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U.S. Department of Justice

Federal Bureau of Investigation
Washington, D.C. 20535

September 28, 2018

MR. JOHN GREENEWALD JR.
SUITE 1203
27305 WEST LIVE OAK ROAD
CASTAIC, CA 91384

FOIPA Request No.: 1408071-000
Subject: MERCHANT, MADELINE
GWYNNE

Dear Mr. Greenewald:

Records responsive to your request were previously processed under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Below you will find informational paragraphs relevant to your request. Please read each item carefully.



A search of the Central Records System maintained at FBI Headquarters indicated that records responsive to your request have been sent to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Since these records were previously processed under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, we are providing you a copy of the previously processed documents.

Please be advised if this release of previously processed material does not satisfy your information needs for this request, you may make a request to NARA at the following address, using file number 117-HQ-286 as a reference:

National Archives and Records Administration
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD 20740-6001

Enclosed are 11 pages of previously processed documents and a copy of the Explanation of Exemptions. This release is being provided to you at no charge.

Please be advised that additional records potentially responsive to your subject may exist. If this release of previously processed material does not satisfy your information needs for this request, you may request an additional search for records. Submit your request by mail or fax to – Work Process Unit, 170 Marcel Drive, Winchester, VA 22602, fax number (540) 868-4997. Please cite the FOIPA Request Number in your correspondence.

For your information, Congress excluded three discrete categories of law enforcement and national security records from the requirements of the FOIA. See 5 U.S. C. § 552(c) (2006 & Supp. IV (2010)). This response is limited to those records subject to the requirements of the FOIA. This is a standard notification that is given to all our requesters and should not be taken as an indication that excluded records do, or do not, exist.

For questions regarding our determinations, visit the www.fbi.gov/foia website under “Contact Us.” The FOIPA Request Number listed above has been assigned to your request. Please use this number in all correspondence concerning your request.

You may file an appeal by writing to the Director, Office of Information Policy (OIP), United States Department of Justice, Suite 11050, 1425 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20530-0001, or you may submit an appeal through OIP's FOIA online portal by creating an account on the following web site: <https://www.foiaonline.gov/foiaonline/action/public/home>. Your appeal must be postmarked or electronically transmitted within ninety (90) days from the date of this letter in order to be considered timely. If you submit your appeal by mail, both the letter and the envelope should be clearly marked "Freedom of Information Act Appeal." Please cite the FOIPA Request Number assigned to your request so it may be easily identified.

You may seek dispute resolution services by contacting the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) at 877-684-6448, or by emailing ogis@nara.gov. Alternatively, you may contact the FBI's FOIA Public Liaison by emailing foipaquestions@fbi.gov. If you submit your dispute resolution correspondence by email, the subject heading should clearly state "Dispute Resolution Services." Please also cite the FOIPA Request Number assigned to your request so it may be easily identified.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Hardy", with a stylized flourish at the end.

David M. Hardy
Section Chief,
Record/Information
Dissemination Section
Information Management Division

Enclosure(s)

EXPLANATION OF EXEMPTIONS

SUBSECTIONS OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, SECTION 552

- (b)(1) (A) specifically authorized under criteria established by an Executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy and (B) are in fact properly classified to such Executive order;
- (b)(2) related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency;
- (b)(3) specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than section 552b of this title), provided that such statute (A) requires that the matters be withheld from the public in such a manner as to leave no discretion on issue, or (B) establishes particular criteria for withholding or refers to particular types of matters to be withheld;
- (b)(4) trade secrets and commercial or financial information obtained from a person and privileged or confidential;
- (b)(5) inter-agency or intra-agency memorandums or letters which would not be available by law to a party other than an agency in litigation with the agency;
- (b)(6) personnel and medical files and similar files the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;
- (b)(7) records or information compiled for law enforcement purposes, but only to the extent that the production of such law enforcement records or information (A) could reasonably be expected to interfere with enforcement proceedings, (B) would deprive a person of a right to a fair trial or an impartial adjudication, (C) could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, (D) could reasonably be expected to disclose the identity of confidential source, including a State, local, or foreign agency or authority or any private institution which furnished information on a confidential basis, and, in the case of record or information compiled by a criminal law enforcement authority in the course of a criminal investigation, or by an agency conducting a lawful national security intelligence investigation, information furnished by a confidential source, (E) would disclose techniques and procedures for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions, or would disclose guidelines for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions if such disclosure could reasonably be expected to risk circumvention of the law, or (F) could reasonably be expected to endanger the life or physical safety of any individual;
- (b)(8) contained in or related to examination, operating, or condition reports prepared by, on behalf of, or for the use of an agency responsible for the regulation or supervision of financial institutions; or
- (b)(9) geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells.

