



## On the Whole, I'd Rather Be Invisible: The Philadelphia Experiment

by Kenneth Hite

*"U.S. Navy's force-field experiments, 1943, October produced invisibility of crew and ship. Fearsome results. So terrifying!"*

- annotation by "Mr. A" in the Varo Press edition of *The Case for the UFO*

It's cooler than Roswell. Three alien bodies and a hunk of Reticulan tinfoil are as so much dross in the lambent greenish glow of the Philadelphia Experiment. Where else do you get Nikola Tesla, alien conspiracies, time travel, Crowleian workings, invisibility, madness, ghost dimensions, cool Black Op slang, secret military coverups, UFO technology, ley lines, and a big hole in the very fabric of space, time and dimension? Where else but Philadelphia? Well, okay, in Norfolk, Virginia. And maybe Montauk, Long Island. Confused? That tingle means it's working.

*"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 subculture?"*

- Brad Steiger and Joan Whitenour, *The New UFO Breakthrough: the Allende Letters*

The story began with Morris K. Jessup, astronomer and author of *The Case for the UFO*. In it, Jessup urged further research into Einstein's Unified Field Theory (which Einstein died without discovering, at least officially) as a means of developing space travel. After publishing his book in 1955, he began to get letters from someone who variously signed his name "Carlos Miguel Allende" and "Carl M. Allen" claiming that he, Allende, had further information on a secret Navy project at the Philadelphia Navy Yard which used Einstein's theories (which Allende claimed Einstein had actually completed in 1927) to attempt to turn a destroyer invisible.

The destroyer was the DE-173, *U.S.S. Eldridge*, and in late October (later sources give October 22 or October 28 as dates, variously; alleged time-jumped survivor Al Bielek gives August 12) the Navy activated the invisibility device. Not only did it turn the ship invisible, it also teleported it to Norfolk, Virginia! However, the field also turned the crew invisible, intangible and insane; some crewmen rematerialized inside the decks, others simply "froze" in time, and still others caught fire (one, says Allen, burned for eighteen days!). The Navy, distressed at this result, covered up the experiment and reassigned the crew to various hospitals. Allende claimed to have been observing the experiment from the Liberty Ship *SS Andrew Furuseth* and to have actually stuck his arm "INTO THAT TERRIFIC FLOW" (Allende's grasp of capital letter usage is idiosyncratic, to say the least). Jessup exchanged letters with

Allende/Allen for a time.

In 1957, Jessup got a call from the Office of Naval Research asking him for input on his book. It seems that in 1956, someone mailed a copy of *The Case for the UFO* to the ONR (anonymously, inscribed "Happy Easter") annotated in three colors of ink (blue, violet and aqua - - used by "Mr. A," "Mr. B" and "Jemi") giving new hints on the UFO issue as well as the other Fortean mysteries Jessup had posed. >From the handwriting, style and mention of the invisible ship, Jessup identified "Mr. A," at least, as Carlos Allende/Carl Allen. The ONR paid a Dallas research firm (Varo Research) to produce 25 (or 8, or 127) copies of the "annotated" book; this "Varo Press edition" eventually became something of a Holy Grail for UFOlogists, hinting at ties between the UFOs and "Gypsy language" and "racial memory" among other oddities. Sparked by these revelations, Jessup continued working on UFO research and the Philadelphia Experiment specifically until he was found dead of carbon monoxide poisoning near Coral Gables, Florida on April 20, 1959. His death was ruled a suicide.

*"ONR has never conducted any investigations on invisibility, either in 1943 or at any other time (ONR was established in 1946.) In view of present scientific knowledge, ONR scientists do not believe that such an experiment could be possible . . ."*

- official Office of Naval Research form letter OI-2252A

So much for the legend of the Philadelphia Experiment. (The classic source is William Moore and Charles Berlitz' *The Philadelphia Experiment: Project Invisibility*.) In the harsh and ugly world of Actual Truth, the *U.S.S. Eldridge* (commissioned on August 27, 1943 - - so much for Bielek) never entered Philadelphia harbor at all; during the month of October 1943, she was in the vicinity of Bermuda for sea trials (18 Sep - 15 Oct) and in New York Harbor until she sailed for Norfolk (in a perfectly normal fashion) on 1 November. From there, she served as a convoy ship and in 1951 was sold to the government of Greece, where she served as the *Leon*. An unlikely fate for a transdimensional timeship, to say the least. The *Andrew Furuseth* was in Norfolk in October 1943, but was well on its way to Casablanca by the 28th, and was never in Norfolk at the same time as the *Eldridge*.

Carlos Miguel Allende was clearly Carl Meredith Allen, of Springdale, Pennsylvania. Family members readily told an investigator in 1980 that he was imaginative, lazy - - and a known hoaxer. He had served in the Coast Guard during the war. He may have overheard sailors discussing an actual Navy practice of degaussing the hulls of ships making them "invisible" to magnetic mines, or an experiment changing the pitch of destroyers' screws to camouflage their sonar signal that UFOlogist/debunker/split-personality Jacques Vallee seems to have found out the *Eldridge* actually may have been a part of. The Varo Press edition was done by two ONR staffers with their own money - - because they were UFO fans.

