

The Big Picture: IDRISI, Aliens, and All Things Great and Small



by the Editors

The full story of IDRISI, Clark University, and the aliens is a complicated one, with lots of implications and retrospective realizations. It can quickly become confusing when the story is told in pieces. For the purpose of clearer understanding, we offer the complete version of the tale, as best we could determine from the information gathered in the time since the original announcement.

The Beginning

On Spree Day, 1969, an alien spacecraft arrived at Clark University and proceeded to hover ominously above the President's and Dean's houses. After several hours of hovering, it destroyed the two buildings and landed. Interviews suggest witnesses thought it was part of the Grateful Dead's set. Bootlegs reveal that from the time the spacecraft emerged from the clouds, until the time of the landing, the Dead were only able to make it through a third of "Dark Star."

The alien spacecraft is now what we call the Goddard Memorial Library. It is unclear whether the aliens appreciate the irony of this.

speaking, and by 1971, several million dollars was allocated to the formation of the IDRISI Project.

IDRISI: The Early Years

Despite the IDRISI webpage's assertion that "IDRISI is not an acronym," IDRISI stands for International Defense Research Initiative against Space Invasion. It is funded by the government as a dual project sponsored by both the Department of Energy and Department of Defense. It is run by John Balcunas.

The IDRISI operation is extremely secret, but it appears to be rather shoddy in certain respects, too. The webpage, for instance, asserts ridiculous things about the name, making references obviously fabricated on the spur of the moment, and containing names taken from Clark personnel.

To wit, "Idrisi was a cartographer and geographer of major significance during the medieval period... Commissioned by King Roger of Sicily to prepare a geographical survey of the world, Idrisi headed a collaborative effort by scholars and technicians of the Rogierian Court at Palermo." As laughable as this is, it went unquestioned for 25 years, and one can only attribute that fact to the naivete of students at the time.

Balcunas was supposed to be

heading IDRISI's work against the aliens, but at some point, he turned sides. There, as yet, has been no convincing argument as to why. All we can determine is that by December of 1972, Balcunas was helping the aliens plan to transfer the massive super-light-speed engines out of the spacecraft.

The aliens' work at on the new 'library' was slow until Balcunas arrived. Once IDRISI was founded, however, major changes were implemented. First, the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning was completely renovated to make it hospitable for human habitation. This was not completed in its entirety until 1979, but by 1973, it was safe for humans to exist in it for up to 3 hours.

Balcunas was also there to supervise the external illusions. A first floor was attached, barely functional but there none the less. Records from the period indicate that the aliens were concerned about being able to take off again, so the first floor is not attached to the rest of the building by anything. It was about this time that Balcunas convinced the government to bury a nuclear warhead under the spacecraft behind a plate dubiously labeled "time capsule."

Clearly, the government and aliens had nothing to teach other about plausible explanations.

Setting Up

Balcunas' project was in jeopardy by 1973. Nixon had resigned, and it wasn't clear if the new administration would share his paranoia. Also, Balcunas had been there two years, and he needed a point to his occupation and expense budget. Memos and reports from the year indicate that Balcunas was able to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the timing.

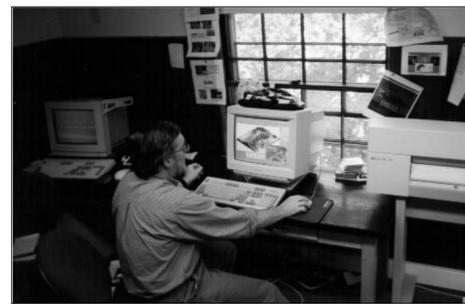
First, IDRISI was given the project of building an all-terrain, multi-purpose hovercraft. This was due to a contract with a Worcester hovercraft-construction factory that the Pentagon had erroneously made and couldn't get out of. Second, IDRISI was renewed as a priority by the Ford Administration, and a budget was passed granting IDRISI a seven-figure budget.

This luck would continue, ironically, even through the Carter and Reagan Administrations, when IDRISI was dropped into extremely low priority. Government sources testify that the administrations didn't entirely understand what the hell IDRISI was, but it sounded important and probably shouldn't be messed with. Balcunas was thus able to work with large pools of financial resources in relative anonymity.

The Jefferson Hovercraft

Under Balcunas' direction, the IDRISI Project was perverted into an alien weapon: the super-sonic hovercraft known as the Jefferson Hovercraft. The name is apparently a snide reference to the Jefferson Academic Center and Jefferson Hall (torn down to build the UC), although a recent court decision has unearthed documents suggesting that it was reference to a joke on The Simpsons about the Alan Parsons Project. Ron Eastman, current Director of IDRISI, has publicly responded with "I don't get it."

