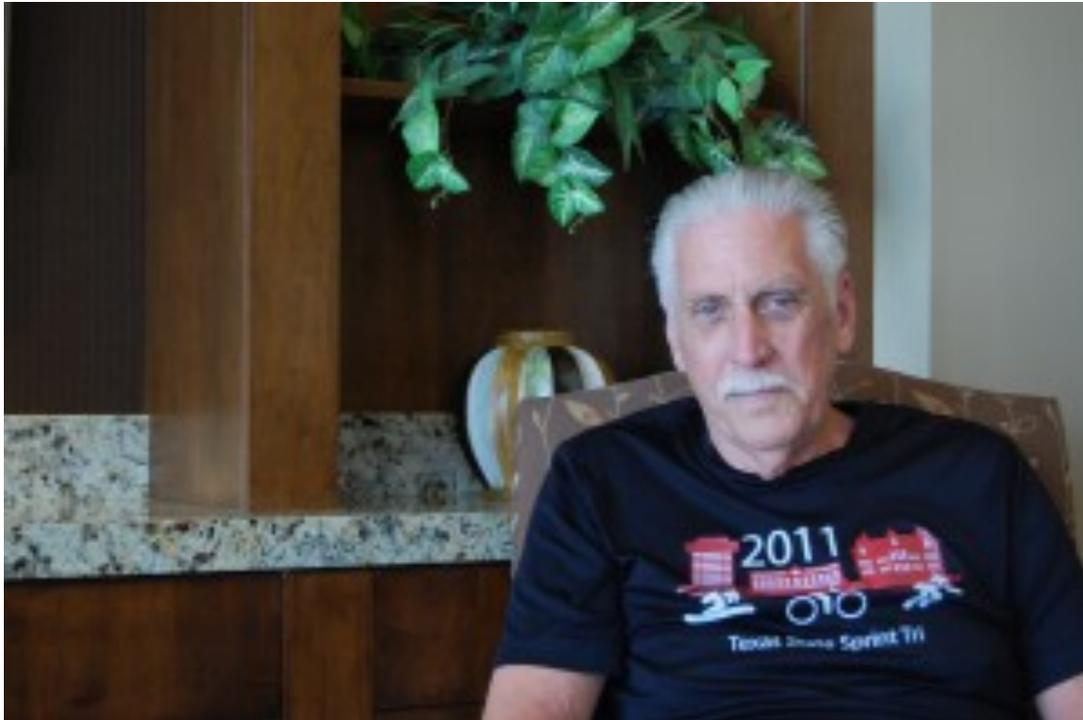


PROFILES IN PATRIOTISM: PATRICK MCCASLIN

By C. WAYNE DAWSON



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At 3 a.m. on October 24, 1968, B-52 Air Force Navigator Pat McCaslin scanned his radar screen, seeking an object that had been reported over the skies of Minot Air Force base in North Dakota.

In a single sweep of the B-52's radar—less than three seconds—a UFO traveled from three to within one mile of the aircraft. The extraordinary and rapid movement startled Captain (now Colonel) Patrick McCaslin. As he explained to *The Sun*, the UFO had to be traveling 3,000 mile per hour to cover two miles in one radar sweep—something no American aircraft before or since is capable of.

"I knew whatever it was, it was something new I'd never seen on radar. Nothing I know of can travel laterally in three seconds, two miles, and then stop. It maintained our descent rate, and then evened out laterally to within one mile in perfect formation."

When the object became visible, the B-52's pilot invited McCaslin to take a look but the navigator declined, unwilling to give up the safety of his ejection seat should the aircraft lose altitude. According to those on the B-52 who gambled a look, the UFO was headed by a crescent shaped object attached to a tunnel structure leading to a huge glowing orange oval, approximately two football fields across. (Sketches are available from <http://minotb52ufo.com/introduction.php>.)

Subsequent radar sweeps indicated the UFO was following and matching the forward speed of the bomber. When the plane's pilot swung 180°, in the direction of the object, the UFO turned to the side and allowed the aircraft to continue. After the B-52's change of direction, its two UHF radios closed transmission on all frequencies with Radar Approach Control. The UFO continued shadowing the aircraft off its left wing for about 20 miles. As the crew prepared to land, the radarscope camera recorded the UFO's spiraling around behind the B-52. After the object vanished, the aircraft's radio communications returned to normal.

"To move like that, it had to be guided by some form of intelligence," McCaslin said, "but as someone with a scientific background, I'm not going to say what that was." "They said the UFO was the star Vega. But that doesn't explain how we were able to fly over it when it approached ground level. Stars don't do that."

The Air Force was beginning to close down Project Blue Book at the time, a policy of classifying UFO sightings and limiting public access to information about them. The story received no publicity, due in part to the Air Force's policies, but commentator Peter Jennings of ABC News made a documentary on the incident in 2005 and interviewed the B-52's crew, including Colonel McCaslin. It is on DVD and available from Amazon.

In 1969, McCaslin received pilot's training and in 1970 was transferred to Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, where he flew an OB-10 light attack plane. He was the commander of a flight supporting Operation Prairie Fire, which, when needed, grew up to two CH-53 helicopters and four A-1E Skyraiders, in addition to his own aircraft. The group was responsible for inserting and extracting Special Forces ground troops from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

"I can't remember any of my missions that weren't done under enemy fire," he said. "We later found out the enemy knew about our missions in advance because our people discovered a saboteur back at headquarters leaking information to the enemy."

Once, when on assignment over Laos, a bullet crashed through McCaslin's cockpit, into his head and blew glass into his seat. "That's how I got a purple heart," he said. But one mission in particular haunts him to this day.

"We got a call in May of 1971 from a unit of three Americans and 7-8 Vietnamese operatives called Recon Team, Alaska," he said. "They were in an area close to the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone) and called in a Prairie Fire Emergency – the highest level of urgency."

McCaslin was 30 miles south and made an all-out effort to reach the men, desperately calling for backup. But, as he neared the extraction zone and heard different voices take over after the preceding man died, and the American voices disappeared one by one. By the time he arrived, the voices ceased and only one Vietnamese survived. "I felt helpless, like watching my own son getting run over by a car," he said, visibly emotional.

Colonel McCaslin received two Silver Stars, two Distinguished Flying Crosses and a Purple Heart when flying in Vietnam, but has nothing today resembling a war hero's swagger. As a former chairman of the Sun City Republican club, he supports a strong US defense but says that most wars fought since World War II, including Vietnam, needlessly squandered American lives.

"Every generation seems to have to prove their manhood, but wise leaders should know the price we pay when they send young men to war," he said. Even though I'm not a Franklin Delano Roosevelt fan, he sent his own son overseas when that war broke out. He was one of the few presidents in modern times willing to pay the price."

Source: <http://www.cwaynedawson.com/regular-blog/profiles-patriotism-pat-mccaslin/>