

OUTER SPACE CHALLENGE

Jean Stephenson

The audience was attentively silent, all eyes on the neatly dressed woman at the podium. She was turning a small metal object over and over in her hands, staring straight ahead. Finally she spoke to the audience.

"I have brought each of you here tonight because, after going thru hundreds of files, I have chosen you top leaders in the space industry to resolve a problem of universal importance.

I truly believe you are the only people who can come up with a logical solution to the situation this simple looking piece of outer space scrap has created. We have to inform the public in such a way that there will not be immediate panic in the streets, and that we will find a way to combine forces with some unlikely space visitors for the benefit of all....

I would ask you all to remember back to some years ago when it appeared that an unidentified flying object had crash landed near Roswell, New Mexico. Seen by hundreds of drivers on the road adjacent that evening, headlines were published in all of the major newspapers, still our government steadfastly refused to comment other than that it was a weather balloon, case closed.

Many serious investigators have never accepted that, and I am one of them. For many years now I have conducted hundreds of interviews of persons who saw this strange sight, including many who claim to have been abducted for short periods by similar crafts to that one in Roswell. Unfortunately most of these I would term "nutcases", but a few have sounded so credible and similar that I cannot ignore them. One, in particular has won me over completely.

Her name is Marianne Einstein, and she is a great niece of the famed scientist who gave us so many clues that led directly to Max Planck and his quantum physics work. Not incidentally, Marianne trusted me enough to give me this small piece of equipment which she claims she surreptitiously took from the spacecraft that had abducted her. The strange markings on the back, she says, is the code for understanding the mechanics for exceeding the speed of light. She said she had no idea how to crack the code, but that some of our space scientists might. And as you have read recently in the news, scientists have just now found an element that actually can go faster than light, do just not how to utilize this information.

So, as you can see, I have in my hand this small important piece in the space puzzle. It just needs you people to de-code it. Since I am now retiring, I am entrusting this piece of equipment to Mr. Hiram MacConahay, my trusted assistant for 22 years, who will be in charge of the study from now on."

With that last sentence, the speaker handed the metal object to a man in the first row who was now standing and bowing to the audience. A roar of approval flowed thru the auditorium, and the Improv teacher too, was nodding appreciatively. "You get an "A", Susan. That was very creative. Let's see what you can do with it Joe. Try to be a bit more brief than Susan was."

"This scrap of metal is an old workbench container to hold different sizes of screws labelled 1 to 9. Short enough, Sir?"

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