The Jefferson Hovercraft, if the research provided by Professors Bayse, Kennedy,



IDRISI Project director Ronald Eastman evaluates terrain viability for the Jefferson Hovercraft. Notice the original working model on top of his monitor.

Davies, Agosta, and Thackeray is any indication, is an offensive weapon of extraordinary magnitude. Libya has expressed interest in purchasing it, but details remain classified. [Look for them in the next issue.]

All anyone knows is, John Balcunas is the only one with the keys to the hovercraft.

Symbiotes, Signals, Secrets

Of course, he was helping the aliens. They had brought with them incubating chambers which grew symbiotes that allowed for total mind control. The symbiotes attach themselves to a human, and can be grown to any genetic structure they wish.



Jack Foley's mustache-symbiote hatching in an alien incubator (artist's rendering)

more and more influence on the school, parts of Clark University began to change.

First, Woodland Street was closed off. That served to cut a major artery of traffic off, making Clark something of an island unto itself. Even better, it made Clark into something close to a fishbowl, where outsiders couldn't go without trouble and inconvenience. This would become a major theme in the aliens' plans.

In order to move the spacecraft's engines, Balcunas arranged for

some students and a professor under the influence of a symbiote to apply for a Department of Energy grant to build a 'cogeneration plant.' Of course, there's no such thing as a cogeneration plant, but this was the Carter administration, and they could have asked for a cogeneration plant and gotten it. The money was used to move the alien engines into the basement of Jonas Clark, where they were hooked into powerful energy converters and used to power many parts of Clark.

About the same time, the aliens were making in-roads in the Clark Administration with the help of John Balcunas. Slowly but surely, key figures were leaving and being replaced with either symbiote-controlled zombie slaves, people so corrupt they could be bought, or (occasional-ly) robots.

Meanwhile, WCWU began to get very big and popular, and increasingly hard to deal with. Even more alarmingly, the aliens were beginning to formulate a plan for Clark, and WCWU's community-oriented attitude and joie de vivre didn't fit in. Deals were made, and WCWU moved off campus and the aliens put their transmitter in the newly-constructed Goddard Erection.

The spacecraft, in the meantime, after several million dollars in renovations over more than a decade, was about fit for human use. Its atmosphere was pretty close to Earth's, by now, and the extremely hot temperatures that plagued its early days had been basically eradicated. (There is speculation that the aliens are from Jupiter.)

In 1981, IDRISI was given an official front by the government:

pretend you're doing cartographic image scanning technology. It'll be like map scanning but easier. Like many government projects, the rationale seemed to be "It's so banal no one will think twice." It worked. The "Clark Labs for Cartographic Technology and Geographic Research" was hastily concocted. To this day, some members of the Geography Department believe it does three-dimensional cartographic analysis.

Memos from this time period indicate Balcunas' level of paranoia was rising rapidly. It apparently got so out of hand that there exists a rumor of him killing the campus dog named Baron because "he knew too much." One possible reason for the paranoia was the Sidney Peck fiasco.

Sidney Peck was professor of Sociology who, if you believe the newspapers, eyewitnesses, and archival data, was accused of sexual harassment by five female



Super-light-speed engines from the alien spacecraft are now stored in the "cogeneration plant," located in the basement of Jonas Clark Hall.

colleagues at Clark. In fact, the whole scandal was an elaborate fabrication by Balcunas and IDRISI, an apparently semi-successful effort to remove Peck from Clark and discredit him. Peck was successfully removed, but only after 5 years of lawsuits, intense media attention, and extreme amounts of mud on the face of Clark University.

Balcunas did not want this sort of media circus again, yet he wanted to make the most sweep-

ing change possible on the campus: a complete turnover of the Clark administration. Balcunas had set his sights on Clark.

IDRISI and the University

Some points need to be made about IDRISI's relationship with Clark. Currently, they are not separable, and one cannot meaningfully talk of Clark without mentioning IDRISI. It wasn't always this way. For the length of the 70s, IDRISI and Clark had a very tenuous relationship—the government hacks at IDRISI weren't sure they could trust the liberal arts school, and the university wasn't sure they liked the government in their backyard. Many people at Clark refused to believe in the aliens at all, even when confronted with the increasingly large piles of evidence.

IDRISI's attitude, as expressed in a 1978 document, was that "Clark University shows

only reluctant signs of cooperating, and is resistant to [the fact of the alien presence]. They should probably be removed." IDRISI and Balcunas, by this point, had their own agenda, and some namby-pamby university was not about to jeopardize it.

The university, meanwhile, tried to resist, but were basically helpless. This can be attributed to the basic competence level of your average academician.

