

TWITTERSPACE

Careless talk.

BY WILLIAM MEIKLE

@Voyager2: I am currently 13 hrs 11 mins 26 secs of light-travel time from Earth

Dave was excited to find that he could follow the Voyager spacecraft on Twitter. He'd been obsessed with space, aliens and UFOs for as long as he could remember. He wanted to believe so bad, and being in touch with Voyager made him feel like he was reaching out into the vastness. In a small way, it felt like he was attempting *first contact*. His excitement soon turned to disappointment: the messages weren't coming from the craft but were being typed in by a nerd at NASA. It did however set him to thinking.

What if they're already here? What if they're watching us?

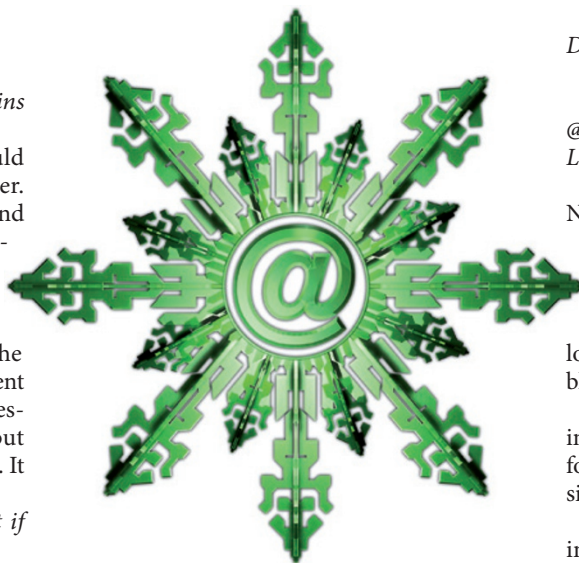
He did a search on Twitter — #aliens, #ufo and #invasion. The results were illuminating. @weegreenmen and @saucerzrus in particular shared many links, and many of them had nothing to do with aliens. What they *did* have a lot to do with was military infrastructure and economics for all the major powers on the planet. That was enough to make Dave think some more.

@weegreenmen: Check out Reuters. Big fluctuations in sterling today #invasion

He followed their tweets for several weeks. During that time he found out more than he needed to know about troop movements in Afghanistan, the North Korean nuclear programme, the perilous state of the Eurozone economies and, strangely, long-range weather forecasts for the Northern Hemisphere.

@saucerzrus: #ufo #aliens Major weather bomb in the Maritimes. Whoo-Hoo!

By now Dave was convinced he was on to something. The only way he would be able to find out what, was to join in on the conversation. He created a user on Twitter for the purpose. He spent a while looking for just the right name, and finally went with @littlegreybuddies. Then he needed a hook, to get their attention. The thing they were currently most interested in was weather patterns, so he started with that. He began by posting links to the North Atlantic storm watch sites, and actually found himself getting interested in the real-time tracking systems he found. That led him into ever more esoteric areas of research involving analyses of the movements of the jet stream, and apocalyptic warnings of serious trouble ahead for the world's climate.



@littlegreybuddies: Looks like the UK is in for a severe chill. So much for Global Warming #jetstream

That got their attention. He started to see his messages retweeted to the #aliens, #ufo and #invasion hash-tags. Slowly at first, he began retweeting messages posted by @weegreenmen and @saucerzrus, then started replying to their messages. In turn they started including him in their conversations, and seemed especially interested in his ongoing weather research.

@saucerzrus: #ufo #aliens Not long now till LUTZ #countdown

Buoyed by his acceptance Dave now felt that he had to do something to make sure he stayed there long enough to find out what was going on. He delved into university server systems and crept as close as he could to worldwide military information. From that he cobbled together a model of the coming month of where troops would be gathered, what the weather would be, and forecasted three weeks to come. He uploaded it all to a local ftp server and posted the link. Then he sat back and waited.

@saucerzrus: #ufo #aliens Hey @littlegreybuddies, THX man. #countdown brought forward

Dave was ecstatic. He'd made contact. He was now sure to the point of bursting with excitement that he was talking to actual alien entities here on Earth. He was on the verge of finding out their plan. And it never hurts to ask.

@littlegreybuddies: #countdown So when's

D-Day? More to the point ... what's D-Day?

The reply was almost immediate.

@saucerzrus: #countdown Watch the skies @littlegreybuddies Keep watching the skies LOL

Much to Dave's dismay things went quiet. Nobody posted to the hash-tags for a week, and @saucerzrus and @weegreenmen came back as discontinued when sent direct messages. He tried to force the issue by posting to the hash-tags, but he was a lone voice in the wilderness, tumbleweed blowing through his posts. No one replied.

Dave got desperate. He hacked his way into secure military installations, searching for a secret that would unlock his contacts' silence. He didn't find it.

What he did find was a growing disquiet in the military with the state of the upper atmosphere. Something was going on up there that had the top brass very worried. Dave was about to send a general tweet to see if anything was trending when he got a personal message. There was no sender identified, but he guessed who had sent it.

Time's up. Switch on the news.

He did as he was told.

"An unusual phenomenon is being reported all along the East Coast tonight. It is snowing in a zone stretching from New England to Labrador. Nothing unusual for this time of the year, except for the colour — the snow is green.

"Reports are also coming in that this snowfall is having strange effects on plant life in some areas. Scientists have taken samples of the substance for analysis, but as yet there is no official confirmation as to the cause of these events. All we can say for certain is that this is a deadly attack, from a source as yet unknown. FEMA has issued a preliminary statement asking people to remain indoors with doors and windows locked until the storm has passed, and we can only reiterate the importance of that advice. From what we have seen here, this country may never be the same again."

His laptop beeped.

A new tweet had just been posted to the hash-tags.

@saucerzrus: ROFLMAO Take us to your leader! PLS RT. #ufo #aliens #invasion #countdown = 0 ■

William Meikle is a Scottish writer resident in Canada with 10 novels published in the genre press and more than 200 short-story credits in 13 countries.

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