SUBSECTIONS OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, SECTION 552a

- (d)(5) information compiled in reasonable anticipation of a civil action proceeding;
- (j)(2) material reporting investigative efforts pertaining to the enforcement of criminal law including efforts to prevent, control, or reduce crime or apprehend criminals;
- (k)(1) information which is currently and properly classified pursuant to an Executive order in the interest of the national defense or foreign policy, for example, information involving intelligence sources or methods;
- (k)(2) investigatory material compiled for law enforcement purposes, other than criminal, which did not result in loss of a right, benefit or privilege under Federal programs, or which would identify a source who furnished information pursuant to a promise that his/her identity would be held in confidence;
- (k)(3) material maintained in connection with providing protective services to the President of the United States or any other individual pursuant to the authority of Title 18, United States Code, Section 3056;
- (k)(4) required by statute to be maintained and used solely as statistical records;
- (k)(5) investigatory material compiled solely for the purpose of determining suitability, eligibility, or qualifications for Federal civilian employment or for access to classified information, the disclosure of which would reveal the identity of the person who furnished information pursuant to a promise that his/her identity would be held in confidence;
- (k)(6) testing or examination material used to determine individual qualifications for appointment or promotion in Federal Government service the release of which would compromise the testing or examination process;
- (k)(7) material used to determine potential for promotion in the armed services, the disclosure of which would reveal the identity of the person who furnished the material pursuant to a promise that his/her identity would be held in confidence.

RECORDED

117-286 - 1

December 9, 1947

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
BY SPECIAL MESSENGER

To: Atomic Energy Commission
Room 38, Public Health Building
Washington, D. C.

DECLASSIFIED BY 60309 *W. J. W.*
ON 10/5/86 *KSA/bjs*

Attention: Rear Admiral John E. Gingrich
Director of Security and Intelligence

From: John Edgar Hoover, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation

Subject: MADELINE GWYNNE MERCHANT

[redacted] Security Officer, Tinker Field, Oklahoma City, has advised the Oklahoma City Office of this Bureau that Mrs. Merchant appeared at Tinker Field on October 14, 1947 and attempted to obtain employment as a Press Agent at a reported salary of \$7,200.00 a year.

In an interview with [redacted] she advised that she had been writing articles on atomic, nuclear, ionic, and ray warfare for the Atomic Energy Commission. She claimed to be in close contact with scientists at Los Alamos and stated that her divorced husband, Benson Merchant, was one of the original engineers at that facility. [redacted] advised that Mrs. Merchant did not give any information which could be construed as confidential, but claimed to have written articles under her maiden name, Madeline Gwynne, on various theories and that these articles had met with wide acclaim. Mr. Juvenal was of the opinion that Mrs. Merchant was probably a psychopathic case.

The files of this Bureau reflect that Mrs. Merchant contacted the El Paso Office and advised that she had received several reports concerning light objects seen at night and followed by explosions. She claimed to be a student of radio waves and reportedly discussed flying objects with officials of the Atomic Energy Commission at Los Alamos, including Mr. Sidney Newberger. She also claimed to have written the Secretary of War and other Government officials concerning her theories. The El Paso Office has advised that officials of the Commission at Los Alamos consider Mrs. Merchant to be unreliable and possibly not well balanced mentally. (See 117-186-1)

This is being furnished for your information.

- Mr. Tolson
- Mr. E. A. Tamm
- Mr. Clegg
- Mr. Glavin
- Mr. Ladd
- Mr. Nichols
- Mr. Rosen
- Mr. Tracy
- Mr. Egan
- Mr. Gurnea
- Mr. Harbo
- Mr. Mohr
- Mr. Pennington
- Mr. Quinn Tamm
- Tele. Room
- Mr. Nease
- Miss Gandy

CWB:AM
COMMUNICATIONS SECTION
DEC 9 1947 P.M.
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

71 DEC 16 1947

Handwritten notes and signatures:
one flying
T. C. B.
C. H. W.