*"There have always been creative minds that have sought to recapture the ancient mysteries and apply them to modern technology. I believe the Navy's experiment in invisibility was yet another of those attempts...."*

- UFOlogist Timothy Green Beckley

But away with dull, humdrum fact! The seed grain of Carl Allen's crude hoax has become a luminous pearl of arcane wonder and fruitbat mystery. Return with me now to an imaginary time, somewhere in the vicinity of 1931. Beginning, as so many

secret government projects from atom bombs to Arks of the Covenant do, at the University of Chicago, the U.S. Navy assembles a top team of physicists to research invisibility; in 1933 this "Project Rainbow" moves to Princeton and adds Einstein, Townsend Brown (of Biefeld-Brown Effect fame) and John von Neumann (father of the computer, among other things) to its staff. In 1934, FDR gets the nod from aliens in a mid-Pacific summit meeting aboard the *U.S.S. Pennsylvania* (the aliens had been talking with Tesla since 1895, you see, and FDR's Navy connections explain that service's role in this research) and the project goes forward. Tesla objects to testing the device on humans, and sabotages the first test in March 1942; ten months later, he is killed.

The experiment goes off successfully in 1943, and rips a hole in the space-time continuum, opening the Earth to alien invasion; the Philadelphia-Norfolk line is a powerful ley line drawing energies from the Bermuda Triangle. (Remember that *Eldridge* cruise to Bermuda?) That, you see, was the fiendish alien plan all along, and it's why you get the first foo-fighters seen over Europe that year - - the UFOs entered our space in force through the Philadelphia Rift. (Coincidentally, or not, Albert Hoffmann's first synthesis of LSD in April 1943 opened the doors to inner space - - for perhaps a whole different bunch of aliens.) Von Neumann continued his work at a secret base near Montauk, Long Island, where he added Tantric sex-magick (taken from Aleister Crowley via either Crowley's friend Dennis Wheatley in British Intelligence or from Caltech rocket scientist/Satanist John Whiteside Parsons) and psionics to Tesla-beamed mind control and dimensional rifting. Whether Project Phoenix (the new name for Rainbow) was intended to harness, control, recreate or stop the Philadelphia Experiment's dimensional rift is up to, well, the GM. For a heck of a nice trip through the UFO side of this story, check out Brad Steiger's *The Rainbow Conspiracy*; for more on the Montauk-magick angle, I can but implore you to find and enjoy Preston Nichols and Peter Moon's *Montauk Series*.

*"These folks have a very high or just a high PSI factor in their make-up that can be intensified under stress or strain OR that usually is intensified under extreme fright. It can also be Re-intensified under Hypnosis, thus is like reading from the Encyclopedia Britanica. Even though that Barroom-Restaurant Raid was staged by invisible or partly invisible men, those men CAN SEE EACH OTHER..."*

- letter from "Carlos Allende" to Morris K. Jessup, Jan 1956

The Philadelphia Experiment makes just lovely game material all the way around. The True Varo Press Edition (with the secret annotations in green ink by "Mr. C" and "Madame Q") sits proudly in the *Warehouse 23* Library of Extracted Works, and would make a fine jumping-off point for any number of adventures as the PCs must find the book or follow the cryptic clues therein. The alien plot to "blow a hole in hyperspace" and flow into our dimension has ramifications from *GURPS Illuminati* to *GURPS Cthulhupunk* and beyond. Crewmen of the *Eldridge* make ideal recruits for the *Black Ops*, especially if the GM lets them keep their "dimensional phasing" powers gained from the Rainbow Effect (and use the cool lingo Allende used to describe the effects): invisibility ("Going Blank"), intangibility ("In the Green"), time-freezing ("Getting Stuck"), pyrokinesis ("Scorch") and slipping into parallel dimensions like the astral plane ("Hell Incorporated") comes in handy when you're battling the Greys. Of course, the GM is more than justified in making such powers horribly dangerous (almost half of the *Eldridge* crew went mad or phased into bulkheads or caught on fire or evaporated or aged instantly, after all) or populating the "Green Zone" and "Hell Incorporated" with yet more "Such Terrors."

The *Eldridge* itself would make an excellent "time ship" for *GURPS Time Travel* games, or a portal through which our 1943 heroes can travel to various and sundry alternate dimensions, whether they be worlds where magic works, alternate histories or any other parallel place the GM desires. 1943 technology makes a good baseline for PC tech in such a *GURPS Alternate Earths* game, in that it includes submachineguns but not microcomputers capable of giving reams of data about everything the PCs encounter. Any need for "weird science" can certainly be met by the Project Rainbow research teams - - in this kind of game, von Neumann becomes the quintessential mad scientist-director of the dimensional corps, and the Nazis make perfect bad guys (perhaps Werner von Braun has his own dimensional rift at Peenemunde to send vile SS commandos through).

*"Had Faraday concerned himself about the mag. field surrounding an Electric Current, We today Would NOT exist or if We did exist, our present Geo-political situation would not have the very time-bombish, ticking off towards Destruction, atmosphere that Now exists."*

- letter from "Carlos Allende" to Morris K. Jessup, Jan 1956

You don't even have to stick to 1943. The Montauk Project continued at least into the 1950s, and may continue today at Brookhaven National Laboratories, say the kinds of people who say those kinds of things. A modern-day Philadelphia Experiment, in the context of Aegis research or SDI testing, makes a fine beginning to a High Tech High Weirdness campaign. Allende himself alludes to a different possibility, however, when he hints that Faraday's experiments could have developed the Rainbow Effect in 1831 (Faraday came within an ace of inventing AC power in Real History). Imagine, then, an invisible British Navy, or a secret Confederate plan using the first ironclads in a Norfolk Experiment, or an alien pact with Bismarck to make the Kriegsmarine invincible. Perhaps all of them happened somewhen, opening a rift onto "Hell Incorporated," a dimension of green fog and eternal flames, where it's always October 28, 1943, and where Those Outside are about to come in and play in your game. All of a sudden, invisibility starts to look pretty good . . .

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