got the location, sex and cause of death right. Can a Skeptic do that? Ψ

(Pt. 3 cont'd Sept. 2013)

Notes:

1. www.aussieghosts.com/forum/viewtopic.php?

Sensing Michael by Robb Tilley

After the 4th Annual AIPR Lecture, given by Dr. Lance Storm, at University of Western Sydney (UWS) on November 7, 2012, Dr. Adam Rock, Dr. Lance Storm, and Dr. Tony Jinks and I were having dinner at the "Three Weeds" Hotel in Rozelle in Sydney, NSW. The conversation was obviously centred on the topic of parapsychology.

Suddenly, I clearly sensed the

late Dr. Michael Thalbourne to my right, standing casually, smiling, and listening to our conversation. Lance said he'd been getting cold shivers at that same moment, and he also thought of Michael.

Michael seemed pleased when I proposed a toast to him—we, the four of us, clinked our glasses to Dear Ol' Michael. I then mentioned that I had a 'sense' that Michael was around at the UWS

lecture theatre too.

Michael seemed younger and slimmer than I remembered him—he was also relaxed and happy; free of his health problems now. So far as I know this is the first appearance he has made since his death in May 2010. I'm sure his curiosity took him out into the multi-verse for a good look around . . . but he came back again. Ψ

Quid Nunc by Hannah Jenkins (continued from p. 4)

That is why I did a double-take on reading about his suicide and what made it, to my mind, a double tragedy. For what?

To tie the discussion into the topic of this bulletin and this column—I think that, for a start, the political ideas behind this kind of activism don't account for an awful lot of information that is of interest, but which does not make it into the academic journals that JSTOR draws on. Of course, I am thinking of parapsychology and related topics which are kept out of these types of journals by the mediocre-level academics and gatekeepers of most institutions that are driven by an ingrained conservatism. So focusing on radically 'freeing' this already

reasonably free information does nothing but reinforce the idea that what is being dealt with in these journals is the epitome of human thought.

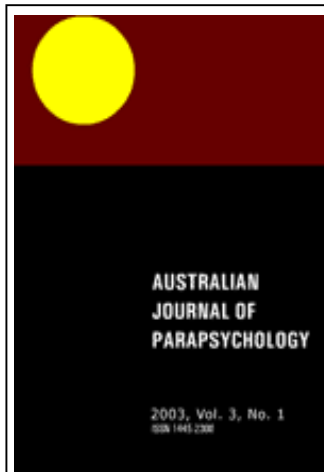
There is already much available about parapsychology that is thoughtful, revealing and freely available. Look at the archives of the AIPR, ASPR, SPR, and SSE, not to mention the websites of the prominent researchers in our field—and you can add to that the books that are now more available than ever (online second-hand sellers never cease to amaze me with what they can procure for such small cost).

I do think the academic institutions should reconsider their publish-or-perish policies which do little more than create a busi-

ness for the likes of Elsevier, and encourage mediocre public-policy inspired research. I also think the people who encourage the new generation of activists should be more careful. Merely providing information does not suffice as a provision for the tools of critical thinking needed to evaluate that information. Whoever or whatever social impetus put a young twenty-something kid up to thinking that freeing the JSTOR archive was worth the risk of a jail sentence really needs to read more of the already freely available information that is out there. Ψ

Notes:

1. RSS = Rich Site Summary (often dubbed Really Simple Syndication). See <http://www.rssboard.org/rss-specification#whatIsRss>



The *Australian Journal of Parapsychology* features research articles on ESP (extrasensory perception), PK (psychokinesis), and the afterlife.

Subscribe Now! (see page 4)

The Australian Institute of Parapsychological Research is a non-profit community association. Based in Sydney but with a worldwide membership base, it was established in 1977. The aims of the organisation are:

- To collect, assess and disseminate factual information about claims of psychic (paranormal) phenomena.
- To support and encourage parapsychology (the scientific study of paranormal phenomena).
- To undertake or promote activities (e.g., fundraising, social activities, etc.) in support of the above.

Looking for information on the paranormal? The AIPR has fact sheets on:

- Psychic and mystical experiences of the aborigines
- Psychic and psycho-spiritual development
- Healing
- Mystical experiences
- Apparitions, ghosts and hauntings
- Out of body experiences
- Near-death experiences
- The human aura

We're on the Web:
www.aiprinc.org

Quid Nunc by Hannah Jenkins

Earlier this year newspapers were abuzz with news of the apparent suicide of Aaron Swartz (1986-2013), a promising young programmer who, among other achievements, had helped create RSS.¹ He had also made his mark as an activist where he was a prominent figure promoting a free and accessible Internet. At 26 years old he had clearly achieved more than many do in a lifetime.