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

b6
b7c

TO : Director, FBI

DATE: November 19, 1947

FROM: SAC, Oklahoma City

SUBJECT: MADELINE GWYNNE MERCHANT
ATOMIC ENERGY ACT

On October 14, 1947 [redacted] Security Officer, Tinker Field, Oklahoma City, advised this office that the above named individual appeared at Tinker Field on that date, attempting to obtain employment as a Press Agent at a reported salary of approximately \$7,200 a year. She was interviewed by [redacted] under the pretext of being a Personnel Counselor, and she advised that she had been writing articles on atomic, nuclear, ionic, and ray warfare for the Atomic Energy Commission. These articles had been submitted to the War Department for ATC. She claimed to have been in close contact with scientists of Los Alamos, New Mexico, and her divorced husband, BENSON MERCHANT, one of the original engineers at that facility. She also claimed to be in close contact with FBI Agent FEMMER (phonetic) at Santa Fe, New Mexico. Mrs. MERCHANT advised that she was presently residing with her mother, Mrs. H. E. MYERS, 918 Northeast 18th Street, Oklahoma City.

Mr. JUVENAL advised that MERCHANT did not give any information which could be construed as confidential, but claimed to have written articles under her maiden name, MADELINE GWYNNE, on various theories, and that these articles had met with wide acclaim. [redacted] expressed the opinion that Mrs. MERCHANT was probably a psychopathic case. She claimed that she was well known to the FBI, AEC, and U. S. Army.

By teletype dated October 14, 1947 the El Paso Office was requested to furnish this office with any information in their files concerning Mrs. MERCHANT.

By teletype of the same date the El Paso Office advised that Mrs. MADELINE GWYNNE MERCHANT had visited the Santa Fe Resident Agency, at which time she advised that she had received several reports concerning light objects seen at night and followed by explosions. She claimed to be a student of radio waves and reportedly discussed the above flying objects with officials of AEC, Los Alamos, New Mexico, including SIDNEY NEWBERGER, Chief of Intelligence. MERCHANT was also reported to have written the Secretary of War and other government officials concerning her theories. The El Paso Office advised that officials of the AEC, Los Alamos, consider MERCHANT to be unreliable and possibly not well balanced mentally.

62-3891-76
RECORDED
INDEXED
NOV 22 1947
ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 10/5/06 BY 60309 uc/ta
KSR

Director, FBI

November 19, 1947

Re: Madeline Gwynne Merchant
Atomic Energy Act

On October 22, 1947 Mrs. MERCHANT personally appeared at the Oklahoma City Office, at which time she stated that she wanted to report that on October 10, 1947 a disc was sighted north of Oklahoma City by her step-father and mother. This disc was traveling from the east, apparently going in a semi-circle to the northeast. She requested that this information be furnished to the Bureau for transmittal to appropriate Army officials.

It was apparent that Mrs. MERCHANT is suffering from some mental disorder and it was noticeable that she has dropsy. It is not believed that she is reliable and no investigation will be conducted by this office.

CC: El Paso

DRS:bnm
117-3

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

b6
b7c

TO : MR. D. H. LADD
FROM : MR. H. B. FLETCHER
SUBJECT: MRS. MADELINE GWYNNE MERCHANT

DATE: November 19, 1948

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 1/5/00 BY 60309 UO/STW
KSL/3

Mr. Tolson _____
Mr. E. A. Tamm _____
Mr. Clegg _____
Mr. Glavin _____
Mr. Ladd _____
Mr. Nichols _____
Mr. Rosen _____
Mr. Tracy _____
Mr. Egan _____
Mr. Gurnea _____
Mr. Harbo _____
Mr. Mohr _____
Mr. Pennington _____
Mr. Quinn Tamm _____
Tele. Room _____
Mr. Nease _____
Miss Holmes _____
Miss Gandy _____

Attached is a request from the Army Air Forces for an investigation into the "background, objectives and reliability" of the captioned subject.

A review of Bureau files reflect in file 117-286-1 that [redacted] Security Officer, Tinker Field, Oklahoma City, advised on October 14, 1947, that in his opinion Mrs. Merchant was probably a psychopathic case. File 62-83894 Serial 37 contains information wherein Mr. Sydney Newburger, Chief of Security and Intelligence for the AEC at Los Alamos, stated officials of the AEC consider the subject unreliable and probably not well balanced. In the same serial, the El Paso office stated Mrs. Merchant personally appeared at the Oklahoma City office of the Bureau on October 22, 1947, to report information concerning "flying disks". It is stated:

"It was apparent Mrs. Merchant is suffering from some mental disorder and it was noticeable that she has dropsy. It is not believed that she is reliable....."

