



The Bermuda Triangle Mystery Solved?

"The mysterious loss of a ship and all of its crew." "The disappearance of aircraft and the pilots as well." These mysterious phenomena have been reported over a certain area of the Atlantic Ocean near Bermuda. While studying gas hydrates, the late Dr. Donald Davidson, a Canadian physical chemist, proposed a theory that may explain these mysteries.

Dr. Davidson received his BSc and his MSc degrees in chemistry from the University of New Brunswick, and his PhD from Brown University. He was a staff chemist at the National Research Council in Ottawa for many years, until his death in 1986. He had a great interest in gas hydrates and it was his knowledge in this field that led to his proposed Bermuda Triangle theory in 1984. At enormous pressures and low temperatures (as at the bottom of the sea), water and gas molecules form gas hydrates. These compounds resemble ice but, unlike ordinary ice, the water molecules form cages that trap gas molecules such as methane. The solid hydrates retain their stability until conditions, such as higher temperatures or lower pressures, cause them to decompose. This decomposition releases enormous amounts of trapped gas.

The disappearance of ships and aircraft may be the result of these natural gas blowouts. This could turn the sea, very briefly and without notice, into a mass of froth that could sink any ship in the area. As the methane gas rises, an airplane flying through the gas would experience engine failure, or worse: a spark from the engine could turn the aircraft into a flying fire ball.

When Davidson proposed his Bermuda Triangle theory in 1984, the scientific community did not take much notice. However, new information concerning blowouts of naturally occurring gas hydrates (presented at a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1990), and aircraft pilot reports of waterspouts on the ocean's surface that might be the result of these blowouts, lend support to Dr. Davidson's theory.