While only those closest to him will understand the reasons for his decision to end his life, there was, and still is, speculation that at least a contributing factor was the stress he was under as he awaited trial for illegally downloading articles from the academic publisher JSTOR (i.e., Journal Storage—JSTOR is a US-based not-for-profit organisation which provides a searchable repository of academic publications it has gathered and tagged and sorted). As a consequence the prosecutors have been accused of increasing the stress on him by aggressively pursuing the case in a fashion out of kilter with the crime.

But the legalities of the situa-

tion aren't the focus of this column. Instead I will explore what I think makes the death of Aaron Swartz even more of a tragedy—and that is if the charges he faced for illicitly downloading JSTOR articles did contribute to the depression that led to his death—who or what sector of society made him think that releasing the articles was an aim worthy of risking a jail sentence? I'll also tie the discussion into why I think it is relevant to academia and, of course, the field of parapsychology.

Abstracts in JSTOR are available free online. Subscribers to JSTOR are able to download full articles. It is used extensively by academics and students. In my experience it is used as a handy way of getting access to papers that are older and would most likely not see the light of day unless you really, truly, seriously needed to get hold of them. JSTOR is a not-for-profit organisation and have, as far as I can figure out, an organisation that provides a service for which they charge, but not in an unscrupulous way. For any article still under

copyright they presumably pay a charge to on-distribute (for older articles they provide free access). To cover their costs, they therefore charge institutions and individuals for their service.

It is relatively easy to gain access to the JSTOR archives. For a start, an Internet search will allow you to gain access to the abstracts of articles it holds. Most higher education institutions allow access using a student or staff login, and even if you do not have such login available, major university libraries will often allow access to their computers to search, find, and print-out the relevant papers. On top of this, the papers themselves are often available for a small fee through other outlets. JSTOR seems an innocuous target as they are a not-for-profit and charge for the service of collating, not generating the material.

That is what made me do a double-take when I read about the death of Aaron Swartz and the connection to the charges for trying to 'free' the JSTOR archive. It seemed a bit like stealing from a Salvo officer's wooden collection box. It made me wonder, is there more to this story, but it appears that, no, he really thought he'd be doing good by releasing the JSTOR information, and though he settled amicably with JSTOR in 2011 and returned the 'stolen' documents (they have a statement on their website advising people of this), he was still going to have to face charges regarding use of MIT space and equipment to do the initial downloads.


Apparently he was motivated by the idea that the articles JSTOR provides were written by academics on publicly funded payroll and that as a consequence neither the publishing companies, nor JSTOR, should be making money out of them. He does have a point—it seems crazy that institutions continue to enforce publishing quotas on their academics as a measure of their success. Many high-

ranking journals are published by profit-making companies so they are benefiting from research supported by public funds. This is a problem that needs to be addressed. But so does the issue of who takes the time and energy to peer-review, edit, proof-edit, proof-read, and print the articles. Not to mention what JSTOR does—compile and create accessible electronic versions that are easily searched.


Merely providing people with access to these materials is quite beside the point. Just because they are electronic and more steal-able does not mean that releasing them is going to solve these issues. Imagine if you took this approach with physical books and journals of an average university library. I could free the books and journals by removing them from the shelves and . . . what? Putting them . . . where? Presumably, according to the idea behind releasing the JSTOR files, a place where the hordes hungry for information might find them and use them. But what would really happen? I am pretty sure the books and journals would sit wherever gathering dust. Freeing this type of information that is reasonably accessible anyway does not seem to me to be a pathway to emancipation.

I wondered where the idea came from, which brings me back to the question I raised earlier: Who or what social sector gave a promising, caring, thoughtful 26-year-old the notion that this information was critical and it was worth risking prosecution to make it available to people who really needed it? It seems to me like there was somehow an idea that information was conflated with knowledge. And that by 'freeing' the information, the use of it, and understanding of what to do with it, would follow. Whatever social forces had brought him to Internet activism had also created a scenario where it couldn't discern the distinction between information and knowledge let alone knowledge and wisdom.

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