A card is maintained in the Crime Records Section of the Bureau indicating that Mrs. Merchant may be mentally ill.

ACTION:

In view of the above information, the Army Air Forces may not desire that the investigation requested be conducted. It is suggested that this memorandum be directed to the Liaison Section and the substance of the above be orally furnished to the Army Air Forces at which time a determination should be made as to whether that Agency still desires any action taken in this matter.

Attachment

EFL:jmf

Major Capucci 11/26
ST-2888 - checking

see 11-9-48
AF command
material Fed. returned
wing matter 12-22-48
to col investigation denied
matter will all wing get Fed
to clear through 11/25

5-2/4/48
RECORDED - 114
EX-40

117-286-2
5 JAN 12 1949

708
[Signature]

RECORDED - 23
EX-121

11-276-3
SAC, Oklahoma City

September 21, 1949

Director, FBI

MARLENE CHEVRE MERCHANT
ATOMIC ENERGY ACT
Bureau File 117-286

Reurlet dated October 28, 1949, in which you requested that the Bureau obtain from the headquarters of the Office of Special Investigations any information that they may have concerning the subject and/or her association with known Communists.

Bureau files reflect that OSI requested an investigation concerning the background, objectives and reliability of the subject in November, 1948. This request was withdrawn on December 22, 1948, in view of the information indicating that the subject was suffering from a mental disorder.

In view of the background of this subject, no inquiry will be made by the Bureau as requested in your memorandum.

cc-Rubice

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 12/5/06 BY 60309 uc/ram
KSL/g

KWD:mm

mm

Handwritten signature

Handwritten initials

Handwritten symbol

- Tolson _____
- Ladd _____
- Clegg _____
- Glavin _____
- Nichols _____
- Rosen _____
- Tracy _____
- Harbo _____
- Mohr _____
- Tele. Room _____
- Nease _____
- Gandy _____

52 NOV 22 1949 NOV 21 1949

RECORDED
NOV 21 1949

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Director, FBI

DATE: October 25, 1949

FROM : SAC, Oklahoma City

SUBJECT: MADELINE GWYNNE MERCHANT
ATOMIC ENERGY ACT

7-1

Remylet 11/19/47.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 10/5/00 BY 60309 uc/tam
KSK 8

By letter dated 11/25/47 the Butte office forwarded to this office the original and a carbon copy of questionnaire received by [redacted] Canyon County Coroner, Nampa, Idaho, on November 20, 1947, apparently from the above captioned individual, who gave her address as 918 N.E. 18th St., Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Enclosed herewith is the carbon copy of the questionnaire, and this office is in possession of the original.

The Butte office in their letter of November 25, 1947, advised that an explosion caused by butane gas leakage occurred at Nampa, Idaho, on November 15, 1947. Five persons were killed, 50 were injured, and three buildings were demolished as a result of the explosion. [redacted] a waitress in the Canyon Cafe, across the street from the explosion, reported to the newspapers that she thought she had seen "a ball of fire" at the time of the explosion. [redacted] advised the Butte office that he had interviewed [redacted] relative to the "ball of fire" and that it was concluded that [redacted] had seen the reflection of the blast in a window of the Canyon Cafe.

The Butte office requested the Oklahoma City office to ascertain from Mrs. MERCHANT her reason for desiring information regarding the "ball of fire" and why she requested this information be sent to the FBI Agent at Santa Fe, New Mexico. By letter dated December 29, 1947, this office forwarded to the Butte office the information contained in referenced letter to the Bureau, and no investigation was conducted by this office since it appeared Mrs. MERCHANT was not reliable and was possibly suffering from some mental disability.

The Butte office by letter dated October 7, 1949, advises they had received correspondence from the above captioned on July 25, 1949, in which she desired information be furnished the nearest Military Security Office in that area in regard to seven V-shaped objects that were sighted over the Mountain Home Desert, which is near Boise, Idaho, on July 24, 1949, by an unidentified pilot. The Butte office advised MERCHANT claimed she had received this information in the Daily Oklahoman newspaper dated July 25, 1949.