Takin' Over for Good

Balcunas' plan to take over Clark was executed between 1983 and 1985. In that time period, all of the most significant changes for Clark took place. For starters, massive amounts of administrators and professors left, including Professor Peck,

A Second Look at the 'Goddard Memorial Library'



by Sven Reinendorf

The Goddard memorial library has long been a source of idle conversation-filler and half-joking speculation. Aspects such as bizarre architecture, with dysfunctional internal and external features, combined with a troubled history, now make sense in light of recent disclosures regarding its true function as an interstellar spacecraft.

The library landed the night during Spree Day in 1969, when most of the campus was either stoned or hiding. According to *Scarlet's* dating from that period, several months of hasty construction followed, during which the "shiny metallic exterior" was covered with brick and several "concrete support pods" were added around the perimeter. The second floor entrance received a winding concrete stairway to facilitate entry.

According to John Davies,

Professor of Physics and Astronomy, a first floor was not added because it would "hinder the craft's ability to take off again." Psychology professor David Stevens agrees, postulating that the existing first floor was certainly extemporaneous.

By early summer of the same year, the outside modifications were complete, and the internal renovations began, to convert it into a structure in which humans could use. Ideally, for a library. Data regarding this process is sketchy, but molecular biologist Justin Thackeray feels that the chief obstacle was the high heat the aliens needed to survive. Local records obtained from City Hall show a series of work orders from a local construction company for extensive Heating, Ventilation and Air-Conditioning projects. The name signed on all of them was one John Balcunas.

Balcunas' presence was not witnessed by anyone we contacted from that period, but he clear-

ly had a major role in the interior design and conversion of the structure. Perhaps, as psychology professor David Stevens points out, "The aliens may have needed someone more familiar with human physiology and the Dewey -Decimal system."

Much of the interior structure was changed repeatedly over the ensuing fifteen years. According to a *Scarlet* opinion piece from 1975, "The reference desk has been relocated so many times, and there are so many strange architectural oddities... it's like someone was tripping when they designed this thing. Or something." Little information is available about the changes made, other than the fact that the modifications did not go smoothly.

The area underneath the library is a source of contention for the period of 1969-1980. Eyewitness

account differ, but there is cor-

roborative evidence that massive



digging equipment was working on a foundation below the surface, though some people recall what appeared to be deep-drilling equipment.

Physics professor Chuck Agosta, who worked on IDRISI's propulsion system, feels that the library's engines and power plant were moved from the library's

second floor down into this space for storage. In 1976, he reportedly assisted in the movement of "very large generators and other power equipment, the likes of which I'd never seen" from under the library to a new addition to Jonas Clark, only 50 feet away. At some point, and opinions differ significantly, the basement level was partitioned, with one section accommodating additional library space for book storage.

The other partition has not been seen and was completely hidden until recent photos and investigations revealed it to be the Balcunas' control center for the IDRISI project. It features a giant display screen for monitoring all aspects of the campus and advanced computing facilities. The control center has a separate secure entrance that is always locked.

Very little was known about the roof until Clark's admissions department began fly-bys in the late

70's to produced doctored photos of the surrounding neighborhood. Clearly visible is a landing pad with an attached docking tower.

Rumors have abounded for years then that when viewed from directly above, the library resembles a giant book. Philosophy chair Walter Wright feels this is "obviously so the structure can be viewed by space," a theory corroborated by the IDRISI's cover operation focusing on analyzing satellite photos.

In the end, the renovations were a half-assed job, the aliens presumably content with their structure not raising too many eye-brows. Many features, presumably from the original interior, remain to this day, along with numerous artifacts from the shoddy renovations.

Examples are numerous, such as interior windows inside that look into other areas inside the library, and external ones that provide views from all six sides of the structure.

Andy Albrecht, PhD student in Physics, pointed out exterior structures that he feels are escape pods. Dr. Agosta has identified

thruster engines about the structure, and larger ones apparently detached and left on the ground.

Currently, we have no data on the immediate use of the library—whether it serves some secret purpose; whether it will ever take off; whether it will ever be possible to find research materials in it. All the scientists and professors we interviewed for this article were either evasive or outright denying in any such knowledge.

In the end, it appears to have been hastily planned and poorly executed, leaving features presumably from the original interior (such as windows that view other areas inside the library) and many architectural oddities such as hallways that don't go anywhere and concrete slabs that serve no purpose.

Whatever the future plans, it is clear that without the designers' carelessness, the truth might have never been known about the origin of this extraterrestrial edifice. On a final note of irony, the namesake chosen for the structure was Clark's own rocket scientist, Robert Goddard.