ENCLOSURE ATTACHED

Enclosed with Subject's letter was a "data sheet" containing 18 questions which pertained to V-shaped objects, and according to the Butte letter, these questions were very similar to the data desired by Air Force Intelligence Offices in regard to flying saucers, discs and other similar flying objects. The Butte office has advised Subject desired no acknowledgment to her correspondence, but requested the completed questionnaire be forwarded to appropriate military security authorities. The Butte office has advised this information was furnished Army

cc Butte (65-0-206)

RECORDED - 130

117-286-3
FBI

INDEXED - 130

12 OCT 31 1949

EX-3

FIVE

Let Oklahoma City
11-2-49
117-3

authorities at Great Falls, Montana, Air Base; Hill Field Air Base, Ogden, Utah; McCord Field, Washington; and the Salt Lake City office.

On October 3, 1949, the Butte office received correspondence from the Inspector General, AAF, 15th District, OSI, Great Falls Air Force Base, Great Falls, Montana. Enclosed with this correspondence to the Butte office was a letter from the OSI, USAF, which advised that Subject associates with known Communists, and is considered dangerous, and further that Subject's letter was being forwarded to the Air Materiel Section for evaluation. The Butte office requested the Oklahoma City office to obtain all information in possession of the Headquarters Office, OSI, at Washington, D.C., concerning Subject's association with known Communists.

The Oklahoma City office has no information concerning Subject not already provided to the Bureau in referenced letter, except that one Mrs. MADELINE GWYNNE MERCHANT, by letter to this office dated August 2, 1948, advised she had attended Oklahoma University in the Spring of 1935, at which time she had attended lectures given by one Dr. EATON (possibly identical with HOWARD O. EATON, Professor of Philosophy.) Subject stated she was suspicious of Dr. EATON since he had recommended to her as his student, that she give serious consideration to Socialist or State ownership of all property. She advised that he also suggested that such a change in concepts might be effected by legislation, and should that not be effective, "mild force" or "mild revolution" might have to occur.

The files of this office reflect HOWARD O. EATON was Faculty Adviser of the Equal Education Committee at the University of Oklahoma, which, according to informants, is controlled by Communist Party members.

In view of the above, the Bureau is requested to obtain from the Headquarters of OSI any information they have concerning Subject and/or her association with known Communists. No investigation will be conducted by this office inasmuch as it appears from information in the file that she is mentally unbalanced.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 10/5/04 BY 60309 UC/TAM
KSRL

111 27-3

ENCLOSURE

Enclosure to Bureau
MADELINE GWYNNE MERCHANT
ATOMIC ENERGY ACT
OC 117-3

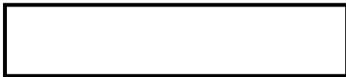
ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE *10/5/06* BY *60309 wcl/ram*
ESAT

918 N.E. 18th St.

b6
b7C

Oklahoma City (5) Okla.

Nov. 17, 1947



Canyon County Coroner,

Nampa, Idaho.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 10/6/04 BY 60209 DC/Jan
KSL/SM

Dear Sir:

Will you kindly answer the following questions concerning the
"ball-of-fire" described in a news release as seen by  and
others on Sunday, Nov. 16, 1947?

1. Was the reported number of persons killed (five) correct? _____
2. Of the fifty persons reported injured, how many are seriously injured _____
3. Are the injured suffering from burns similar to lightning burns?

4. Direction from which "ball-of-fire" came. _____
5. Size, (as accurate as possible) _____
6. Was it seen by others before it entered the cafe kitchen _____
7. Did it explode? _____
8. Color _____
9. Exact hour of occurrence _____
10. Shape of object _____
11. Remarks: _____
12. What was the state of the weather? _____

On a separate sheet of paper, please give any other unusual impressions of those
seeing the "ball-of-fire."

Thanking you very kindly for your earliest possible reply, I am,

en/

Sincerely,

Mrs. Madeline Emma Mouchant

cc/ The carbon copy enclosed should be mailed to Mr. Francis Finley, FBI Agent-
In-Charge.

Federal Building,
Santa Fe, N.M.

P.3. This communication should not be discussed any more than absolutely
necessary to secure the desired details, except with members of the
FBI or official members of the War Dep't.

Additional remarks: _____

Use space below if necessary: