

SUNlite

Shedding some light on UFOlogy and UFOs

VOICES FROM THE WOODS

When we got within a 50 meter distance. The object was producing red and blue light. The blue light was steady and projecting under the object. It was lighting up the area directly under extending a meter or two out. At this point of positive identification I relayed to CSC, SSgt Coffey. Positive sighting of object...colour of lights and that it was definitely mechanical in nature. This is the closest point that I was near the object at any point. We then proceeded after it. It moved in a zig-zagging manner back through the woods then lost sight of it. - Jim Penniston January 1981 statement

We climbed over the fence and started heading towards the red and blue lights and they just disappeared. Once we reached the farmer's house we could see a beacon going around so we went towards it. We followed it for about 2 miles before we could see it was coming from a lighthouse. - John Burroughs January 1981 statement

As we entered the forest, the blue and red lights were not visible anymore. Only the beacon light was still blinking. We figured the lights were coming from past the forest, since nothing was visible as we passed through the woody forest. We could see a glowing near the beacon light, but as we got closer we found it to be a lit-up farmhouse. After we had passed through the forest, we thought it had to be an aircraft accident. So did CSC as well. But we ran and walked a good 2 miles past our vehicle, until we got to a vantage point where we could determine that what we were chasing was only a beacon light off in the distance. Our route through the forest and field was a direct one, straight towards the light. - Ed Cabansag January 1981 statement

Penniston relayed that he was close enough to the object to determine that it was definitely a mechanical object. He stated he was within approximately 50 meters....Each time Penniston gave me the indication that he was about to reach the area where the lights were, he would give an extended estimated location. He eventually arrived at a "beacon light", however, he stated that this was not the light or lights he had originally observed. He was instructed to return. - J. D. Chandler January 1981 statement

I monitored their progress (Penniston, Burroughs and Cabansag) as they entered the wooded area. They appeared to get very close to the lights, and at one point SSgt Penniston stated that it was a definite metallic object. Due to the colors they had reported, I alerted them to the fact that they may have been approaching a light aircraft crash scene. ...SSgt Penniston reported getting near the "object" and then all of a sudden said they had gone past it and were looking at a marker beacon that was in the same general direction as the other lights. I asked him, through SSgt Coffey, if he could have been mistaken, to which SSgt Penniston replied that had I seen the other lights I would know the difference. SSgt Penniston seemed agitated at this point. Fred Buran January 1981 statement

...we're looking at the thing, we're probably about 2-3 hundred yards away. It looks like an eye winking at you, it's still moving from side to side and when we put the starscope on it, it's sorta a hollow centre right, a dark centre,.....It's like the pupil of an eye looking at you, winkingand the flash is so bright to the starscope, that err.... it almost burns your eye. - Colonel Halt taped observations as he looked in the direction of the Orford Ness lighthouse on December 28th, 1980

Whilst some puzzles remain, we can probably say that no unearthly craft were seen in Rendlesham Forest. We can also argue with confidence that the main focus of the events was a series of misperceptions of everyday things encountered in less than everyday circumstances.

Rendlesham investigator Jenny Randles

"The UFOs that never were"

November-December 2010

Are you genuine?

I was not that surprised when I saw the sender of the e-mail with this title. Anthony Bragalia was requesting that I allow him to write an article for SUNlite that would address many of the statements I made in the last issue regarding his research. For some reason, Mr. Bragalia thinks those reading this newsletter (which he stated in the Reality Uncovered forum was a *little-read Klass-wanna-be e-newsletter*) are missing his articles that are peppered all over the web (even though I provide links to them in SUNlite). I thought about this for a second or two but then realized that whatever he wrote in this newsletter, I would have to comment upon. Then he would want to respond, and I would have to respond again. It would be a case of "rinse, lather, and repeat". This newsletter is not a discussion group and I saw no merit in it. I offered to discuss it with him in the Reality Uncovered forum, where we could debate this until the cows came home (the moderators had promised to control the debate). He refused.

I also had written in SUNlite 1-1,

However, in keeping with the newsletters format, I expect that the articles be written objectively without a need for conspiracy theories and wild claims being displayed as facts. Feel free to do that in some UFO publication.

With that in mind and based on Mr. Bragalia's articles, I have no interest in posting his article in this newsletter.

As a final complaint, he took issue with my desire not to discuss anything with him in private. There is a reason. He has misrepresented many things that I have stated in the past to him in e-mail exchanges. For instance, Bragalia stated I attempted to "mine him for information" (is asking a question about a story "mining?"), that I "stalked" him (yet he is the one that continuously e-mails me), and that I was stunned silent (even though I had responded to that e-mail within a few hours!). None of those things were accurate at all! Why should I engage in a private discussion with somebody who has tendency to exaggerate and distort what I said? I made sure that my e-mail exchange was also sent to a few others

just so they would be aware of what was transpiring. Bragalia stopped bothering me after that.

I had a discussion with Ian Ridpath and decided it might be a good idea to summarize some of the Rendlesham case. Lately, it seems to have gotten a lot of attention and Charles Halt is "rallying" his troops and getting support from people like Robert Hastings. A lot of what Halt is now saying is not even consistent with what he stated in the past! For instance, he now believes that personnel under his command were mistreated (drugged and harassed during interviews). As a senior officer, it was HIS responsibility to take care of HIS people. Allowing such interrogation methods to occur indicates he failed in his job as an officer.

Before I got to work on this article, I noticed that Dr. Clarke became the target of various UFO proponents for daring to suggest that Rendlesham **might** be explainable as a lighthouse and other misperceived phenomena as stated by Ian Ridpath. To even suggest it was possible brought down the wrath of the almighty UFO collective mind. Clarke must know that a case that becomes such a high profile event can NEVER possibly be explained no matter how good the evidence. The thought process for UFOlogists appears to be that if one of their best cases can be explained, maybe all of the good ones will eventually be explained! UFOlogists would never want that to happen.

There was a UFO festival nearby in Exeter but I regret having to miss it. No, I was not "stunned silent" or anything like that. I had to be out of town on family matters. If it was anything like last year's festival, I don't think I missed much.

Wendelle Stevens passed away. My knowledge of him was limited to what I saw on TV and his connections with Billy Meier. I don't agree with those conclusions but his passing was probably missed by many in UFOlogy.

From my own perspective, Jack Horkheimer's passing was sad to hear. I remember in the mid-1980s when I first saw his star hustler show on the local PBS

front: Ian Ridpath's photograph of the Orford Ness lighthouse in November 1983. The lighthouse is the bright light on the right. According to Ian, the lights on the left are from some buildings in the valley. I added the comments from all the principal witnesses taken shortly after the events happened. The difference between what they said then and now is significant. Halt's own words on the tape describe the lighthouse as it would appear in a "starlight scope".

station in Orlando just before sign-off. It was so popular that my brother asked if I watched it. While I found it to be very elementary and that it held nothing for me, I did realize how informative it was for the non-astronomer. I have always practiced his motto of "keep looking up". One can learn a lot about what is in the sky without jumping to wild conclusions by practicing what the "star hustler" preached.

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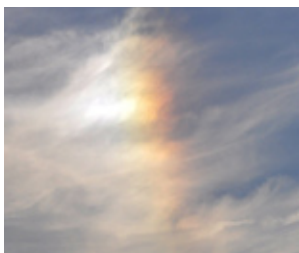
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The Sanger Paranormal society has found a voice on the internet. Some of the stuff they are presenting on their web page is "out there". My favorite is the white van video. These vans, which were recorded parked on the side of the road, were supposedly monitoring eyewitnesses to a recent UFO event. However, those recording the video never bothered to go up and talk to the drivers OR record the license plates for everyone to examine. When it comes to UFOs, it is often better to create a mystery than attempt to solve one.

Another great UFO event recorded by the Sanger Paranormal society was a video tape of a triangular UFO. The one that appeared in the UFO examiner's blog has the tell tale anti-collision beacon. Anytime that flashing strobe appears, one should immediately think it is an aircraft. Apparently, the Sanger group must have convinced themselves that alien spaceships/UFOs often use standard aircraft lighting to fool unsuspecting witnesses.

The Sanger paranormal society also claimed they had hit the "jackpot" when there was the report of a UFO crash on a hill near a witness' home. The team rolled into action and then proceeded to do just about nothing regarding the incident. There are no photographs, no videos, and little concrete information regarding the crash site. After a bunch of hoopla, the story disappeared. It demonstrates the vast distance between this organization's abilities/claims and reality.

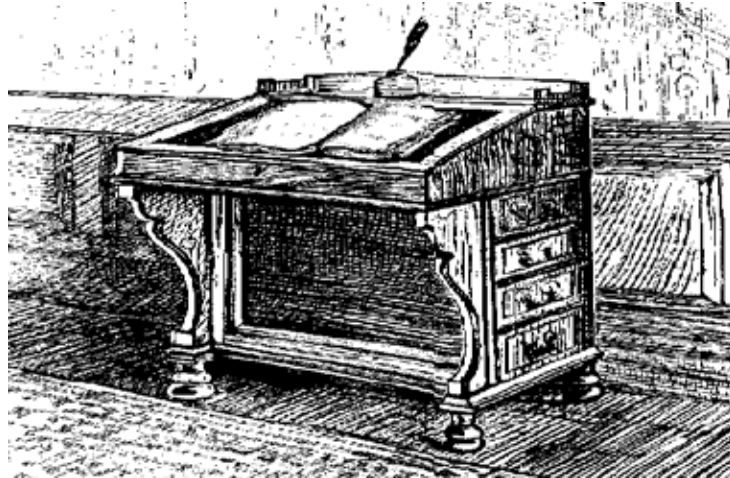
Anthony Sanchez, who is associated with the Sanger paranormal society, demonstrated just how out of touch he is with what is happening in the sky. According to Sanchez, he saw a bizarre cloud form while driving and heard



A photograph of a Sundog (a "rainbow cloud") that was taken by the editor

Who's blogging UFOs?

Hot topics and varied opinions



a loud boom. Shortly thereafter, he saw an "aurora/rainbow" cloud that was part of this event. He was able to take some pictures of it. What he actually photographed was a sun dog (see my photo of a sundog at bottom left). This is a case of a person, who wants so badly to see something strange, that they will immediately consider it is exotic instead of something that is natural. A little research on his part, would have identified what he had seen. Just prior to publication, Anthony Sanchez suffered a family tragedy and stopped writing his stories. While I sympathize with his personal problems, it still does not leave him off the hook for his flawed research.

Dr. David Clarke posted a new page on his blog devoted solely to Rendlesham. His interview with Colonel Conrad did not paint Colonel Charles Halt's story in a positive light. I normally don't write any comments in blogs but it contained new information instead of the same old recycled nonsense. As I stated very briefly in his blog, it was very informative. In my opinion, this is the best light shed on the matter since James Easton presented his series of articles on the subject over a decade ago. Sigh....I miss Easton's "Voyager" web site and UFO research list.

Not happy with Dr. Clarke's take on the matter, Robert Hastings then posted a rebuttal. Not surprisingly, it relies heavily on the comments made by Charles Halt and Nick Pope, who have a vested interest in promoting this case. He also uses decades old memories of some radar operators as evidence to refute documentation that there were no radar contacts!

Hastings' behavior towards opposing opinions and failure to look at all possibilities demonstrates his research is flawed. Of course, he does get paid to promote this kind of thinking. The last thing he would want to admit is that any of what he has presented in the past might be false.

The UFO Iconoclasts complained about an old True Magazine where Travis Walton's name was misspelled.

They used this to point out that UFO material is full of factual errors. This is the same blog that posts Anthony Braglia's articles, which contain errors (including calling me "Tom Printy") and highly misleading statements. Despite claiming to be journalists, they seem to make no effort to fact check anything in their blog. When errors are identified by outside sources, they are ignored and no corrections are made.

UFO Chronicles, which claims to promote UFO research in a scientific manner (and desires funds from its readers to support it), has a very unscientific method of silencing its critics. When it comes to scientific investigations, one answers skeptics/critics/opposing opinions with solid arguments and evidence. At UFO Chronicles, opposing opinions are simply censored so the readers don't get to read anything that indicates the story being told may not be accurate. This was evident when James Carlson posted a comment on the blog regarding Malmstrom. Within a few hours Frank Warren removed the comment. This was apparently due to Carlson's post being considered an ad hominem attack. I CAN understand this type of editing BUT one would expect there to be some form of feedback on the matter like publicly stating the author's comment was deleted for some specific reason. I also think that

Who's blogging UFOs? (Cont'd)

allowing authors, such as Robert Hastings, to post articles that contain the same kind of personal attacks on various individuals indicates a double standard.

The UFO examiner posted three UFO sightings by the same person from Stockdale, Texas. Anytime there are "repeaters", one has to question the source. If real UFOs are so rare, why would somebody be able to see more than one? This was a common concern in early UFO groups. Now repeaters appear to be treated as "special individuals". In this case, two of these events were "triangle" sightings that were made during the same time period, the ISS made a pass visible from his location! Is this just a coincidence or is it possible that just about any bright light seen in the sky is a UFO for this individual?

The UFO Mafia's blog writer Greg Boone threatened to "bust a cap" on skeptics or debunkers that try to "lean" on him. This was after he read some silly story about a UK couple who video taped some light in the sky and then claimed somebody called them with threats. I find it ironic that somebody who is complaining about threats, writes a blog called "UFO Mafia" and then makes comments stating they feel like shooting people. I realize that Mr. Boone was upset that somebody received a threat on the phone but I think he needs to recognize that these kinds of stories may not be entirely accurate. I certainly do not believe they are made by "debunkers and skeptics". Why would he think that? Will I be required to wear a bullet proof vest because I am writing this entry here?

Special effect artist, Douglas Trumbull has a web site where he describes his efforts to capture UFOs on film. His UFOTOG video is well worth watching. It appears to be a serious scientific effort to actually get some real time data on UFOs. Hmm...didn't somebody recommend this before? His equipment is far superior to what I proposed but he has the money to invest in such an effort. It appears he is also getting paid by some group that makes documentaries. It will be interesting to see if he achieves any meaningful results.

According to this link, Chris O'Brien from the San Luis Valley is putting webcams on top of cell phone towers! It's a nice idea and I like it. However, I am not sure what cell phone towers are going to do for you other than being a bit higher than a camera on the ground. Additionally, how low a light level can these webcams see? Despite seeing potential problems, it might yield something. I just hope they publish some serious research and not just blobs of light that move across the sky and appear a lot like airplanes, balloons, birds, etc. Triangulation, elevation angles, angular speeds, and azimuth are things I would like to see from this effort. Well.....I can always hope.

The Magonia blog made some rather interesting points with respect to MUFON, its journal, and its membership. The Filer story was quite the eye opener. For somebody who is so "respected" in the UFO community, he has some serious credibility issues. I thought the Fort Dix event was exposed as a probable hoax by Roger Pinson of NIDS in 2001 or 2002.

The most bizarre UFO prediction I have heard recently came from retired NORAD officer Stephen Fulham, who predicted a UFO event over major cities on October 13th. Nobody really expected anything but New York City experienced a UFO event on that day! Mystified bystanders saw dozens of small orbs drifting towards the south and southeast over the city's skyscrapers. When I first saw the videos, I assumed they were simply balloons that were drifting in the wind. Exopolitics guru Michael Salla and UFO disclosure countdown clock blogger Rick Phillips felt different. A quick check of surface winds that day shows they were blowing from the north and, according to radiosonde data, were consistently from the north and northwest well over 10,000 feet. The motion of the UFOs was consistent with the wind. The FAA could not identify them on radar and were unaware of any weather balloons being released. However, there were two known sources of balloons that day. One was a small school in Mount Vernon, NY, which had a party for one of their teachers. A dozen or so helium-filled balloons accidentally got released and drifted away. That seemed plausible

but the school was 15 miles to the north-northeast of Manhattan. A more likely source was much closer to the sighting area (about 1 mile to the north). Celebrating the 100th year of Madrid's Grand Via, dozens of balloons were released from Times square. They would have drifted south and passed over the sighting area. It seems likely that balloons of some kind produced this display contrary to what some UFO proponents desperately want to believe.

Another UFO event involved a video shot over El Paso, which got UFO proponents all excited again. Some tried to relate it to the NY city event but it was, as always, something more mundane. The video turned out to be a night drop of the US Army's Golden Knights parachute team. They had pyrotechnics attached to their legs, which explains the streaking lights. Once their chutes opened, they became lights that drifted around forming interesting patterns (including triangular).

Kevin Randle and Don Ecsedy discussed the 1947 Rhodes photographs in detail. Nobody really could draw a conclusion. Randle suggested there was a smear campaign being waged against Rhodes. Ecsedy focused on a statement by Rhodes that Dr. Lewis Larmore photographed the same UFO (even though these photographs have never surfaced or were examined by ATIC). Anthony Braglia weighed in with his opinion reciting most of the information that Randle presented but interpreted this information so it indicated the photographs were a hoax. Allan Hendry once noted that most UFO photographs are due to deliberate fraud. As a skeptic, I am one to assume that all photographs of "flying saucers/spaceships" (not photographs of UFOs) are probably hoaxes unless evidence can be presented they are not. The quality of the Rhodes photographs are so poor, it is impossible to use them as evidence for anything.

Robert Sheaffer has started a skeptical UFO blog called "Bad UFOs". He began with the NYC UFOs described above. I suggest you keep an eye on this to see his comments on recent UFO sightings.

The Roswell Corner

MORE JARS

Kevin Randle discussed one of the most recent JARS (Just Another Roswell Story) that has surfaced. Ralph Multer had told a story about hauling Roswell debris in the state of Ohio. Like all the other tales, there is nothing to support the claim. Still, it was accepted by some as potentially worthwhile. Randle thinks it does not pass the smell test. I suggest Randle not open the "Witness to Roswell" book because many of these stories could qualify as "putrid".

SHERIFF WILCOX PSYCHOLOGICALLY SHATTERED BY ROSWELL?

Anthony Bragalia wrote a piece about George Wilcox and how he was mentally distraught over the Roswell event. According to Bragalia, Wilcox decided not to run for re-election because of all the problems associated with the Roswell event. However, he did continue to serve as Sheriff until 1950 and his wife was more than happy to run in his place in the 1950 primary.

To add to the mix of recollections by various people, Mrs. Wilcox once wrote a short booklet about her life, which included a brief description of the Roswell incident. I remember when this document surfaced in 1997 or 1998. It appeared in a UFO magazine article called "The children of Roswell" (or something like that). I believe that this was an account written by Inez sometime in the 1950s or 1960s. It appears to be a mangled recollection of the events that were documented to have transpired that early July 1947. Some important details indicate she was working from her memory on the subject and did not remember accurately:

1. She claimed that an officer picked up debris that Brazel brought into town. This disagrees with the contemporary accounts in 1947. The AP reported that nobody saw the disc and Wilcox seems to be the source of that report. In the same issue of UFO magazine that Inez Wil-

cox's story appeared in, Bill Brazel was interviewed and he stated his father did not bring anything into town. Marcel Sr. never mentioned picking up any debris at the Sheriff's office either.

2. Inez stated that almost as soon as her husband got off the phone, some officer showed up to retrieve the debris. Jesse Marcel Sr. was the only person to go to the sheriff's office. Nobody else is on record as having done so and it took some time for him to get there from the base so it was not immediately after the phone call occurred.
3. Inez also mentions all the phone calls from around the world happening about the same time. The fact of the matter is that the phone calls did not occur until 24 hours later (or 48 hours depending on which time line you prefer) when the press release was issued.

There are also some VERY important things to note that indicate her account was untainted by all the Roswell mythology:

1. There is no mention of death threats to them or the local populace. As sheriff, Wilcox would have known about these things and his wife would be just as knowledgeable. She certainly would have mentioned the thug tactics described in the Roswell mythology.
2. There is no mention of alien bodies or a crashed spaceship.
3. The rumors she describes about the origins of flying saucers reflect the general ideas regarding UFOs in the late 1940s and early 1950s

I am sure her statement of "a secret well kept" is what every Roswell proponent will focus their attention upon but it really is not that big a deal that she thought it was considered secret. One must look at the context in which this "journal" was written. She was attempting to put down her life's story at Roswell in an effort to publicize. To only briefly mention the greatest event that ever happened in the town, indicates that it was an exciting but brief non-event. The lack of any mention about the subsequent wild stories concerning the Roswell incident (military raids, cordons, trucking a huge

saucer through town, bullying MPs, exotic metals, great gouges in the earth, etc) implies that they did not happen. Such an event would have occupied far more space than a few paragraphs of her life story.

Nick Nickerson = Warren "Nick" Nicholson

Mr. Bragalia has written to me about the person he called Nick Nickerson in his article about Nitinol. I could not find any record of a Nick Nickerson and it made me question the story. Well, it turns out there is no such person as Nick Nickerson working at Battelle. His name was Warren Nicholson. He does work there and is a long time UFO investigator/proponent. He also was involved in securing the "confession" (if you can really call it that) of Mr. Ditter's Zanesville hoax. Bragalia pointed me to the story in the Ohio MUFON directory called "The Zanesville, Ohio Photographs". It was written by Warren B. Nicholson and Ronald Fisher. What is documented there is an open admission by Mr. Ditter AFTER the photographs were analyzed and found to be fraudulent. This confession occurred in October of 1971, four years after the photographs made headlines and long after the analysis had been done. It was not like Mr. Nicholson had done a lot of leg work. Ditter just bluntly admitted it after he presented Nicholson the report about the photographs. I surmised this back in SUNlite 2-5 (page 17):

If Nickerson obtained the confession, it was probably after all this (the analysis of the photographs) had occurred. At that point, it was like shooting fish in a barrel.

Based on this story, it seems that was the case.

Meanwhile, Bragalia admitted his mistake of getting the name wrong. Using the nickname of "Nick" instead of his formal name of Warren probably led to this error. I am still wondering how he could call me "Tom".

WHEN DID BILL BIRNES BECOME A RELIABLE SOURCE? I AM JUST ASKING.....

UFOLOGY AS AN ACT OF LOVE

by Matthew Graeber

Naturally, speaking of love is no light task as it has so many facets to examine and consider. But, when we limit those many facets to a singular subject like the love of UFOlogy the task should become a bit easier, less complex and seemingly more concrete. It is very important not to over-psychologize the love of UFOlogy or, be tempted to link it to pathology of some kind although, this could easily be done. But, not all UFO love should be analyzed this way. There is a love of hunting, fishing, boating and a love of physical places such as theaters, rivers, libraries and mountains. In fact, whole communities and industries have sprung up along rivers. So, there is also an economic link to the river love affair. We know that some charlatanic and deluded UFOlogists have exploited this enigma over the years. So, a love of financial gain, need, greed and celebrity are a very real part of UFO love which we must carefully consider too. Moreover, bowling and tea sipping tea could be linked to things sexual but, some people just love to bowl or, enjoy drinking a cup of freshly brewed tea. So, as one can see there is a distinct danger of over-doing it with all the psychobabble despite all the obvious pathology, complexes, delusions and chicanery in saucerdom.

Surely, for the bowler there is the camaraderie of the teammates, the sounds of the alley and, the joy of winning a tournament. Just as there is the soliloquy of sipping tea in a quiet setting or, the gentle ambiance of the quaint tea room which may be where one unleashes their fantasies, hopes and aspirations in the pursuit of the goal to solve problems - Be they personal as in the case studies I have previously written about in 'SUNlite' or, be they transpersonal like being unable to prove aliens are visiting planet earth for over six decades. UFO conventions and group meetings are places where fantasies are created and turned loose as one surrounds him or, herself with similar fantasy-seekers and rumor mongers, never bothering to ask themselves or, others what is the problem? So, they are doomed to a repetitive fantasy of making love with an illusion with their own delusions. Certainly, the bowler could simply be lonely... perhaps, he or she lives alone? For the fisherman, he may

be seeking a little peace and quite, some time away from the house to be alone with his thoughts. One could say this is escapism and self-centered love or, a healing process...but in fact, it is love in the process of attempting to make problems clear and understood.

Perhaps, we might approach UFOlogy as a hobby, since it is decidedly not a science or, proto science. We could liken it in some ways to stamp collecting and coin collecting. (i.e., A desire to obtain and possess rare finds potentially valuable items and objects). It is important to keep in mind that some of these items and objects are important and valuable only to like-minded persons (i.e., People who share in the hobby), which may simply be a sub culture pass-time complete with trinkets and novelties. Believers tend to dabble with intangibles such as anecdotal UFO reports and other data. He or, she believes such data are indicative of a matter of great historical significance and they, of course, are the heralds of this momentous news! If one should attempt to cast a little light upon this delusion, it will only entrench them more deeply in their group's consensus of opinion. It would be like a worried parent inadvertently propelling a rebellious daughter into the arms of a boyfriend who is obviously a very poor choice (By simply speaking common sense to her)! So, we cannot expect to change the minds of believers by inflicting clarity and bits of transparency upon them. They see us as the destroyers of their UFOlogical love, which is a Magnificent Obsession!

However, several skeptics seem to be obsessed with the desire to bring the believers thought processes into line with the consensus of long established sciences and logic (i.e., their model of reality). If they were successful there would be no controversy at all and, the decades-long argument would cease to exist. This seems to be an impossible task since to struggle together throughout so many years of discord is a kind of love/hate relationship and any attempt to create a 'third' from the 'two' as with my Twenty-First Century UFOlogy series would be pure UFOOLishness!

Fireballs and rockets

For the months of September and October, the American Meteor Society (AMS) reported many fireball meteors. I decided to list all the fireballs that were seen by three or more observers for reference purposes and tracking down UFO reports. The "Mag." listing has to do with the estimated magnitude of the fireball (-12 is the brightness of the full moon). There were two rocket launches on the 20th (9:03PM) and 25th (9:41PM) of September from Vandenberg AFB as well.

Date	Time	Mag.	States
9/2	2230E	-8	FL
9/4	0600C	-10	WI,IA, IL,IN
9/5	2100E	-7	MA,NH, VT
9/5	2230C	-9	TX
9/10	0505P	-13	CA
9/12	0130C	-10	MI,IL
9/13	0625E	-13	GA,SC KY,TN,OH IN,IL
9/17	2040E	-11	WI,TN,IN
9/18	2200E	-9	NC
9/21	2100M	-13	NM,CO
9/22	2150E	-10	KY,AL
9/24	2100P	-14	NV,AZ,CA
9/24	2315P	-13	CA
9/27	2130M	-13	MT,ID
9/28	0530C	-10	TN,KY AL,AR
10/2	2300C	-13	IL,MI
10/7	0700C	-13	TX
10/8	0500C	-13	TX
10/8	1900C	-13	FL,MS
10/10	0140E	-10	KY,OH,IN
10/12	2145P	-13	CA,NV
10/15	0615E	-10	NC,MD VA,TN

Some of these had many reports (the 9/13 event had 16 reports) and some, like the 9/24 2100 event, was listed as two separate fireballs (it is possible there were two events but I listed it as one). As one might expect, some of these fireballs and rocket launches appeared in the MUFON database. The NUFORC database has not been updated in some time but I am sure some of these fireballs and rocket launches will be there as well.

A review of the Rendlesham case

This December 26th marks the 30th anniversary of what has come to be known as Britain's Roswell. This case has been controversial since the day it first appeared in the news in 1983. It has been the subject of many books, television shows, and is well known throughout the UFO community. Next to Roswell, it probably is the most publicized UFO event ever. Because of this, I felt it was necessary to review the case with my readers, highlight some important points, and add my own opinion.

First night

The first night's events have evolved over the years. All one has to do is read what has been printed and discussed in the various books and media accounts.

In the original media accounts in 1983, there was little information from the principal witnesses for the first night. However, investigators eventually cornered some of them. By the time the book Out of the blue appeared in 1991, Jim Penniston and John Burroughs had told their stories. They both used an alias but it is pretty clear which person was which. Jim Archer was Jim Penniston and John Cadbury was John Burroughs.

Penniston (Jim Archer) in Out of the blue stated,

It was a triangular thing-yes, triangular- and it stood on three legs....I would say it was about ten feet, maybe twelve, and eight feet in height...The color was strange offish white. It actually looked pretty dirty. There were lights of different colors but it had red in the middle. When it moved it was so slow, you could walk after it. Cadbury (AKA Burroughs) did. I thought he was going to touch it, but it pulled its legs in and took off. Then the forest lit up with a huge flash of light and it went.¹

It is odd that this description of Burroughs attempting to touch the UFO were not mentioned by Burroughs in his comments. Also missing are Penniston's photography, touching, and walk-around that he would later add to the story.

Burroughs (John Cadbury) in Out of the

blue tells a slightly different story than Penniston (Archer).

It was lit up like a Christmas Tree with white and a blue back of lights. It moved slowly at first, but then it could move so fast and it turned at right angles in an impossible way. I do not know any technology certainly not in 1980, probably not even now, that could do the things this did. It was just like magic. I think that's what freaked most people out. Not what it was but the crazy, unbelievable things it could do.²

Burroughs description never mentions a solid shape/craft and he is describing lights that he interprets as being attached to something.

Penniston in Strange but true, added more to his story.

It was about the size of a tank, it was triangular in shape. Underneath the craft, was a high intensity white light emanating out of it and it was bordered by red and blue lighting, alternating.... On the upper left side of the craft, was an inscription. It measured six inches high, of symbols. They looked familiar, but I couldn't ascertain why.³

Burroughs contradicted Penniston in an interview with John Powell:

...we did not see a structured 'craft' as was depicted (in Strange but True). All we saw were lights that seemed to imply a structure of some kind.⁴

In his interview with Omni magazine, Penniston changes the craft somewhat. In Out of the blue, the UFO had landing legs. Now, we are told they may not have existed and the color of the craft has changed. These seem like small items but why the change? Even more interesting is that Penniston states that all of the events started right after midnight, which disagrees with everything that was known about the events that night. Apparently, Penniston had realized that for his story to be accurate, more time would be required than what Halt wrote in his memo (0300). Penniston also reveals something new in these interviews. He now produces a notebook that he sup-

posedly had with him that night. In that notebook, he wrote all sorts of notes and sketches.

I got within 10 feet of the craft and the clearing where it sat. I estimated it to be about three meters tall and about three meters wide at the base. No landing gear was apparent, but it seemed like she was on fixed legs. I moved a little closer. I had already taken all 36 pictures on my roll of film. I walked around the craft, and finally, I walked right up to the craft. I noticed the fabric of the shell was more like a smooth, opaque, black glass. The bluish lights went from black to gray to blue. I was pretty much confused at that point.... On the smooth exterior shell there was writing of some kind, but I couldn't quite distinguish it, so I moved up to it. It was three-inch lettering, rather symbols that stretched for the length of two feet, maybe a little more. I touched the symbols, and I could feel the shapes as if they were inscribed or etched or engraved, like a diamond cut on glass.⁵

Penniston would later add that he relayed all of this information back to the base.

Strangely, there is no evidence these 36 photographs were even taken except for the notebook. The notebook is considered evidence but I am unaware of any testing being performed to determine if it is from the 1980 time frame.

One also has to wonder why the time listed in this notebook is in disagreement with known facts. How good could this notebook be if the time surrounding the events is wrong? What is even more damaging to the notebook's contents were some documents that would surface several years later that would shed new light on the events that morning.

A dirty little secret

In 1997, James Easton obtained from Jan Aldrich the Rendlesham file containing most of the research collected by the Citizens against UFO secrecy (CAUS). What James discovered in that file was something certain UFOlogists apparently knew about for some time. Halt had obtained statements from the principal witnesses on that first night and had produced them (at least in part) for UFOlogists to use. These documents had never been completely revealed even though

Colonel Halt had mentioned their existence several times in interviews and on television. Easton spent several months trying to authenticate the documents but had little luck in getting Colonel Halt to respond. When he published his work about them, there was some uproar in the UFO community.

It is clear that some people were aware of these statements and their contents but chose not to present them publicly. I find it a bit hypocritical that a group that was supposed to be "Against UFO secrecy" had sat on these documents for some time, and several authors apparently had access to them (or parts of them) prior to Easton's revelations. Jenny Randles included part of Burroughs sketch in her book UFO Crash Landing. Did she have access to the entire document or did she get fed only the pieces that Halt or others decided for her? Inquiring minds would like to know because the reason these documents were hidden from public view became clear when Easton presented them. Some of the major items revealed in these documents were:

1. Penniston is the only person that mentions a "craft" of any kind and then mentions that they only got within 50 meters. His sketch does not show a triangular shape.
2. Both Burroughs and Cabansag (the third member of the group) report seeing a "beacon light" and pursuing it for some distance (they estimated 2 miles) before realizing that it was a lighthouse. Rendlesham dogma was that everybody knew about the lighthouse. These statements demonstrate this was not the case.
3. Msgt Chandler acted as a relay station for the three team members as they proceeded into the woods but did not report seeing any craft even though Penniston indicated the craft was not that far into the woods and was seen by various base personnel as it departed.
4. Lt. Buran stated he monitored what transpired on the radio and ordered a recall of the airmen at 0354, less than one hour after the events started. He makes no mention of any of the stories later told by Penniston

concerning the craft and inspection. Considering the time line with much of what transpired, this makes Penniston's account (and his notebook) suspect. If one throws in the account of a pursuit through the woods towards the "beacon light" described by Burroughs/Cabansag, it is extremely difficult to believe that Penniston's version of events is accurate.

Both LT. Buran and MSGT Chandler state the events started around 0300, which demonstrates Penniston's claim of the events starting at midnight is false. Penniston and Burroughs have claimed they did not tell the whole story in their statements. However, Buran and Chandler had no reason to lie about the time the event started and the omission of any details relayed by Penniston. Instead, their statements pretty much confirm what Burroughs and Cabansag described.

Charles Halt in the Strange but True Live episode in 1997, made the following statement regarding these documents (which had not been made public at the time):

The story, so to speak, as far as the size and shape has not changed through the years. I took original statements from the three people that actually approached the object and did it the day afterwards and they all said the same thing when they were independently interviewed and they all said it was approximately 9 feet on a side and it was triangular.⁶

Looking at the documents, we now know that his statement is false on several accounts:

1. He took the statements on the 2nd of January as indicated by the dates on several of the reports. He confirmed this to AJS Rayl in an article called Baffled at Bentwaters. This was not the "day afterwards".
2. None of the statements made by Penniston, Burroughs, or Cabansag ever indicated a distinct "triangular craft" of any kind and none gave a dimension of nine feet. Penniston's original story in Out

of the blue gave dimensions that did not include the number of nine.

It appears that Colonel Halt was less than accurate and, apparently, less than honest when he spoke on that program and since. His failure to reveal the statements by Burroughs and Cabansag about the lighthouse pursuit, demonstrates a desire to conceal facts from the public in order to make his story sound credible. Can one really trust a man that chooses to conceal information from others in order to perpetuate his own version of events? Halt's recent accusations that the governments of Britain and the US are "covering up" the case sound hypocritical in light of this information.

Her majesty's mysterious forest

Colonel Halt's foray into the woods two nights later, was, for the most part, recorded on tape. This is an account of what actually transpired and puts an interesting light on some of the things claimed by Halt in his subsequent interviews and in the memo.

Claim: The radiation levels were well above background at 0.1 mrem/hr.

Tape: They were not that high. The maximum reading on the tape appears to be only .07 mr/hr. Nobody established what the background level was on the tape and no formal survey was done (See the text about the AN/PDR-27 on page 8).

Claim: The lighthouse was 30-40 degrees to the right of the "winking eye" that Halt mentions on the tape.



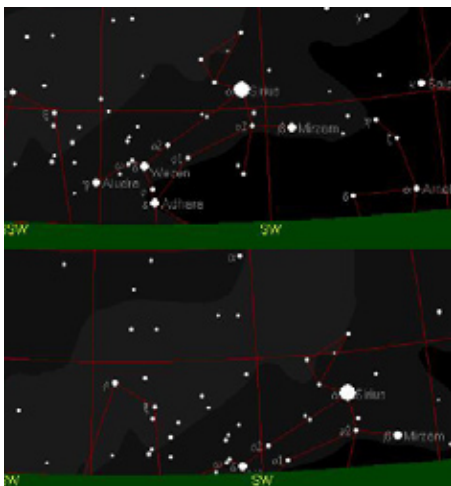
Vince Thurkettle in the forest with the lighthouse flashing on and off in the background. (Video clip from Ian Ridpath)

Tape: The direction he gives for the “winking eye” was about 110 degrees azimuth. This is in the general direction of the lighthouse (which is about 90-100 degrees). Halt would later state on the tape that they could see a flashing light out to the coast from the “second farmer’s field” on this same bearing indicating his 110 degree value was probably in error and he was looking at the lighthouse on the coast. Halt’s other position for the “lighthouse” is in the direction where the ship-wash lightship was located. This indicates Halt had no idea as to the actual location of the lighthouse. Most damaging is the comments made on the tape as the light flashed on and off. They are completely in synch with the 5 second revolution rate of the Orford Ness lighthouse. Jenny Randles noted this:

At the site the lighthouse does pulse like a winking eye, just as Halt describes on the tape. The pulses can even be timed as the beacon rotates (taking about five seconds) and there is a comparison with part of the tape where the men notice that the light briefly disappears and shout, “There it is again,” as it reappears. This match is quite striking if you judge film of the lighthouse alongside the audio of the tape.⁷

Despite all of this evidence indicating that Halt was looking at the lighthouse, he still insists that the Orford Ness lighthouse was visible in a direction that does not point towards the lighthouse!

Claim: Halt states a UFO shot beams down into the Woodbridge base and one beam illuminated the ground in front of



The positions of the star Sirius at 0315 and 0400. The first horizontal red line is an elevation angle of 10 degrees. Obtained using Orion’s “The sky” planetarium program.

him.

Tape: This is not really mentioned on the tape. He states the object from the south is approaching shooting “beams” that “appeared” to be going towards the ground. At no point does he specifically describe this beam striking in front of him and lighting up the ground. Such an incredible event would have been documented in some way on the tape or in his memo. For some reason, this detail, which Halt repeatedly mentions in his descriptions of the event that night is missing from the tape and memo. It is important to note that the moon was last quarter and overhead. The ground would have been already illuminated to some extent by the moon. Is it possible Halt recalled the ground being illuminated by moonlight filtering through the trees?

The position for the object that was apparently shooting these beams matches the bright star Sirius. His description matches the kinds of observations made by witnesses describing scintillating stars. Allan Hendry wrote the following about how people sometimes described stars misperceived as UFOs:

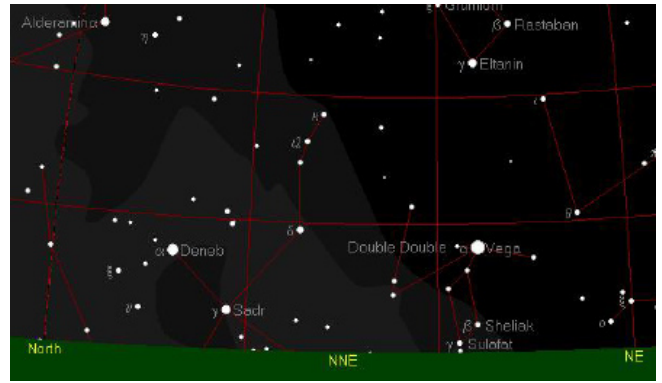
People have seen “spikes,” beams,” “appendages,” and sparkles shooting out in all directions from bright stars.⁸

The item that pretty much clinches the idea he is describing Sirius is when he states on the tape that, after 45 minutes, the object’s altitude decreases towards the southwest. This is the exact thing one would expect from a setting Sirius (see the star chart to the lower left).

Claim: There were THREE objects to the north moving at sharp right angles according Halt’s recent affidavit. In the “UFOs and Nukes” press conference, he changed this number to up to FOUR.

Tape: The tape and the memo only mention two objects to the north. Their positions are consistent with the bright stars Deneb and Vega.

What confirms the idea that Halt was



The northern sky at 0305 on 12/28/1980 showing the bright stars Deneb and Vega near the positions Halts describes on the tape. Obtained using Orion’s “The sky” planetarium program.

looking at stars comes in his statement to Jenny Randles:

These objects (in the north) seemed to persist and would not go away. We decided it was time to go back to base... the objects were still in the sky - however, it was getting light and they were getting faint.⁹

This is the kind of characteristics one would expect from stars. There is also a contributing factor that affected Halt’s (and his men’s) observations that night.

Fatigue factor?

For both nights, one needs to consider some contributing factors associated with the men involved. Both sets of events transpired after midnight, which is not the best time for any person to make accurate observations and sound decisions under duress.

The first night’s events occurred on Christmas night. According to Brenda Butler Halt stated that Burroughs and Penniston had been up for a long period of time after having a “very good Christmas day”. If they had stayed up most of Christmas day, their perception and reasoning abilities would have been impaired.

The second night’s events were also compounded by the fatigue factor. Halt is quoted as stating:

Most of us had been up since five or six the previous day and were quite tired. We had managed to fall in the water on the way out across the field and got wet. It was very cold...¹⁰

Being tired, wet, and cold does not help a person make rational decisions and ac-

curate observations. If any of the “team” had consumed alcohol at the party they were pulled from, that would make matters worse. These are factors that could have magnified errors in judgement and perception.

More right than wrong

Since 1983, Ian Ridpath has been promoting his theory that the lighthouse, a fireball, and stars were the sources for the events on those two nights. Despite complaints about it being unlikely by various individuals, there is a significant amount of evidence that has surfaced to demonstrate his explanations are correct. After thirty years, Ian Ridpath’s work has withstood the test of time. As each new piece of evidence has surfaced, his theory has grown stronger and the wild exotic claims by those trying to perpetuate this case have grown weaker.

Notes and References

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The rocket attack that wasn’t

Probably one of the more interesting astronomy/navy stories I have to describe occurred in Groton, Connecticut in March of 1991. At the time, I was the nuclear electronics division (Reactor Controls) Chief Petty Officer (E-7) on board the USS Providence (SSN 719). Part of my duties was to stand watch in port as the Engineering Duty Petty Officer (EDPO). When in port, there is always a duty section on board standing watch and performing the routine tasks of maintaining the ship while the rest of the crew is at home with their families. Part of my responsibilities as EDPO was to make a tour of the engine room every six hours and make sure the personnel standing watch were still alert and to check on Engineering/Reactor plant conditions. Normally, that was the limit to my tours. However, at this time there was a heightened concern about all watch standers being alert and awake, so I was also required to check on those standing watch in the forward end of the ship. The duty officer also would make tours of the ship every six hours. By staggering these tours with the duty chief petty officer (the senior enlisted in charge of the forward end of the submarine), one could check up on all the ship’s watch standers every two to three hours. My responsibility in the middle of the night was the 3-4AM tour.

I had started my tour around 3AM and things were pretty much routine. Everyone was alert and not much was happening until I went up the hatch to check on the topside watch. There I found a concerned topside petty officer (an E-4 or E-5), who told me he had seen a rocket attack on the submarine base from across the river! Had we been overseas, I would have been seriously concerned. However, this was Groton, Connecticut and it seemed unlikely to me. After listening to his details, I began to become

skeptical of this being a “rocket attack” of any kind. Based on my knowledge of astronomy, it sounded like he had seen a bright fireball. There was no sound from the “rocket”, there were no sirens on or off base, and there was no explosion or fire visible. Across the pier was another submarine and their topside watch did not seem to be alarmed at all. I recall that the topside petty officer wanted to wake up the duty officer and I considered this for a few seconds. However, based on what I had observed, I felt there was not much to be concerned about. I stayed topside for a short period of time (maybe 5-10 minutes) just to make sure there were no “follow-up attacks” before heading down below. I tried to reassure him that he probably saw a bright fireball and I would discuss it with the duty officer at 6AM. When I saw the duty officer a few hours later, I told him the story and he seemed to agree there was nothing to be concerned about. The following day, I picked up the Norwich Bulletin (one of the small newspapers in the area) and there was a nice article about a bright fireball being seen over the northeast the morning before around 3AM (see below for a similar clipping). When I showed it to the topside watch, he still had his doubts. He still felt it could have been a rocket attack where the rocket failed to explode or missed.

This little anecdote demonstrates how the power of a preconception can cause a witness to misinterpret an astronomical event like a bright fireball. The recent Gulf War affected this individual’s interpretation of a celestial event. It is not a great leap to see how airmen on security patrol late at night could interpret the same type of celestial event as a crashing aircraft. The appearance of a bright fireball at the same approximate time the airmen reported a crashed aircraft is too coincidental to ignore

Reports of fireball sighting made in 9 states

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — People from Maine to West Virginia reported a brilliant fireball in the sky early Wednesday, offering descriptions ranging from “the size of a Volkswagen” to the shape of a “boomerang on its side.”

“This was big,” said New York state Trooper Richard Haas. “I’ve seen shooting stars before, and this was nothing like that.”

People in West Virginia, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine reported seeing the bright light, moving from west to east,

about 3 a.m.

Philadelphia air traffic controller Jim Krimm said he took three phone calls reporting it. One pilot radioed that it “appeared to be the mother of all meteors,” Krimm said.

“Many witnesses said the object appeared to have a green-and-red tail and lit up the sky for about five seconds before it disappeared over the horizon.”

Haas said he was driving in Danby, N.Y., when he and his partner saw the bright light in the western sky.

“It appeared to be real low,” Haas said. “We opened our windows to listen

for a crash, but we didn’t hear anything.”

In Atlantic Highlands, N.J., Danny Fletcher, 23, said he had just returned home from work when he saw the speeding light close to the horizon.

“At first, I thought it was a Scud missile,” he said.

Mark Barton, a police officer near Boston, said it looked like “a boomerang on its side. A cluster of lights with a big red fire tail behind it.”

What people saw most likely was a low-flying meteor that burned brightly from the friction of entering the Earth’s atmosphere, said Walter Webb, manager

of planetarium observations at the Charles Hayden Planetarium in Boston.

“It’s not unusual for fireballs to be seen over an area of several hundred miles,” Webb said.

Derrick Pitts, an astronomer at the Fells Planetarium of the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, said the object likely broke up.

James Cornell of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory in Cambridge, Mass., said the object either disintegrated in the atmosphere or fell into the Atlantic Ocean, based on its west-to-east trajectory.

March 8, 1991 European Stars and Stripes page B-7. Some of the comments are interesting. One stated, “At first, I thought it was a Scud missile”. Another stated, “I have seen shooting stars before and this was nothing like that.” A police officer stated, “it appeared to be real low...we opened our windows to listen for a crash, but we didn’t hear anything.”

My experience in the US Navy's nuclear propulsion program exposed to me the use and maintenance of various radiation detectors. One of those happened to be the AN/PDR-27 that was used in Rendlesham that night. As a result, I feel I can act as something of an expert on this part of the Rendlesham case.

First of all, the choice to use the AN/PDR-27 was not a very good one. If I were going out to measure radiation levels on the ground, I certainly would not have brought the 27. Instead, I would have used an E-140N frisker (Beta-Gamma) and, possibly, an AN/PDR-56 (Alpha). I also would have recorded everything on a survey map showing what was read where and not relied upon an audio tape to record the data.

On the tape, Sgt Nevels, kept focusing on the number of "clicks" he was reading and not the actual deflection on the meter. The audible clicks is only a guideline to note that there is an increasing radiation level. The rule of thumb is 30 counts/minute (cpm) is equal to about 0.01 mr/hr (0.07 would give 210 cpm or over 3 cps). Nevels keeps referring to a few clicks here and there (without any reference to time - we can only assume he is stating so many clicks every few seconds), indicating what he was reading was very low.

There are items that can cause faulty readings. These meters had to respond to small electrical signals. To do this, they pivoted on "jeweled bearings" that made them highly responsive. Unfortunately, this also made them highly responsive to the operator moving the radiac. This is one of the reasons they included a shoulder strap on the radiac to prevent faulty readings due to moving the unit. We can also add the concern about the level of charge on the batteries, calibration of the unit, and the physical condition of the sensor probe. All of these can contribute to er-

The AN/PDR-27

roneous readings.

My biggest concern was the experience level of the operator. What was Sgt. Nevels training and experience with the AN/



PDR-27? I am sure he used it occasionally during a few drills but how often was that? My experience in the navy was that those that used the instrument daily and were trained in its detailed operation, were very proficient with it. Those that used it once a month or several times a year, were not so good at using the equipment. If you couple this with operating the device while tired and in the dark, you have the recipe for errors and mistakes. The comments on the tape demonstrate that Nevels did not quite understand the device or was unfamiliar with it. Is he actually describing the audible signal or is he referring to each tick on the meter as a "click"? His reading of the



meter as "seven-tenths" also speaks volumes. A proficient operator would have announced the reading as 0.07 mrem or mroentgens/hour.

It is important to note is that the AN/PDR-27 large probe has a "beta-window" on it (see the photo at bottom). If the window is open, it allows the probe to read low energy Beta radiation that normally would not be detected with the window closed. Potassium-40 is a high energy beta-emitter found in soil.

Exactly what levels were existing as background in Rendlesham forest is unclear. Colonel Halt claimed on a Strange but true program that only the center of the "triangle" was "hot" and the rest of the forest was "cold". This is not accurate because the tape has Sgt. Nevels noting radiation levels on the trees, in the various holes, and when pointing it at the "winking eye". Halt even reports they were getting radiation levels of "three good clicks" after they had ventured beyond the second farmer's field! This refutes his claim that the rest of the forest was "cold" and shows the readings were similar throughout the forest. Most important to note is that not one document exists showing a radiation survey of any kind that SHOULD have been done if they suspected radiation levels of significance. Instead of having hard data, we have readings that were incorrectly measured/recorded and are essentially worthless.

Over the years, the Rendlesham radiation readings have reached mythic levels. Ignored is the fact that soil can have naturally occurring radioactive elements emitting radiation that might be detected and, contrary to what Nick Pope has stated, the levels reported are insignificant even if the maximum reading of 0.07 mr/hr was even accurate. Like much of the Rendlesham story, the radiation levels are not that unusual when examined properly.

The entire Antelope Valley was on fire. It wasn't true, of course but the news anchor made it sound that way. Although the wildfire was raging out of control in the hills eight miles southwest of my neighborhood, it was unlikely to endanger my home.

Nevertheless, I stepped outside into my driveway to assess the situation. It was Thursday, July 29, 2010, shortly after 7:00 pm and the sun had not yet dropped below the horizon. The western sky was clear and blue except for a flattened brown band of smoke crossing from one side of the valley to the other. Illuminated from below by the setting sun, it looked eerie.

As I watched the sky, a bright white object suddenly appeared against the smoke. I had the impression that it was round but honestly it was just a point source of light, apparently reflecting the sun's illumination. It seemed to be moving very fast along a straight trajectory to the east and slightly south. Then it turned to southeast and abruptly disappeared. I couldn't tell whether it had been visible through a thin part of the plume and then vanished behind an area of thicker smoke or if it had been flying below the smoke and climbed upward into the cloud. At any rate, the object did not reappear.

I have been interested in aircraft, spacecraft, and astronomy for most of my life. These subjects have dominated my hobbies and my career. I have worked around aircraft and aerospace vehicles of every type from the mundane to the most exotic. I have seen unconventional airplanes that didn't even look like airplanes. Experience has familiarized me with civil and military craft, blimps, wingless lifting bodies, flying wings, solar-powered span loaders, stealth aircraft, spy planes, unmanned vehicles, and hypersonic scramjets. Living between Edwards Air Force Base and Air Force Plant 42, it is not uncommon to see such craft in the skies

Smoke Gets in Your Eyes: A Classic UFO Sighting

Peter W. Merlin



A photograph of Venus before sunset. The inset box was a 2X enlargement with processing to bring Venus out. It was obvious to the naked eye once it was located.

on any given day. My point is simply that I am an experienced observer and I was certain that I had seen an aerial craft of some type that Thursday evening.

I debated whether to report my sighting to some organization such as the Mutual UFO Network. Perhaps a MUFON investigator could turn up additional sighting reports and information. On the other hand, why not investigate it myself?

I decided to start by deconstructing my own observation. At the time of my sighting I had been facing west and looking up at a 30- to 45-degree angle. The object, though no more than a white point of light, had a distinctively solid appearance

but no other features or details. I had seemed to move in a perfectly straight line before turning toward the southeast. After it disappeared into or behind the smoke plume, it did not reappear.

Something was nagging at me. I recalled seeing something the previous evening that might explain my sighting. Unfortunately, I couldn't check my hypothesis because smoke from the fire spread across the sky creating a dense overcast.

The following evening the sky was clear and I set about to recreate the conditions of my UFO sighting. Shortly before sunset, I stood in my driveway gazing up into the western sky. There, just as it had been the day prior to my "close encounter" with the unknown, was the planet Venus.

Although Venus has been the source of numerous UFO sightings, I have often wondered how anyone could mistake the planet for a moving object. When Venus appears in the night sky, against a backdrop of stars, it seems stationary. The same is true against a clear blue sky with no additional reference points. In the case

of my observation, however, the smoke plume provided a visual reference that gave an impression of rapid motion.

From my vantage point, the plume seemed to be stationary against the background of the sky but it was actually moving due to winds at altitude. This created an optical illusion that fooled me into thinking the smoke was static and that the bright object visible through the thinnest part of the cloud was moving. I have often heard Venus described as the "Queen of UFOs," and now I know why.

Leslie Kean's first public foray into UFOlogy was her lackluster effort investigating the Kecksburg UFO "crash". To the best of my knowledge she just repeated everything told to her by Stan Gordon and never made any contact with Dr. Von Del Chamberlin. There is a lot of documentation concerning the research associated with the meteor observations made that evening, which demonstrated the fireball had nothing to do with Kecksburg. Had she looked into this she would have realized that the "facts" being fed to her were less than accurate. Kean duplicates this sloppy research methodology in her recent UFO book.

James Oberg wrote a critical piece concerning this new book on MSNBC. Oberg pointed out the errors associated with her work and the misuse of pilot testimony as being beyond reproach. It was a well written argument that needed serious consideration by Kean.

Kean's response concerning the errors noted by Oberg was to blame one of the authors who wrote the chapter he commented about. By appearing on television promoting her book and the stories in it, she had personally certified the content as being accurate. Kean, in her infinite wisdom in compiling this book, apparently failed to fact check her authors.

All Kean really appeared to do was collect stories told to her by people with vested interests in presenting UFO theories and then repeat them. I seriously doubt she did anything else beyond that based on what she presented. Some cases Kean highlighted in her MSNBC article (and in her book) were:

Brazil 1986: This event appears to be a case of anomalous radar signals and, perhaps, over eager pilots chasing stars and planets.

Rendlesham 1980: Ian Ridpath's explanation about the event have been shown to be solid over the years. Charles Halt and James Penniston, who wrote this section in the book, have been shown to be less than honest in their revelations regarding the case. Details have shifted and are not in agreement with the memo and original witness statements. Read the recent article by David Clarke on his blog and in this issue regarding how Halt's and Pen-

The Kean and Oberg MSNBC debate

niston's accounts have been shown to be less than accurate.

Trans-en-Provence 1981: Eric Mallot explained a lot about this case in his article on the subject found in the book, UFOs: 1947-1997. The science associated with this event is less than convincing.

The Belgium "wave": These events have been investigated by far better people than Kean. De Brouwer never mentions the Salmon-Gilmard study or the paper written by Auguste Messen on the F-16 chase. Both determined that the radar contacts were erroneous. Messen stated the original police sightings were probably just stars! The photograph, which figures prominently in this book, has been shown to have flaws that were not mentioned and possibly hoaxed. Having a few UFO proponents claim it could not be hoaxed (which is the same thing as having the fox watch the hen house) is not the same as getting independent scientists to all agree with that conclusion. De Brouwer's one-sided presentation of the various other sightings is far from accurate. According to him, a great many of the UFO reports made remain unexplained. The source of all of this information appears to be the SOBEPs report, which was criticized by scientists from the University of Liege as not being scientific because the cases were poorly researched (see the two articles in this issue by Robert Paquay and Jean-Michel Abrassart demonstrating this). He completely ignored and omitted any detailed reference to any examination of the events outside the UFO community.

Cosford 1993: The "Cosford incident" was caused by the re-entry of a Russian rocket booster. Pope's version downplayed this explanation and highlighted other observations that have since been explained as well.

1997 Arizona UFOs: In 1997, now disgraced Governor Symington made the event into a joke instead of really investigating the case. The Arizona event was mentioned in SUNlite 2-3 and it seems that there is a logical explanation. Sym-

ington states he personally saw the event. However, he kept quiet about it for over a decade until it allowed him to get his name in the media again. There is no reason to believe his claims of trying to investigate the event and having witnessed it without more evidence.

The Channel Islands 2007: This had been examined by a group of British UFOlogists and found to be not as good a case as first thought. Martin Shough made a good summary of the lengthy investigative report on UFO Updates. She mentioned the report but, not surprisingly, misrepresented its conclusions.

With such cases being presented as "good evidence" is it any wonder, Oberg found her book not very persuasive?

The rest of Kean's book is simply a recap of many UFOlogical beliefs and thinking over the years where she states the Robertson panel initiated a covert program designed for disinformation to the general public and the Condon study was unscientific based on UFO literature versions of what transpired. Like her UFO cases, they are gross misrepresentations of the facts and regurgitation of UFOlogical interpretations. Kean's blind acceptance of what she has been told about UFOs is demonstrated when she makes a ridiculous proposal.

Kean naively suggests that a new government organization be set up to study UFOs! She even adds that there are people ready to assist in forming such an agency. My guess is that most of them are authors in this book. 60 years of UFO research has demonstrated that Dr. Condon was right. The 1997 Sturrock panel even agreed with his conclusion that "*nothing has come from the study of UFOs*"! Despite spending massive amounts of dollars on studying UFOs around the world, exactly what has been accomplished? Does Kean really expect the American taxpayer to pay for a department of UFOlogical studies headed by people associated with MUFON or CUFOS that will accomplish nothing except promise some great disclosure/discovery that never happens?

Leslie Kean's effort to sell UFOs is just repackaging the same old flawed stories and writings. You can keep putting lipstick on a pig but it is still a pig.

Recently, Dr. David Clarke has come under fire from the UFOlogical "elite" on UFO updates. It started with the usual bullying tactics employed by Robert Hastings that seems to be tolerated by the UFO updates crowd but would be shunned in an academic setting. Clarke was looking at the written record of the Rendlesham case and the arguments put forth by Ridpath. Hastings was pretty much entrenched in the attitude that "this is not what Colonel Halt says" but presented no real facts to back up his claims. He simply relied on the recollections of people as being accurate and that these people had no reason to lie even though Halt has been changing the details of his story over the years.

Eventually, David had enough and stated he wasn't going to waste any more time with Hastings comments. This brought on more derogatory commentary by Hastings. David Rudiak implied that he was "running away" from the debate. Anyone monitoring the exchange would recognize that Clarke attempted to deal fairly with Hastings but Hastings seemed more interested in denigrating Clarke and academia as a whole.

Shortly after this debate terminated, David Clarke chose to "unsubscribe" from UFO updates. Strangely, Errol Bruce-Knapp passed this "unsubscription" to the list members, which brought out public cat calls from several UFO proponents. One thing that was brought up was how somebody, who had a degree in Folklore, was able to get involved in the release of the Ministry Of Defence (MOD) UFO files. The implication was that Clarke was selected because of his skeptical attitude and it was a government ploy to downplay anything significant in these files.

An outside observer might be able to easily deduce why David Clarke was selected. I was aware that he had written several books over the past decade, which involved researching documents on UFOs. Not only was he an active UFO researcher trying to obtain facts, he was an academic. Since there seemed to be no other academic UFO researchers in the United Kingdom also working on such documentation, he was an obvious choice. However, to make sure I got my facts straight, I e-mailed David Clarke and asked him.

Life in the bullseye: Dr. David Clarke takes verbal abuse from the UFOlogical elite



Dr. Clarke, as usual, was very informative about how he got involved and it was pretty much as I had guessed. According to David, he first became involved with researching MOD files back in 1998-1999 for the book he co-wrote with Andy Roberts called, *Out of the shadows*. Prior to the UK's FOIA act, UFO files were released annually on 1st January, and David was there working on them. He began to construct a database of the surviving files. When the FOIA was introduced, Clarke requested the early release of all UFO files (otherwise they would sit in the archives for decades). Because of his credentials as an academic and his familiarity with the archives and personnel there, it was no great surprise he became involved with the public release of these documents.

According to David, the National Archives could have easily just put all the files up for download and left it at that. However, they desired to have the files put in historic context without the need for "unjustified or subjective claims that could not be justified by the content of the files". They did not want somebody like Nick Pope creating every booster rocket re-entry report into a flying spaceship. Choosing Mr. Pope would have been a conflict of interest anyway since there are several files describing his activities while working at the MOD (mentioned in the last issue of SUNlite).

David Clarke's work on the files should be commended and appreciated. His video productions summarizing and highlighting important events in the files is a great help to those not desiring to read the seemingly endless mind-numbing pages of text.

Despite the yeoman's work he has put forth, there have been quite a few individuals who have asked that he be replaced by somebody like Nick Pope. Additionally, people have conducted a belittlement campaign in an attempt to downplay his credentials as a journalist and researcher. My problem with this argument is what qualifies a nuclear engineer, a historian, an optometrist, a fisheries graduate, a psychology major, a degree in sociology, and the numerous other professions (outside of degrees like astronomy, meteorology, and optics) as being qualified to study anomalies in the sky or conduct interviews? What special gifts did their educations give them to determine if a witness is telling tall tales, an object is Venus or a spaceship, or what a fireball meteor looks like? The truth of the matter is, nobody is really qualified to be an expert on UFOs. Arguing if a degree in folklore is not good enough is just a bunch of baloney.

For those that think David Clarke is part of some vast conspiracy to obscure important files, I suggest they look at all the files that have been released. Like the United States government files (as well as in other countries), no "smoking gun" proving the common belief that alien spaceships were causing these UFO reports has ever been found. Belittling Clarke for the apparent lack of any such evidence, is the equivalent of a UFOlogical temper tantrum being thrown by a spoiled brat.

This little smear campaign has failed to change Clarke's position at the archives or affect him personally. He remarked that he must be doing something right to cause such a stir. Dr. Clarke plans on staying at that position until the all of the files have been released, which should be by 2011 or 2012. I look forward to those releases.

Last issues article by Matt Graeber sparked an e-mail exchange between myself and a gentleman named Steve Pearse. Pearse had some complaints about the article that were valid and I felt it was necessary to mention them here. However, the follow-up exchange sparked a rather heated discussion regarding his work, which he feels is the true star map that Betty Hill saw.

Comments about the Hill article and questions about the new Hill-Wilson map

*"We go on the deck. I ask him, 'Are you from the Pleiades?' The Being adamantly replies, 'No.' I ask him where he is from. **We look in the sky to see the Big Dipper.** He says, '**See the Ursa Major?**' I reply "Yes".*

*The Being then tells me, '**The star cluster to the right and below. The one with the triangle to the left and the little stars in between...we're from that one.**' "The fourth planet from our sun." (My emphasis in bold)³*



Corrections

Matt's original piece had some errors in it that I did not bother to check up on and I admit making the mistake of not questioning him about it. I have received comments from others (besides Pearse) that Matt made some slipups on his presentation. Most of them are minor in my opinion (Barney did have a gun in his trunk in the movie, Phil Klass never commented in Astronomy magazine, etc.). A major error was his comment that the Fish map was from some point on earth. It was actually created as viewed from some point in space. Anybody with detailed knowledge on the case probably noticed these mistakes. My concern when I read the article was adding the note of the recent work of Brett Holman in Fortean Times for everyone to examine. I omitted the detail that there was also an article in the MUFON journal by Charles Huffer with similar conclusions because Holman mentioned it in the link. Mr. Pearse claims he also had reached the same conclusion sometime in the past decade (and contributed to Huffer's article) but I was unaware of any published work of his until now.

The new Hill-Wilson map

Pearse in an e-mail exchange attempted to impress on me how he solved the Betty Hill map with a link to a web page describing his research. There he describes how an alien told an abductee named Erik Wilson on July 14, 1993 the location of their home star. According to Pearse:

This newly discovered CE-5 case gave highly specific information in an unprecedented revelation in a one on one conversation about where they come from. The conversation was so specific that the Be-

ing ended up telling him to look at a well known feature in the constellation Ursa Major in the Northern Hemisphere, then as the conversation continued on, the Being mentioned specific reference points to look for to locate their star.¹

My first problem with this paragraph is how can we tell if these aliens are the same ones that abducted the Hills? From what I understand, abductees report all sorts of alien races. Even the more popular Grays of today do not appear quite the way Betty Hill described. Pearse continues:

*In this astounding conversation about where they come from, one of the key references made during this chat is a "Triangle" which was investigated and proven to be an exact match to the famous triangle in Betty Hill's star map, thus allowing us to formally connect these two cases together. Seeing that the triangle was **a perfect isosceles triangle** and an exact match to the triangle in Betty Hill's star map, allowed us to further deduce that Betty Hill's star map was actually Earth based and was in fact fairly accurate with minor corrections. (My emphasis in bold)²*

At this point, we are told this is an "exact match" to the triangle on Betty's map. My problem starts with "which triangle"? Betty's map has several. I can only assume he is describing the triangle, which has the tip at the Zeta Reticuli system. This is NOT a "perfect" isosceles triangle because the sides are not the same length and the angles are not the same. Additionally, I was curious about this being an "exact match".

Pearse went on to describe the directions given by the alien to Erik Wilson:

So, we have to turn back the clock to July 14, 1993 to see what the alien was describing to him. Remember, the Alien did not discuss this with a star chart in front of them but was directing Wilson's attention to the constellations in the sky. Luckily, any planetarium program can recreate the sky for any given date. I chose to use Orion's "The Sky". We are not given a time but that is not too important. Ursa Major was in a position of descending/setting towards the northwest horizon on that date as it got dark (see star chart below which shows 11PM on the 14th of July 1993 - Astronomical twilight did not end for Portland, Oregon until after this time). As dawn broke, the constellation was very low on the northern horizon. So directions of below and to the right would pretty much relate to any time of the night.



Of course, I have some concerns about this conversation. Was the alien referring to the big dipper or the entire Ursa Major constellation? Most people think the big dipper is Ursa Major but isn't. It is a star formation in the constellation. Also, since the alien knew the names we used for our constellations, why couldn't the alien simply give the star name? The biggest problem I have is this is a purely

anecdotal account from somebody who claims to be an abductee. We have no proof he was abducted by aliens or this conversation actually occurred.

Still, if we follow the directions given, we find ourselves in the constellations of Lynx or Camelopardalis, which are to the right and below Ursa Major (see circle A below). One would think this was where this "triangle" of importance would reside based on these "specific" directions. However, Mr. Pearse informs me that the triangular star pattern is found in the constellation of Canes Venatici (circle B).



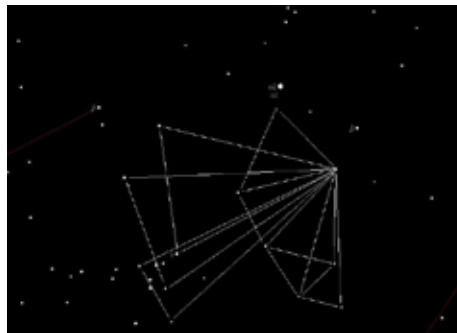
Pearse's explanation is that the alien was not discussing the position in the sky (even though this is what Erik Wilson stated) but the map in Norton's star atlas! Why would the alien use Norton's and not some other star atlas? According to Pearse it is because Norton's is widely accepted/used by everyone. Apparently, it is so widely used, the aliens have acquired one for their library. I am out of touch because I normally use my Uranometria or Sky and Telescope's Pocket Atlas when I am not at my computer.

Moving beyond this significant problem with his logic, my e-mail exchange with Mr. Pearse got rather heated as he kept asking me to pick out his "triangle formation of stars" after giving some coordinates for one of the stars. I asked for him to simply identify this triangle instead of asking me to play his game of connect the dots. I pointed out, several times, that three stars in a pattern other than a straight line will always form a triangle. After several weeks, he finally decided to present this all important triangle of stars with this image:



This is not a perfect Isosceles triangle. The two angles are not the same (69 and 77) and the sides are not equal (6 and 6.2 angular degrees). They are close but not exact, which is what he states they were.

Look at this star map I made using stars of visual magnitude of the same area (using Orion's sky on July 14 around 11 PM) and you will see the multiple triangles one can produce from the star field Mr. Pearse has identified.



Additionally, the triangle pattern suggested by Pearse is composed of stars listed at fifth magnitude. I am not sure what kind of light polluted skies Mr. Wilson was exposed to but if he lived in Portland, my guess is they were probably not dark skies. Seeing stars that are +5 or fainter under such conditions would be difficult. To suggest that the stars described by the alien were these faint stars near the limits of visibility for the observer is a wild assumption. Wouldn't the alien describe obvious stars for guiding his earthbound friend?

Mr. Pearse also made several claims in the e-mail exchange concerning the alien's home world. He stated that it was a nearby G1 star less than 50 light years away and was one of the top candidates selected by Maggie Turnbull as a candidate for

life. He also mentioned the star was older and had a higher metal content. Examination of his star field gave only one reasonable candidate that I could find. That was Beta Canum Venaticorum (named Chara). When I mentioned it, he said that this was not the star, which made me wonder what he was describing or he did not want to admit that it was the star. He would not reveal the name of the star and I could only guess that he wanted to keep it secret for his upcoming book.

I asked several times for Mr. Pearse to produce his star map so I could see his work and see how well it matched the Hill map. He refused to do so and kept asking me to play "connect the dots". The implication seemed to be that I must buy his book to discover this secret. Considering the problems I had with his interpretation of the alien's directions, I was not interested in spending the money for a book I probably would throw down in disgust a few minutes after opening it.

In my exchange with Mr. Pearse, I made the comment that, based on his description, his "map" was worse than the "Hill-Fish" map. At least Fish relied solely on the testimony of Betty Hill and some serious research on the matter. She also shared her work openly without a concern for selling a book. Meanwhile, Mr. Pearse is relying on the Hill testimony, the Wilson testimony, and the idea that both sets of aliens are from the same planet among his many assumptions. Considering all these different speculations, it is my opinion that the Hill-Wilson map is something that can not be seriously considered as a scientific effort. Maybe somebody else has time to play connect the dots with Mr. Pearse or try and create a map from these directions. I have better things to do with my time.

Notes and References

1. Pearse, Steve. Hill-Wilson Star map. Available WWW: <http://www.hillwilsonstarmap.com>
2. *ibid.*
3. *ibid.*

UFO stands for “unidentified flying object”. What better object to be misidentified than an actual object that flies? Believe it or not, airplanes can be and are misidentified as “exotically behaving” UFOs for a variety of reasons.

Fake planes????

Before I go into the more reasonable explanations of how planes can appear as unidentified objects, I need to address something that seems to be taking hold in UFOlogy. There are a few individuals on the internet who have been recording UFOs that suddenly start sounding like airplanes. One would think that the videographer would accept the possibility they were mistaken and admit they were planes. Instead, these people are convincing themselves that what they are seeing are UFOs that mimic airplanes to confuse the observer. These are being referred to as “fake airplanes”. With this kind of logic, it is impossible to explain anything. Is this the future of UFOlogy?

Airplanes during the day

People could never misidentify an airplane right? Well, that depends on the observing conditions. Aircraft seen from a distant during the day look like white dots or flat discs. If they are moving between clouds they can appear to simply disappear without a trace indicating great speed.



If they catch the sun just right, they can gleam in the light just like this image of a landing airliner. I took this photo with a 400mm lens. To the unaided eye, it just looked like a bright object floating in the sky during its approach.

Many people think aircraft will be followed by a contrail but that is not always the case. Under certain conditions there will be no contrail. Small aircraft may not

IFO University: Aircraft

even produce a contrail even though contrails would be visible from higher flying jetliners.

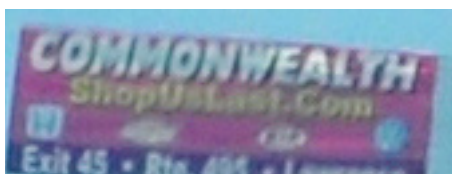


Unusual airplanes

There are airplanes that look odd to the observer. Most obvious are the F-117 and B-2 stealth aircraft but those are fairly localized to where they operate from. Other strange airplanes could include ultralights, experimental aircraft, or UAVs.

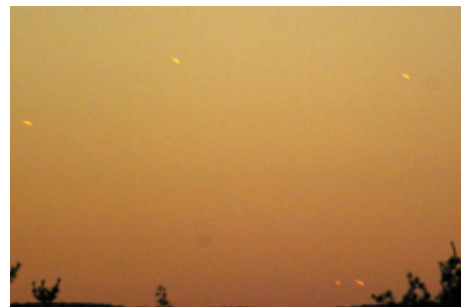
Advertisement airplanes

Back in the 1970s, it was common for airplanes to have illuminated messages under their wings. They are not so common anymore. The last time I recall seeing something like that was in 1997. However, I still see airplanes towing banners. These banners can be much larger than the airplane that is towing them. Recently, I saw what appeared to be a red cigar shaped craft hovering over the highway. I photographed it and, after zooming in, was able to determine it was one of these ad plane banners. The plane was not visible as it was behind the trees.

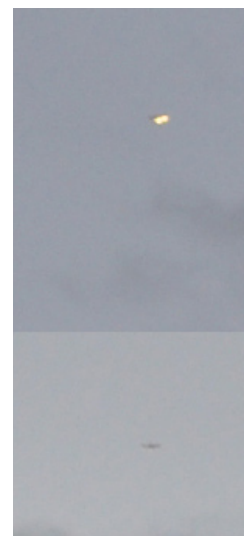


Airplanes at sunset and sunrise

Planes and their contrails reflecting the sun can be misperceived as UFOs. The below image shows five airliners and their contrails reflecting the setting sun. It was interesting to say the least.



Under conditions where contrails are not formed, a plane can suddenly reflect light as bright spot in the sky. Just as suddenly as it appears, it can disappear giving the impression of UFO that appeared and disappeared suddenly. The image to the right shows this effect.

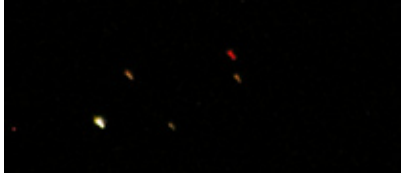


Airplanes at night

Airplanes at night can be very misleading. Their lighting patterns can change as the plane maneuvers and presents different aspects to the observer. For instance, an airplane approaching an observer can appear to “stand still” for a significant period of time giving the impression of hovering. When it makes a gradual turn, from that distance, it could appear to make a sudden right angle turn. All sorts of interesting interpretations could be made by excited individuals, who want to see something unusual.

Under certain conditions, the lights of an aircraft can take on a triangular shape. Anytime I see a video of a series of lights that appear to be triangular at night, I look for the anti-collision strobe. If it shows up, then odds are VERY GOOD that

it is simply an aircraft. The lack of noise from such aircraft probably has a lot to do with the distances involved. This image here shows an aircraft at night with an interesting lighting configuration. Playing "connect the dots", a person might call this a "disc" or "pentagon" shaped craft.



Airplane formations

Some airplanes fly in formation at night. It is not often but it does happen. In NH, I have seen big C-5 galaxy aircraft climbing to refuel with KC-135s in the late evening. At night, these aircraft and their lighting can make them appear extremely odd.

If two or more military aircraft are flying in formation towards a military operating area at night, they would look unique and it would not take much to play connect the dots. It is this kind of situation that seems to have produced several of the UFO reports filed in the Stephenville case.

This image below shows a formation of Snowbirds I photographed at an air show. Compare it to the effect I introduced by darkening the background and blacking out the aircraft. Prior to blacking out the aircraft, I added the navigation lights and the taxi light in the nose. It is interesting the resultant formation takes on the appearance of a large V-shaped object. Planes will not fly this close together at



night but if you spread them out, the "V" can suddenly appear like a massive object hundreds of feet across!

Helicopters

Helicopters tend to be quite noisy but one can never tell. Police helicopters often use bright spotlights that make them obvious from a distance. Military helicopters can appear unusual especially if it is a twin-rotor type like the Chinook pictured here. From a distance, one may have difficulty determining if it is an alien spaceship or just a helicopter.



Blimps/airships

I used to perform Physical training with the junior military personnel while stationed in Orlando. We would run in formation on the golf course for a few miles early in the morning. During the winter it was quite dark. Just to the south of the naval base was the Orlando Executive airport. As we were making our turn back to the gym, somebody noticed a bright light rising above the horizon. He remarked that it looked like a UFO. A few seconds later, I told him he needed to look again since his UFO had the words "FUJI" on its side. From a distance, the blimp can appear like a UFO. Luckily, we were only a few miles away so we could read the advertisement.

There are many blimps operated around the United States by various companies. All can be seen at sporting events day or night. During the recent Gulf oil spill, the US Navy used its MZ-3A airship to help identify oil slicks! I wonder if there were any UFO reports created by this craft?



There are also smaller advertising blimps that can be suspended over a business. This image from californiablimps.com shows an interesting object that might look like a UFO to an unsuspecting individual



Radio controlled aircraft

A recent addition to potential UFO sources is the night flying of radio controlled aircraft. The addition of hundreds of LEDs on these craft have produced objects that can fly at night that appear to be bright objects performing exotic maneuvers that an observer might misinterpret as an exotic craft that was "unworldly" since no normal aircraft could conduct such rapid loops and turns.



Image from RCgroups.com

Beware the aircraft

Aircraft can produce UFO reports and the first thing any investigator should do is examine this possibility. Too often, UFO investigators want to dismiss aircraft simply because they can not believe that aircraft could have been misperceived as something exotic. This possibility increases greatly at night. If anti-collision beacons/strobes are mentioned or recorded on video, the possibility of it being an aircraft is high. Unless a person resorts to the "fake airplane" answer, the rule should be, *If it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it probably is a duck.*

James Moseley recently sent me a letter that he described as “an exclusive” concerning the recovered aliens and saucer at Roswell. It was a printed e-mail that Karl Pflock had sent him with some notes written on it. The content of the e-mail was another classified document stating that there was no physical evidence to examine from crashed flying saucers. In the late 1990s, these kinds of documents were presented by Phil Klass, Robert Todd, Kent Jeffrey, and Karl Pflock as evidence against the idea that there ever was a crashed spaceship at Roswell.

Classified documents and Roswell



All of these documents were important items that needed to be considered. In a 1998 Fortean Times article, Karl stated,

It is important to understand that the documents in question were written decades before the passage of the US Freedom of Information Act in 1975 made it possible to peer behind the wall of American official secrecy. They were created by those whose job it was to crack the flying saucer mystery, who wrote and spoke, certain no unauthorized person would ever be privy to their words. They were the products of, and addressed to, men who had fought World War II and were fighting the Cold War, men used to doing their duty with little fear of being second-guessed, who sat in the highest ranks of American intelligence and official science. They had no qualms about being forthright with each other inside the comfortable precincts of security classifications and Pentagon conference rooms. In fact, their responsibilities demanded it.¹

These classified documents reflect the actual knowledge of these gentlemen at the time they were writing them. Not once, in all of the documentation released to date, is there any mention of a spaceship or saucer being actually recovered and studied by the USAF!

1947: Roswell and then...?

In July 1947, the Roswell event occurred. If we are to believe the present mythology, hundreds, if not thousands, of airmen and civilians were quite aware of what happened in New Mexico that week. However, for some reason, the official record is barren when it comes to this momentous event. In fact, they seem to point towards a more terrestrial source.

The official record of the Roswell incident pretty much relies on news reports, unit histories, and an FBI telex. The morning reports/history of the Roswell Army Air Field/509th bomb group indicate no unusual activity despite hundreds of airmen supposedly being deployed throughout New Mexico to retrieve and transport a crashed saucer.

The first classified document (SECRET) of interest is the infamous Twining memo of September 23, 1947. While the document is mentioned in the three books The Roswell Incident, UFO Crash at Roswell, and Crash at Corona, they focus only on the line, *a. The phenomenon is something real and not visionary or fictitious*². Strangely (or not so strangely), the following section is missing:

h. Due consideration must be given the following:-

(1) The possibility that these objects are of domestic origin - the product of some high security project not known to AC/AS-2 or this Command.

*(2) **The lack of physical evidence in the shape of crash recovered exhibits which would undeniably prove the existence of these subjects.***

(3) The possibility that some foreign nation has a form of propulsion possibly nuclear, which is outside of our domestic knowledge.³ (my emphasis in bold)

Was it left out by accident or did h(2) scare the writers so much that they did not want their readers to see it?

Shortly after the Twining memo was released, there was another document about UFOs generated by General Schulgen on 30 October 1947 (Classified SE-

CRET). Its subject line is “Intelligence Requirements on Flying Saucer Type Aircraft” and speculates about what type of vehicle could be involved in these “Flying saucer” reports. Most important is this line:

For the purpose of analysis and evaluation of the so-called “flying saucer” phenomenon, the object sighted is being assumed to be a manned aircraft, of Russian origin, and based on the perspective thinking and actual accomplishments of the Germans.⁴

If the AF had recovered an actual flying saucer, why would they waste the time with this type of report and analysis?

1948: Sign up ahead!

At the end of 1947, project Sign was created in an effort to collect and evaluate UFO sightings. They were to determine what the causes of these UFO reports were and work with various agencies to accomplish this task. While there is the document often referred to as the “Estimate of the situation” (which suggested the possibility that UFOs COULD be extraterrestrial but did not mention Roswell) described by Ruppelt, nobody has ever seen the document or any document that suggested it really existed as described. However, there are other documents from the days of Project SIGN that demonstrate they knew nothing about the USAF having an actual crashed disc in their inventory.

During a SECRET briefing to the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board given on March 17, 1948 (about 8 months after Roswell), Colonel McCoy (Deputy Commanding General Intelligence T-2 at Air Material Command (AMC)) stated,

... I can't even tell you how much we would give to have one of those crash in an area so that we could recover whatever they are.⁵

Why would he state this, if he knew they had captured a crashed spaceship? If he knew they had such a device, he would not bother mentioning it if it were highly classified. However, he would not be so emphatic that they would like to recover one. Either he was “out of the loop” or the crashed saucer did not happen.

In October 1948, McCoy sent off a series of letters to all the intelligence agencies (CIA, Navy, and Army) asking for help. McCoy states in all of these letters:

This Headquarters is currently engaged in an intelligence investigation of all reported unidentified aerial phenomena. To date, no concrete evidence as to the exact identity of any of the reported objects has been received. Similarly, the origin of the so-called 'flying discs' remains obscure. The possibility exists that some of the sighted objects are of domestic origin... Your cooperation... might greatly assist in identifying our own domestic developments from possible inimical foreign achievements.⁶

The key words were that no concrete evidence was available. Once again, we have McCoy confirming that he had absolutely no knowledge of an alien spaceship crash. McCoy's letters were probably due to him feeling some heat from above about Sign's apparent lack of progress on the UFO problem.

On November 3rd, 1948, Major General Cabell, the head of intelligence himself, wrote to Sign (classified SECRET) requesting some results after one year of work:

The conclusion appears inescapable that some type of flying object has been observed. Identification and the origin of these objects is not discernible to this Headquarters. It is imperative, therefore, that efforts to determine whether these objects are of domestic or foreign origin must be increased until conclusive evidence is obtained. The needs of national defense require such evidence in order that appropriate countermeasures may be taken.⁷

McCoy would respond on the 8th with another secret memo. There he outlined everything that they conclude up to that point. One item mentioned is this:

The possibility that the reported objects are vehicles from another planet has not been ignored. However, tangible evidence to support conclusions about such a possibility are completely lacking....⁸

Another item mentioned is clear cut:

10. *In view of the above, the following*

conclusions are drawn:

a. *In the majority of cases reported, observers have actually sighted some type of flying object which they cannot classify as an aircraft within the limits of their personal experience.*

b. *There is as yet no conclusive proof that unidentified flying objects, other than those which are known to be balloons, are real aircraft.*

c. ***Although it is obvious that some types of flying objects have been sighted, the exact nature of those objects cannot be established until physical evidence, such as that which would result from a crash, has been obtained.***⁹ (my emphasis in bold)

Once again, McCoy is stating that there is no physical evidence for them to examine and that no crashes have yet been recovered.

All of this collection of data culminated in what became known as the Air intelligence report #203 (Appendix "A" was classified TOP SECRET). It concluded that these flying saucers, if they were real craft, could be one of two things. The first would be domestic devices like experimental craft. The other was the idea suggested by General Schulgen's memo a year before. They suspected they were Soviet aircraft based on German designs captured at the end of the war. There was also concern that the propulsion plant might be atomic in nature. Additionally, appendix C of the study listed various UFO reports. Roswell was not one of them.

In all of these letters and reports that have been uncovered over the years, one major theme recurs. The USAF was more concerned that these reports were of Soviet aircraft that were revolutionary in design and not concerned they indicated a potential threat from outside the Earth.

1949-1951 Does anybody care?

In 1949, Project Sign was changed to project Grudge. While UFOlogists suggest this as a change in attitude to go with the name, there still seemed to be a desire to get down to the UFO problem. In the Top Secret USAF director of intel-

ligence's report to the Joint Intelligence Committee on Unidentified aerial objects on 27 April 1949, we read:

Inasmuch as various surmises have been advanced that some of the reported observations may have represented "space ships" or satellite vehicles, a special study has been initiated with the Rand Corporation, under the Rand Project, to provide an analysis from this standpoint and also to provide fundamental information, pertaining to the basic design and performance characteristics that might distinguish a possible "space ship." Rand Corporation has also informed AMC that their analysis of all incidents leads them to the conclusion that there is nothing in any reported incidents which would go against a rational explanation.¹⁰

Again, there is no mention of Roswell and the USAF commissioned RAND to look into the idea that these could be alien spaceships! If they had already recovered one, why spend the money on something they already knew?

1952-1954 Dazed in Dayton

General W. M. Garland, who would eventually take over at the head of ATIC, wrote a memo in early 1952 that addressed the UFO question again. As was the case in 1948, General Garland was concerned about these flying saucer reports being observations of Soviet aircraft. The question remained why did the USAF have a fascination with the threat of Soviet aircraft being the source of these UFOs, when they already knew that UFOs were alien spaceships?

Bluebook spent most of 1952 chasing hundreds of UFO reports. By the end of the year, the CIA had become involved in the UFO question. They commissioned a blue ribbon panel of scientists to evaluate the UFO problem in January 1953. This meeting was classified secret and is referred to as the Robertson Panel. Not once was a spaceship crash mentioned. Additionally, if they already knew that flying saucers were alien spaceships, why would they bother to waste these scientists time looking at UFO reports?

In 1953, Captain Edward Ruppelt gave a SECRET briefing to the Air Defense Command. In this briefing, Ruppelt stated the

following regarding the possibility that UFOs were alien spaceships:

*However, there is no, and I want to emphasize and repeat the word "No" evidence of this in any report the Air Force has received...we have never picked up any "hardware." By that we mean any pieces, parts, whole articles, or anything that would indicate an unknown material or object.*¹¹

Once again, the crashed spaceship link is missing.

SR14 nixes the crash idea

Project Bluebook's Special Report Number 14 is considered by some as one of the greatest documents produced about UFOs by the USAF. It was an effort by Battelle scientists to examine all the reports and analyze them scientifically. What did it say about crashed flying saucers?

*It is emphasized that there was a complete lack of any valid evidence consisting of physical matter in any case of a reported unidentified aerial object.*¹³

Why would these scientists at Battelle note they had no physical evidence when, according to some, they had all seen the debris at one point and had been trying to reverse engineer it?

The GAO is shutout

In the early 1990's the Government Accounting Officer (GAO) was asked to look for documents pertaining to the Roswell "crash". Despite examining the minutes of the National Security Council 1947-8, AMC research and development files 1947-50, and HQ Army Air Force message traffic 1947-54, the GAO could find no indication of any documents related to Roswell:

The other government records we reviewed, including those previously withheld from the public because of security classification, and the Air Forces analysis of unidentified flying object (1) sightings from 1946 to 1953 (Project Blue Book Special Report No. 14), did not mention the crash or recovery of an airborne object near Roswell in July 1947. Similarly, executive branch agencies' response to our let-

*ters of inquiry produced no other government records on the Roswell crash...As a final step, we reviewed Air Material Command (Wright Field) records from 1947 to 1950 for evidence of command personnel involvement in this matter. We found no records mentioning the Roswell Crash or the examination by Air Material Command personnel of any debris recovered from the crash.*¹²

Were all these records that discussed the Roswell crash (which must be numbered in the hundreds/thousands) removed from the face of the earth? Were all the activities of AMC personnel edited to prevent anybody noticing them flying to Roswell and other places to examine the debris? Why isn't there just a hint that something unusual had transpired? Is it because NOTHING out of the ordinary happened or is it because of the conspiracy has covered its tracks better than any other conspiracy before or since?

Smoke screen or self-deception?

All of these documents mean nothing to UFOlogists. Some have suggested that there was an alternate path of communication and all of this was a smoke screen. They insist that any records of a crash were destroyed or that those documents are so classified that nobody would ever see them. Stanton Friedman stated the government has lied before in the case of the Trinity explosion and the U-2 flight by Gary Powers. What he ignores is that these were all public statements and not classified documents. I am unaware of any classified documents that denied the existence of U-2 overflights or an atomic bomb was not exploded at Trinity. To lie to the public in order to cover-up a secret is one thing. To lie and refrain from mentioning the crash to each other in multiple classified documents is another.

UFOlogists will ignore these documents with the excuse that the great conspiracy required that these officers lie about crashed materials because they feared that someday it might be possible that the general public could see what was written. With that kind of logic, one can dismiss anything that was ever written by just simply stating it is part of the conspiracy.

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The Belgian Society for the Study of Spatial Phenomena (SOBEPs) has invested much energy in trying to convince us that from 1989 to 1994, Belgium experienced an extraterrestrial invasion worthy of "Independence Day". There is much to be written about the Belgian Wave, but today I would like to talk to you about its beginning on the 29th of November, 1989.

One of the difficulties the skeptic is confronted with in the explanation of the Belgian Wave is that, to do that, he must absolutely criticise the work, because this non profit-making organization based in Brussels has, on the one hand, maintained the wave – they promoted it in the Belgian French-speaking media – and on the other hand, they put an enormous amount of work into informing the public about it, but not in an impartial way. At the same time, if, in order to explain the Belgian Wave, it is absolutely necessary to criticise the work of the SOBEPs, it is essential to do it in a constructive manner, and not sink into personal attacks, as certain skeptics like Marc Hallet¹ have an unfortunate tendency to do. In science, it is important to criticise the ideas and not the individuals who exhibit them. This is the perilous exercise that we are going to attempt on this page.

Psychosocial Contagion?

Skeptics defend the idea that UFO waves are generally psychosocial contagion phenomena. Philip J. Klass describes this phenomenon in the following way:

*When the information transmitted by the media lead the public to believe that there were UFOs in the area, there are numerous natural and artificial objects that, especially when seen at night, display unusual characteristics in witnesses who are filled with hope. Their witness statements add to the mass excitement, which encourages even more people to look up into the sky so that they can see a UFO. This situation feeds itself until the media lose interest in the subject, then the phenomenon loses steam.*²

The counter-argument advanced by the SOBEPs is that it began so suddenly for the night of the 29th of November, 1989, the organization received no fewer than

The beginning of the Belgian UFO wave

By Jean-Michel Abrassart

143 sightings! Therefore, the substance of the argument is this: as the mass media had not yet aired the information, the people reporting the sightings did so independently; so, such a great number of independent witnesses refutes without doubt the hypothesis of psychosocial contagion. We will come back to this later, but let's take a detour via a presentation by Auguste Meessen.

In the first SOBEPs report, "UFO wave over Belgium" (VOBI)³, Auguste Meessen writes the chapter dedicated to the beginning of the Wave, a chapter entitled "*The decisive observations of the 29th of November, 1989*".⁴ Auguste Meessen is a professor emeritus of physics at the Catholic University of Louvain. He was born near the border between Belgium and Germany, a fact which is important when we consider the conversations he had with the two policemen in Eupen, themselves German-speaking. He began to be interested in the UFO phenomenon when his son asked him if it was possible to explain it. He plunged into the subject and concluded that the socio-psychological model was refuted: the extraterrestrial hypothesis was the best way to explain the phenomenon, and the only scientifically correct one, an idea that he defends in his article, "*The UFO phenomenon and the problem with methodology*"⁵. In another article, published in 2000 and entitled "*How far on are we in ufology?*"⁶, he explains, among other things, that he thinks that the Roswell crash was in fact a flying saucer followed by an attempt by the US government to hide the truth and that kidnappings by extraterrestrials are authentic. He goes as far as to suggest an explanatory theory for the little extraterrestrials' telepathy, based on the fact that they have big black eyes. Auguste Meessen is therefore someone who has great faith in the extraterrestrial hypothesis, and has had for a long time. When the Belgian Wave began, he took it, a priori, as a unique opportunity to have, at last, conclusive proof that the origin of the phenomenon is well and truly extraterrestrial! In VOBI, he rejects the idea that the socio-psychological model could explain the Wave, on more or less one page

out of a 500-page work, which really is very little considering that this is the dominating model in the scientific community.

The policemen's sighting

On the night of the 29th of November, 1989, there was a central sighting, that of two policemen in Eupen, Von Montigny and Nichols. This was the origin of the Belgian Wave. For a certain amount of time, these policemen followed a UFO in their vehicle. They describe the UFO as being like a kind of platform with three cones of white light; they then watched it as it remained stationary over the Gileppe dam where it appeared to be more like a white dot with red filaments emanating from it. In fact, the appearance of the object changed throughout the observation. Ufologists argue that since the witnesses are policemen, this proves that what they saw is a "fact", to be taken as such, not to be subjected to critical analysis. Even so, why should we think that, because these are policemen, they cease to be subject to labelling errors and compound mistakes? Actually, when someone becomes a policeman, he doesn't suddenly cease to be a human being. The most we can say is that it's extremely unlikely that they lied or had drunk alcohol that night. There we are in agreement. However, there is nothing to suggest that, because a person is a policeman, this disqualifies him from having a fantasy-prone personality (see my article on this subject: "*Fantasy-prone personality and its implication in ufology*"⁷) or even from being schizotypal. Now, the SOBEPs never submitted them, or any other witness to the Belgian Wave, to any kind of psychological testing. After all, it's not worth looking into the psychology of witnesses when the only thing you're after is proof in favour of the extraterrestrial hypothesis! Of course, there are two of them, but how much of their later witness statements were influenced by the conversation that took place between them in the car at the time of the observation, thus artificially bringing them into tune with one another? This kind of phenomenon has often been observed in ufological casuistry. Not considering that, during their interviews with Auguste Meessen, he asked them many short, precise questions, the perfect way to influence a witness by using

what, in social sciences, we call “leading questions”⁸. Let’s take the following example: Hubert Von Montigny, one of the policemen, says, “*there were rays of reddish light that went ... very far, on both sides, horizontally. When they were far away, they came back but didn’t go back inside the object. They went round about it and went away again.*” Auguste Meessen then asks him, “*Was it sudden?*” Hubert Von Montigny replies, “*All of a sudden. They came out and then came back again very quickly.*” This is only one example among others, but we can see that the term suggested by the physicist (“Was it sudden?”) is taken up directly by the policemen in his description (“All of a sudden”). This is a perfect example of the devastating effect of leading questions on the content of witness statements. We should also highlight the fact that Auguste Meessen was also in a perfect position of authority. He was a university professor, he introduced himself as an expert on the UFO phenomenon and, to cap it all, he spoke to them in German, their mother tongue. Now, when people are in a situation where they are subject to authority, suggestion very quickly comes into play, to use an expression coined by Stanley Milgram. If we want to keep things precise, we should also highlight the fact that, before talking to Auguste Meessen, the witness statements of the two policemen had probably been influenced by the interview that took place between them and Heinz Godessart, a journalist from the German language tabloid newspaper, Grenz Echo, specialist in all things mysterious and also a believer in the extraterrestrial hypothesis. Seen from this point of view, Auguste Meessen just put the final touch to the deformation of the witness statements given by Von Montigny and Nichols... The Flemish ufologist, Patrick Vantuynne, reports moreover that, during a press conference he was at, as far as the sighting of the rays and the red balls goes, the statements of the two policemen were far less precise than the ones we find later on in VOBI. According to him, they said then that they both had the indistinct impression that rays of light sometimes emanated from all sides of the phenomenon. This description is compatible with the simple sparkling of Venus, probably enhanced by atmospheric turbulence. Today, in fact, the main skeptical explanation for the sightings of the policemen of Eupen is that they saw a

helicopter in the first part of their vision and then they saw Venus, which was very bright, up above the Gileppe dam, then, finally, that their statements were greatly distorted by their discussions with Auguste Meessen. We could also emit the hypothesis that one of the policemen had a fantasy-prone personality or was schizotypal, which would have greatly enhanced the strangeness of his sighting and that the second man only corroborated the first one’s statement (the first one having explained what he was seeing to the second one while he was actually seeing it), even if it’s impossible to prove this hypothesis without subjecting them to a whole battery of psychological tests.

Retroactive witness statements

Let’s come back to the incredible number of 143 witness statements gathered for the 29th of November alone. The question we should ask ourselves is “When were these witness statements given to the SOBEPS?” Not on the same day, but later. They are then retroactive. The true order of events is the following:

1. The sightings of the policemen in Eupen is made known to the press.
2. They publish the information.
3. Local people hear about it.
4. In the greater mass of the population, some people saw something strange in the sky that night, although that’s not fundamentally surprising. In fact, at night, there are lots of strange objects that are visible that we can’t always identify. The people wouldn’t normally have mentioned it, but in this case, they think, “It might be something to do with what the policemen saw”. On the one hand, it gives them the idea that what they saw might be something from another world, and, furthermore, it encourages them to report their sightings, to testify, since, after all, if even policemen saw them, why not ?” And each one testifies in turn, but what they’ve read in the press about the policemen’s sightings obviously influences what they say and also enhances the global coherence of witness statements.

It becomes rapidly obvious, in this version of events, how things can fall into place and become entirely compatible with the model of psychosocial contagion. It is also plausible that the fact that the media suggest there was something visible on the 29th of November 1989 affected certain persons who were liable to easily create their own false memories. There again, this type of explanation was not considered by the SOBEPS, they were too busy searching for proof in favour of the extraterrestrial hypothesis... In his article entitled “*The decisive sightings of the 29th of November 1989*”⁹, Auguste Meessen never mentions the dates that the witness statements were recorded, which is a great methodological weakness. Marc Hallet writes :

*Auguste Meessen who, let us remember, in the SOBEPS report, signed the chapter dedicated to the events of the 29th of November 1989, relates a great number of other observations with the obvious aim of convincing people at any cost. In fact, he only manages to prove the incoherence of a series of witness statements gathered after the events, without ever stating when these observations were first publicly aired by the witnesses. Everyone should be able to understand the importance of such an omission.*¹⁰

Here, there are two possibilities: either Auguste Meessen simply never realized the importance of such information in explaining the beginning of the Belgian Wave and, in this case, committed a gross methodological error, or he knowingly omitted the information and therefore attempts to manipulate the reader by failing to even acknowledge the alternative explanations to the one he defends. Impossible to tell which is the case, but both are extremely worrying.

In conclusion, we can quite simply say that, contrary to what the SOBEPS affirms, the beginning of the Belgian Wave is entirely compatible with the idea of sociopsychological contagion. Contrary to what we are invited to believe, it is possible to explain the wave without calling on an army of extraterrestrial spaceships flying over Belgian territory.

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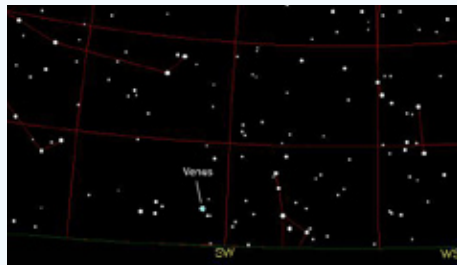
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The November 29, 1989 UFO over Eupen explained?

On November 29, 1989 two Eupen Gendarmerie were driving on patrol towards the town of Kettenis (NE of Eupen). At 5:20 PM, 35 minutes after sunset, they reported seeing a bright light to the right of their vehicle. The policemen sped up and were able to get a closer look. Their description was that of a dark shape barely visible against the fading light with three bright lights and a red flashing light. It headed back towards Eupen at a speed of roughly 50-60 km/hr and they gave pursuit. After checking in with their headquarters, where they learned there were no military activities in progress, the police officers saw the UFO south of town. Once again, they followed it and ended up at Lake Gileppe, where they observed a bright stationary light that shot off beams of light. For 45 minutes, the police officers observed this display until around 7:23 PM, when the UFO disappeared in the direction of the town of Spa (to the SW).

Wim van Utrecht wrote an informative article in UFOs: 1947-1997 (Stacey and Evans) concerning this case. He suggested that the object over Lake Gileppe was not a UFO but simply Venus. A quick check on a planetarium program indicates Venus was in the direction of the sighting and it set in the southwest about the time the officers reported seeing it disappear in that direction. It seems perfectly plausible to explain that part of the event but what about the first sighting around 5:20 PM?



Orion's "The Sky" program for 1900 on 11/29/89

Renaud Lecllet suggested the officers saw a helicopter:

The gendarmes initially thought they were seeing a helicopter, but as they did not hear any noise, they changed their mind for a UFO... It is at least what SOBEPS tells in VOB 1, p.17, where it is said: "It is the silence of the craft that astonishes most the two gendarmes, they do not hear anything that exceeds the noise of the car and of the road traffic". Let us notice that several vehicles overtook the gendarmes and

that the noise they made would already have been enough to mask that of a helicopter...But in reading the daily newspaper Le Soir of December 1, 1989, one discovers another version of the facts: during the sighting, the two gendarmes were struck by the weak noise of the craft, that was only a light humming, comparable to an electric motor noise. This contradiction is of the utmost importance! Why such a change in the testimony reported well afterwards by SOBEPS? Mere error or embarrassing detail for the UFO hypothesis? The existence of a noise was also confirmed by Werner Walter, a German skeptical ufologist. During an interview given by gendarme Nicoll to the CENAP ufologist, the witness confirmed to have heard a noise "like that of a shaver or a mower"...

An investigation by Mr Vantuynne on December 9, 1989 confirms that one of the two witnesses did hear a light buzz and that the structure behind the lights was dark green (22). This colour is typical of military helicopters.

And last but not least, on page 4 of SOBEPS Flash N°1 of February 1990, describing the sightings of November 29, 1989, it is said that gendarme Peter Nicholl (not to be confused with Heinrich Nicoll) "clearly distinguished at the back of the craft something that revolved like a turbine and he heard a fan noise". The media did not speak about this turbine, nor about the fan noise heard by Peter Nicholl. SOBEPS, after having published these statements, will not make any mention of the turbine in its two books, but it will nevertheless speak about a "shaft support for an airship propeller"... The strange variations or disappearances of important details in SOBEPS publications are really astonishing!

The two witnesses seem to have focused on the overall structure of the craft but reported, according to VOB 1, that the adjacent corners at the triangle base were cut. The first report by the two gendarmes was published in the German-language Belgian daily newspaper Grenz Echo of December 1, 1989. However there was no mention of a triangular body behind the lights as SOBEPS asserts in VOB 1, p.17, where the two gendarmes speak about a platform equipped with three huge headlights.¹

While it can not be positively proven that a helicopter was the cause of this part of the sighting, it seems entirely plausible. A clue, in my opinion, is the red flashing light, which is what one would expect from a helicopter. It is no surprise that General De Brouwer never mentioned this potential explanation in the section of Leslie Kean's book that addressed the Belgium UFO wave.

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Editor's note: Roger sent me this piece and it was loosely translated into English. I attempted to clean it up without damaging his article too much. My goal was to improve the grammar, syntax, and flow of the story. What Roger presents is a very interesting analysis of one of those UFO events that populated the Belgian UFO "wave" of 1989-1990.

This UFO event occurred only one day after two Belgian Air Force F-16s were chasing UFOs over the skies of Belgium. It involved a multiple witness sighting with photographs. It was considered to be such a good case that it made into the SOBEPS report, *Vague d'OVNI sur la Belgique* (VOB).

The UFO observation

At 0105 on the 31st of March, the witnesses reported seeing something they considered unusual. A yellowish light that was different than plane lights, rose into the sky and slowly became bigger. It divided into two parts and then divided again so that they saw four white lights. At this moment, one of the witnesses, who was a photographer, took two pictures but they were underexposed. The observers report that they saw the front of the object behind the lights for 15 seconds. It was described to be a dark shape with bright lights and some white areas, (which may have been a reflection or other light emission). At this point the photographer took a third picture. According to the photographer, the object occupied about one third of the viewfinder's field of view (FOV). The object at the time was at an elevation angle of 45° and the three witnesses estimated the altitude of the object as being 300 meter and the size being that of a 747 airliner (about 60 to 70 m). The witnesses added that heard a whistling noise typical of a plane but concluded it was not a plane because it was too weak for the low height of the object.

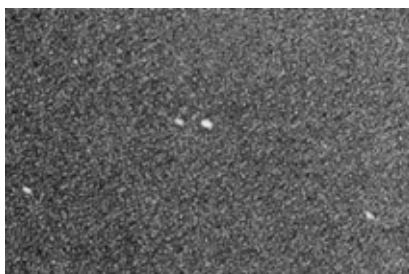
The witnesses (Patrick Ferryn, photographer, Lucien Clérebaut, and José Fernandez) were located near Ramillies at the crossroads of N91 and N29, which happens to be situated under an important airway and they were looking towards the SSE. In VOB1, P. Ferryn stated he used a NIKON camera with a KOMURA 300 mm telephoto lens with an aperture of F5 set at infinite and mounted on a tripod. He used ISO 1600 speed film and shot at a

The March 31, 1990 Ramilles UFO observation by Roger Paquay



shutter speed of 1/125s. Ferryn stated that he took pictures of planes for comparison.

The next day, the photographer developed the film and discovered that the emulsion didn't show any trace of the object they saw. In one negative, all he found were four very small points of light with a magnifying glass. This picture is edited in VOB1 under the number 7.18c.



Analysis of the negative

Professor A. Meessen from UCL, created the hypothesis that the picture was erased by an infrared light emitted by the object. This effect is called "Herschel effect" and requires that the Infrared (IR) light be emitted simultaneously with the normal light on the emulsion. (See VOB1 p 423-435). This effect is weak. For this to exist in the laboratory, it requires 150W at 30 cm without the lens. What power would be necessary if the source is at 1000 m or more with the lens attached?

More over the human skin feels heat from 150 W at 30 cm but the witnesses didn't

feel anything. This experiment proves only the existence of the Herschel effect but the effect is weak and doesn't allow for anyone to conclude the picture was erased by this effect. Moreover, there are four points on this picture that were not erased.

The Herschel effect hypothesis is not very probable and is inconsistent with the data. It makes some unverifiable assumptions:

1. The UFO had very advanced technology.
2. The UFO knew it was being observed by these people.
3. The UFO knew it had a camera pointed at it.
4. The UFO can emit in a time shorter than 1/125 s an IR light in the direction of the camera or maybe it was emitting continuously IR. However, if it did this, how can it be explained that earth satellites never detected it? The sensitivity of the military satellites in IR is so great they can detect meteorites entering the earth atmosphere.
5. Finally, why can we find four points in the picture that were not erased when IR was supposed to erase the entire frame?

This appears to be an ad hoc hypothesis to justify why the UFO was not photographed.

NOTE: In the Petit-Rechain picture, there is no IR but another ad hoc hypothesis, UV light is used to explain an apparent move. UV light could not reach the film layer (Acheroy report).

A more likely hypothesis is that the film was underexposed is ignored and should have been the first thing that to be considered. With the photographer stating he used a film speed of 1600 and maximum aperture of F5, the most important parameter was the exposure time.

The French photographic review "Chasseur d'Images", n°322, April 2010, p 100, contained the article, "Contraintes de la prise de vue en basse lumière" (free trans-

lation: "Obliged data for filming in low light"), which stated:

"Tout cliché est un compromis entre trois paramètres, vitesse d'obturation, diaphragme de l'objectif et sensibilité du support sur lequel est enregistrée l'image"

"Each picture is a compromise between three parameters: speed, aperture and sensitivity of the emulsion on which the picture is registered."

Since two of the parameters are fixed (film sensitivity and aperture) there is only the third parameter (exposure time) that can be changed to obtain correct exposure.

Evaluating the testimony

This omission of other hypotheses indicates the witnesses were biased towards interpreting this as an extraterrestrial/exotic object (thereby invoking the Extraterrestrial Hypothesis - ETH). Moreover, the three witnesses were all in the same place and agreed to give the same descriptions of altitude dimension, noise. This agreement on the data means their descriptions must be considered as "ONE UNIQUE testimony" and were not independent of each other.

The low noise level reported by the witnesses can also have a plausible explanation. The noise was weak because the object was at a greater distance.

What does the data reveal?

The first thing to note is that there is missing or unused data from the evaluation of the case. This data should have been examined prior to suggesting an ETH interpretation of the event.

Data missing: the FOV of the telephoto lens. For a 300 mm lens there are three FOVs: 8.1 ° for the diagonal, 7° for the large side of 36 mm, and 5° for the height of 24 mm. The FOV from the telephoto lens is an intrinsic data of the apparatus. This intrinsic data was omitted or ignored by the witnesses and SOBEPS.

Unused data: The angular size of the object through the telephoto lens. Assuming the witness was accurate, the object occupied one third of the FOV according to the witness, which would be 12 mm on

a single frame of 35 mm film.

Analysis of the data

According to the witness, the object was about 60 m wide at a distance of 300 m. With these data, one can calculate the angular size:

Tangent of the angle = $60/300 = 0.2$.

This computes to an angle of 11.3°. This information was available to the witnesses and SOBEPS but it was ignored.

The maximum FOV for the telephoto lens was 8.1° and the object was reported to have occupied one third of that FOV. So the angular size of the object through the telephoto lens would be $(8.1^\circ)/3 = 2.7^\circ$. Compare this to the estimated size and distance given by the witnesses. At that size and distance, it would have been larger than the maximum FOV for the camera system. This value is also about four times (4.19) smaller than the computed angular size of 11.3°. Assuming the estimated size of 60m was accurate, we can conclude the object was at a distance over four times greater than estimated (about 1250m).

Now if we use the formulas for lenses we discover that the an object of 60 m situated at 1250 m produces an image on the film of 12 mm. It is important to also note that an object of 12 m size situated at 250 m would also give the same 12 mm size on the film.

Nevertheless we must consider other hypotheses based on the estimate of angular size in the camera's view finder. For distances between 250 and 1250 m the dimensions of the object would range between 12 and 60 m respectively.

P. Ferryn said he had photographed planes at high altitude for comparison. These photographs are missing from the report. Also missing are the first two pictures of the UFO. One has to wonder why?

The plane hypothesis

It must be pointed out that a plane of 60 m size at a distance of 10000 m would only be 1.95mm in size on the 35mm frame when using a 300 mm lens.

The lights of this plane (25 cm in size) would only produce microscopic points. Isn't this what the witness reported in his picture: "four non erased microscopic points"?

On the side of the picture in VOB1 they describe the picture as a flat trapezoid. The picture really does not permit this assertion because there are no visible elements of the three dimensional object. The assertion that this is a "Flat trapezoid" is an imaginative interpretation.

Assuming it was a plane that was photographed, the laws of geometric optics demonstrate that there could not be anything on the film other than these microscopic points, which would be the light of the beacons. At a distance of 1500 m, the image of a beacon on the film would only be 0.04 mm. The actual shape of the plane would not be recorded in a short exposure time. There is no need to speak of an image erased by the Herschel effect.

The witnesses reported seeing first one light, then two and finally four. It is exactly what you can see when a 747 is approaching. When the plane is far away (15 to 20 km) the four lights are too close together to resolve with the naked eye. The angular separation is too small. A moment later, you see two lights and finally, when the plane comes closer, you see four lights.

The explanation is simple: when we look at distant objects we cannot see details because our eyes cannot resolve the two neighbour points if the angle of separation is lower than about one arc minute (1/60th of a degree). The multiple lights appear as one to the observer.

During a correspondence I had with P. Ferryn in 2008, I wrote:

In my 50 years of photographic experience, I know that, by night, even with very high sensitivity film, it is impossible to obtain more than the point images of these beacons. With the focal length of 300 mm and a speed of 1/125s, the image of the beacon is very small and can only be seen with microscope or scanner.

In his answer, he insisted that the distance between the points on the film had

to be 12 mm apart, which is what he saw through the viewfinder. So, we can deduce the distance between the points of the film was shorter. I requested that he provide the positions of the points in a rectangle of 24x36 because in VOB1 the picture is cropped. I never received this data.

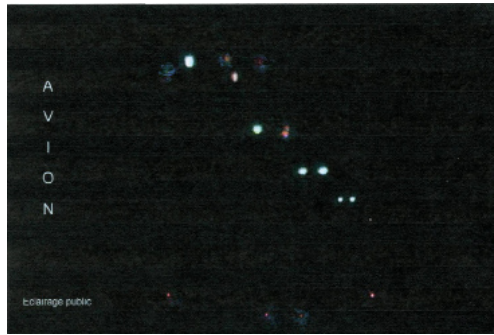
He added: *"the dimension of the subject seen on the viewfinder must inevitably be found on the film"*. I answered that he was mistaken and that the image on the film is affected by the exposure time because the film sensitivity is fixed and the diaphragm is open at its maximum. If the exposure time is too short the film may not have been exposed and there would be nothing to see. As a professional photographer he should have known the damaging effects of underexposure, principally in the works of amateurs.

Examining the drawing made by the witnesses and reconstructing the different moments of the event (reconstruction can be found in VOB1 fig 7.18a - see page 24) we notice the following facts:

The description of the observation of one point (A on the picture) that divides in two (B on the picture) and then in four is identical to what you can see when a big plane (like a 747) is approaching. The drawing at point C shows a curved shape, which is a pure mental interpretation (pareidolia) that occurs when an observer mentally links points of light that are separate in a dark sky. Moreover, no shape is seen in picture 7.18c in VOB1. Additionally, picture 7.18c doesn't show double lights as represented in the reconstruction 7.18a. How can this be explained? Double lights were described by the witnesses and they should have been recorded in the picture. This is not the case.

The yellowish light seen initially probably was due to atmospheric refraction because after that, the witnesses referred to it as a white light.

For comparison I filmed a plane coming in my direction with a camera. I extracted from this film five pictures and I made a photomontage. The lights are seen on the bottom. This picture shows an elapsed time of four minutes. You can see that the shape of the airplane is not visible. But



the front shape of the lights appears to be curved. It is very interesting to compare my montage and the drawing 7.18a. You can see the final shape on my picture corresponds very closely with the shape drawn by the witnesses. The illusion of a curved shape is very revealing and can explain the drawing of the witnesses.

Some might object that you can't find the double points of light in my picture. But this is also the case with the picture 7.18c from SOBEPS that differs completely from the drawing.

Conclusion:

We discover again in this observation and during the interpretation that the same line of thinking was influenced by the ETH. This case puts together all the elements, methodological mistakes, and unproven assertions/postulates that can create a misinterpretation.

The investigators determined the witnesses and their estimates of distance and height were beyond reproach without performing calculations based on those estimates. These investigators, in the excitement of the moment, immediately adopted an ETH interpretation and neglected important data. The photographer, who was a professional, didn't know the FOV for his telephoto lens and the method to calculate the angular size of an object. As demonstrated here, the resultant calculation didn't match what he saw in the viewfinder bringing into question the estimates given.

The witnesses stated they saw a shape behind the lights and thought the picture would show what they had seen. However, the eye is more sensitive than film and they did not consider the likely possibility of underexposure (see the picture at the upper right taken by the editor of an airplane at night using the camera set-

tings described by the witness). Instead, they concluded that the image must have been erased. They also ignored the possibility that the faint noise heard was of a plane's engines situated farther away than what they had estimated.



When examining the two proposed hypotheses for this event, Occam's razor indicates the airplane explanation, which does not require any complex assumptions, is more likely.

Bibliography:

Vague d'ovnis sur la Belgique: un dossier exceptionnel : VOB1

Vague d'ovnis sur la Belgique : Une énigme non résolue : VOB2

Inforespace 100, 2000, p 5-40

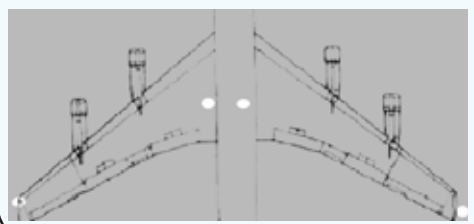
Analyse et implications physiques de deux photos de la vague belge, web site A. Meessen

Vague Belge : les cas solides Ramillies by FBE on <http://adelmon.free.fr>

Canon interchangeable lens guide, 1968

Roger Paquay Roger was born in Waremme, Belgium, on 21 October 1941. Entered the Liège University in 1960 in Physical Sciences. Graduated as "LICENCIÉ EN SCIENCES PHYSIQUES" (Physics) in 1964. Teacher for Physics and mathematics in a secondary school for 15 to 18 year-old students. become Principal of the school in 1986. Retired 1 November 2001. Hobbies include Photography; lectures, walking and travel.

In his e-mail to me, Roger suggested the culprit for the dots on the negative was the lights of a 747. However, looking at the ratio of distance between the center lights and the outer lights, I think a better fit is a 707, which I demonstrate below. The plane was probably not head-on, which might explain the slight variance in my comparison.



A friend very recently sent me a copy of Martin Shough's new critique of the Kenneth Arnold case titled "The Singular Adventure of Mr. Kenneth Arnold." The beast has 359 footnotes and I have no reservation declaring it the most ambitious attempt to be scholarly top dog on the case. It is far classier than Bruce Maccabee's not entirely 'ultimate' paper several years back in both tone, temperament, and care. It pulls together close to everything of historical interest about the case and unearths material even the best informed of skeptics will never have seen before. Among these are details of James McDonald's investigation of the case which of course never saw the light of day because of his untimely demise.

The existence of Google Earth has opened up new opportunities to explore the face of Rainier unavailable to prior folks like myself and Shough writes with glee that he has finally found the long lost part of the mountain that Arnold's objects must have passed behind – Glacier Island. He considers it a good match to Arnold's testimony. Good, albeit awkwardly outside the range of altitudes provided by Arnold.

I smiled over the moment, personal to me, where I am charged with a somewhat literal acceptance of Arnold's estimate of ~9000ft altitude based on his apparent horizon. There are indeed no very suitable peaks near 9000ft. But as advertised in Section 4 we will find that in the course of more realistically qualifying this altitude estimate a consistent scenario emerges.

If I had not, if I had said Arnold was wrong about the altitude by thousands or even hundreds of feet, I would certainly have laid myself open to criticism on the point. I mean isn't the usual concern skeptics treat testimony with not enough respect? As a friend to ufo believers he can get away with saying Arnold was wrong, but only a little bit and with good excuses.

This however was quickly forgiven as I found myself made happily giddy by the effort to try to imagine what a pilot flying according Shough's new reconstruction would see. I wish I had one of those pilot simulators trotted out on TV shows from time to time, plugged it into Google Earth and tried to thread a path behind Glacier

Joining Shough's Singular Adventure by Martin S. Kottmeyer

Island as in his Figure 7 while flying the roller coaster maneuvers described by Arnold at over twice the speed of sound. A footnote implies it is easy:

The width of the Glacier Island cleft (Fig.7) appears to be well over 600ft (180m) at the approximate 100-ft clearance altitude, so it is quite possible to imagine that fighters could have flown through it with 2 - 300 feet (60-90m) of wingtip clearance either side.¹

I guess I could imagine Top Gun people doing that; I honestly don't know. I imagine I'd wipe out quite a few times before I pulled off such a stunt. Probably it would be a fun adventure in a simulator. A passenger in a real world jet, I'd be praying, assuming I was conscious, or crying to push the ejector button.

Another thing I like about the piece is how Shough criticizes several of the explanations that has emerged in recent years, which means that, were I ever to revisit the subject, I wouldn't have to bother with the unpleasant task of dealing with any backlash from criticisms I would be obliged to make against fellow skeptics. I even think he does it better or more thoroughly than I did in my private notes about them. The weird thing though is that after Shough punctures all the new explanations you eventually arrive at the point where most any other writer would then advance his new and better explanation. What's the point to being against everybody if you aren't for something to replace the top spot? Shough advances and defends --- nothing.

The big "Where's the beef?" moment occurs on pages 87-8 when he addresses the point of Dr David Clarke's:

Granted, it's unlikely [that Arnold saw pelicans], but in what order of unlikeliness is it compared with the explanation that he saw a) piloted craft from an extraterrestrial civilisation or b) foreign or US advanced aircraft?²

Shough's answer:

Of course one understands the psychological force of this question. But in scientific logic it is impossible to answer clearly unless we can agree how to quantify before-hand the probabilities not only of a) and of b) but also of c) - which stands for an indefinitely large equivalence class of other hypotheses that are not enumerated and/or not even known to us. How can we know whether a possibility crudely articulated (or yet to be suspected) is really going to be a simplifying or complexifying factor in the context of a model of the world which exists only in the future?

In short we cannot. This sort of ranking exercise can only be defended by very general a priori principles which, like the principle of simplicity or economy itself, are really not justified by anything found in nature.³

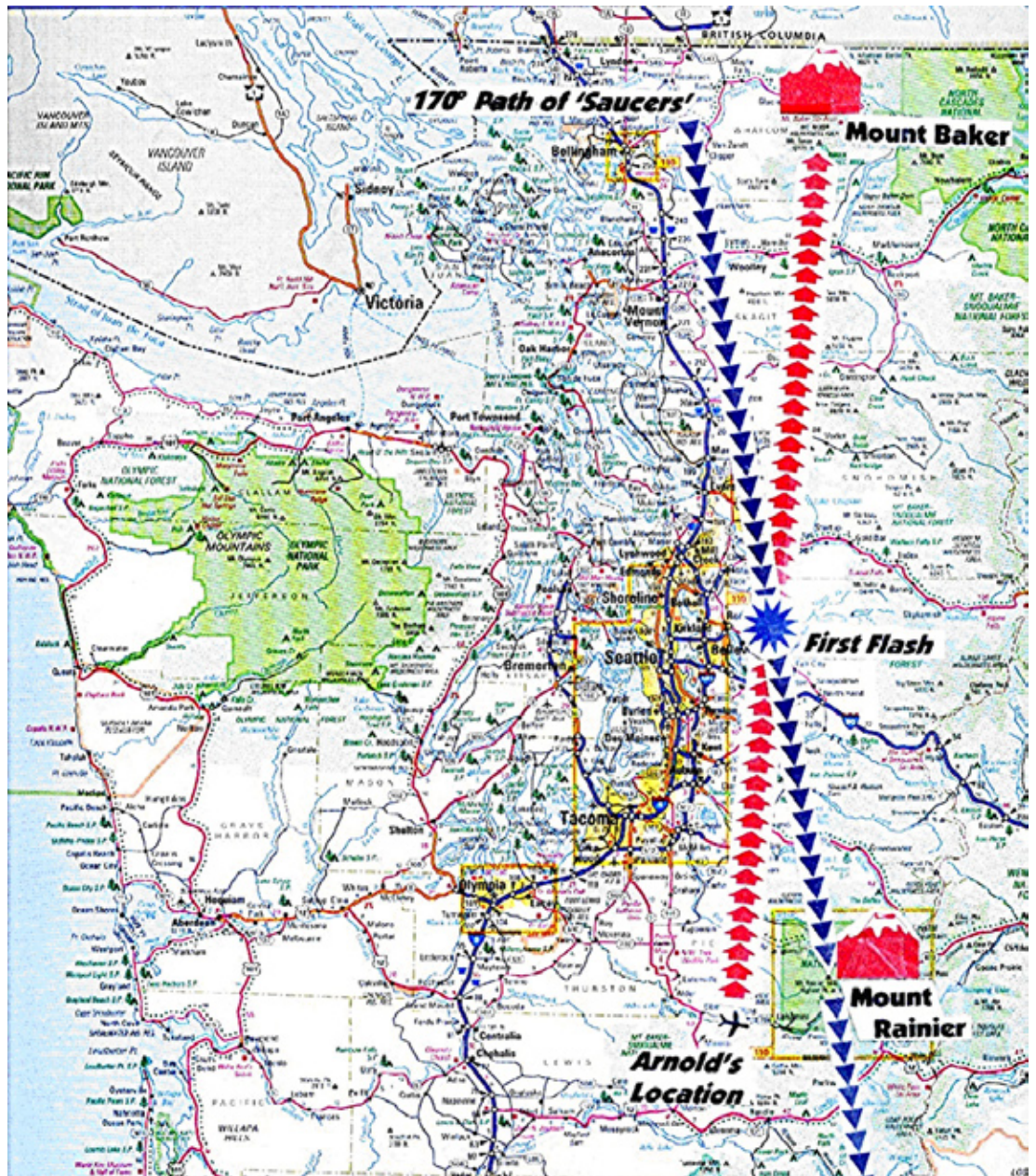
This feels like sophistry designed to avoid claiming baldly that "It's a mystery" is a better explanation than offering one that the people just criticized may, in return, have the opportunity of criticizing.

The people he thanks in his acknowledgements seem to be all ufo believers – at least I don't see the name of any skeptics or psychosocial writers I recognize – so one is tempted to see this all as an exercise to save the Arnold case for ufology. I view as telling though that Shough makes no effort to draw out the implications of trying to explain the objects as extraterrestrial vehicles or discuss Arnold's objects' awkward dissimilarities to other classic ufo cases. That way leads to trouble. Best stop at it's-a-mystery so his friends can brag Arnold's objects are really really unidentified, ergo ufos are real. Never mind they don't resemble other ufos.

I can only accuse Shough of lacking telepathy in his not addressing lesser matters that have dominated my private thinking about the case in the years after my 50th anniversary review of the case. There is a detail in Arnold's account in *The Coming of the Saucers* where he says "In the first place, their echelon formation was backward from that practiced by our Air Force." The significance of what Arnold was saying here long eluded me though I certainly knew of it, having actually quoted it in that anniversary piece. In my notebook sketches, I always put

the objects in a V formation with the vertex at the front. I think it was while watching some ufo documentary's reconstruction of Arnold's sighting with a mismatching voice-over of Arnold's description of the backward formation that the "Oh, my God!" moment hit me. Arnold meant the vertex was at the rear of the formation.

That means...that means... oh, you idiot, of course, the relative velocities! Arnold is travelling faster than the objects. Logically, the V would visually track backwards. The significance is that in one beat you realize supersonic aircraft is unlikely – would you like to be that guy flying the vertex position in that drunkard's run across the face of Rainier? But more, it shifts Arnold even further away from the norms of the ufo phenomenon. There are other cases of ufos in echelon formations, but what percentage has them flying in a backwards echelon? Either zero or too small to be a help. It would have firmed up the notion birds were involved had I realized it earlier and included the point in the argument.



His absence of remote viewing skills also meant he didn't see a sketch in my private files where I show that taking Arnold's descriptions literally - too literally to be sure – he first sees the mystery objects flying right next to Seattle. How is it nobody there saw and reported them or more importantly hear the sonic booms of these supersonic stunt fliers?

With Shough already having sculpted and displayed his position and invested so much work in the path geometry I know he can only dismiss such problems. And maybe it doesn't matter anyways for the debate has long ago become poisonously polarized with everybody quite sure that being a pelicanist is a bad shun-worthy sort of crime against ufology. Do visit the acknowledgements.

None of this should be taken as a reason to turn away from Martin Shough's piece which is an absolute must-see that all skeptics should admire and praise for its patience, persistence of work, acumen, and attention to detail. Given the flood of insane gibberish that one swims in as a follower of ufo literature – this is a relaxing iceberg of sanity to rest on a spell. Spend some time there.

Notes and References

1. Shough, Martin. The Singular Adventure of Mr. Kenneth Arnold. Available WWW: http://www.nicap.org/reports/arnold_analysis_shough.pdf p. 44 footnote 161.

2. Ibid. p.87-8

3. Ibid. p. 88

Martin S. Kottmeyer is the author of dozens of critical writings in UFO culture, among them is Alien Who's Who (Anomalist Books 2008). Martin describes this book as "the worst-selling UFO book of all time" because he has yet to make a penny from its sales. Apparently, he does not collect royalties until after the first 200 are sold. Only about 130-140 have been sold in the past two years.

On September 22, Robert Hastings fired a return salvo to Reality Uncovered's series of blog entries centered around James Carlson's research. Using Frank Warren's blog, "The UFO Chronicles", as his forum, Hastings posted audio clips of interviews he and Salas had conducted with Walt Figel and Fredrick Meiwald to prove that what Carlson had stated was false.

Bait and switch?

In March of this year, Carlson had contacted Walt Figel and Figel had made it clear that there was no UFOs involved with Echo flight's shutdown. His e-mail was posted in SUNlite 2-3 and it seemed to clear things up. However, Hastings claimed he talked to Figel and got a completely different response:

I re-interviewed Walt Figel on Monday evening. Salas re-interviewed him on Tuesday evening. We have both conversations on audiotape and we are currently transcribing them. We asked Figel to address James Carlson's interpretation of his statements and position on various things. James will not like what Walt had to say.

Figel has given Salas and me permission to publicize his statements as we see fit. I will post a comprehensive rebuttal to James' flawed claims in the next few days, providing verbatim excerpts from the conversations. I may even make key portions of the original audio tape available online.¹

For six months, Hastings was silent about these recent statements until just before his "dog and pony show" at the national press club on the 27th of September.

As Reality Uncovered began to present the e-mails of Figel and an interview with Eric Carlson, there seemed to be rumblings in the UFO community. Paul Kimball, who included the missile shutdown in his film about UFO best evidence, began to voice doubts because Hastings had not responded to any of this. Hastings must have felt the heat from his associates and responded the best way he knew how.

Hastings article calls Carlson's efforts a "witch hunt" in an effort to demonize the opposing opinion. What stood out to me when I read this article was the three re-

Exchanging broadsides! The Malmstrom missile shutdown saga heats up



Painting of USS Constitution vs HMS Guerriere is by Michel Felice Corne from Wikimedia commons.

cordings/transcripts he presented were not recent (the most recent being 2008). Where were the recordings of the 2010 phone calls to Figel that he claimed he would present? Hastings appears to have pulled a bait and switch. He had promised his most recent interviews of Figel and instead gave his readers the same information he had in his book. He simply repackaged the old stuff to those desperate to hear anything that would put the UFO back into the Echo flight shutdown.

Carlson, upset at this "switcharoo" (he had addressed these claims in his online book but Hastings ignored them), chose to contact Figel again. Figel, who had found himself caught between these broadsides back in March, had chosen not to respond any more. However, Carlson and Ryan Dube mentioned Hastings recent accusations, which Figel responded to in a somewhat agitated tone. The specific comments he made seemed to punch some very big holes in Hastings' arguments.

In an e-mail that was published in the Reality Uncovered blog, Figel restated essentially the same thing he stated in an e-mail I had published in SUNlite 2-3 (my emphasis is in bold).

James,

First – your dad has not lied about anything nor do believe that he is even capable of lying about anything at all. He was,

is, and always will be an honorable man. You should remember that always – I will.

Second – Bob Salas was never associated with any shutdown of any missiles at any time in any flight and you can take that to the bank. Just think about this for a split second. He is a person wrapped up in UFOs to the Nth degree. Yet he could not remember he was not at Echo. Then he thought he was at November – wrong again. Then he thought he was at Oscar – wrong again.

Third – There is no record about anything happening at November or Oscar except in people's minds that are flawed beyond imagination. Salas has created events out of the thin air and can't get the facts straight even then. My best friend to this day was the flight commander of the 10th SMS at the time. He and I have discussed this silly assertion in the past couple of years – he thinks it is all madeup nonsense for sure. I put both Salas and Hastings in touch with him and he has told them both that an incident at November or Oscar never happened. In addition he was subsequently stationed at Norton AFB where the engineers tested the possible problems. No little green men were responsible.

Fourth – I have always maintained that I do not nor have I ever believed that UFOs exist in any form at any place at any time. I have never seen one or reported that I have seen one. I have always maintained that they had nothing to do with the shutdown of Echo flight in Montana.

Fifth – The event at Malmstrom has a hand written log from me that was turned in just like all the other logs that I wrote over several years. I would think that if I wrote something like that in the log, there would be copies, it would have been classified at the beginning and then released along with the classified SAC messages and base reports. Nothing in that urgent SAC message even hints of UFOs at all and I think that it would if the official logs or telephone calls had referenced that fact.

Sixth – When it happened, neither your dad nor I were "visibly shaken" by the events. It was just another day with a unexpected event in our lives. It was rath-

er underwhelming at the time. No one rushed out to see us, no one made us sign any papers, no one interrogated us for hours on end.

There is no Air Force “cover-up” it just did not happen the way Salas and has portrayed the course of events. I am sorry that you are all caught up in a pissing contest with these people, I really am. They are just not going to let go no matter what you say or do. He has made a 15 year career pandering about the country talking about things he has no knowledge about. I am not at all interested in taking them on – it’s not worth my effort – I have more important things to do with my life. I much rather just stay out of it.

Hopefully, we can move on. **I did read about a briefing on the 27th here in DC. I am here in VA about 10 miles away.** Interesting. Hopefully this helps you and confirms to you at least that your dad is a straight shooter and does not lie to anyone.

Sincerely,

Walt Figel²

Some specific things that caught my eye in this e-mail was:

- I find it odd that after making Figel into a saint and stating he verified that UFOs shutdown the missiles, Hastings did not invite him to Washington DC even though Figel was only a short distance away in Virginia at the time!
- Figel stated he had directed Salas and Hastings towards the flight commander of the 10th SMS (James Carlson says this man’s name is Dick Evans). He had been saying the missile shutdown at Oscar/November flight never happened. Why wasn’t he invited to the press conference and why wasn’t his interview mentioned? Is it possible that a great number of Hastings interviews state that no shutdown occurred at Oscar/November flights? The world wonders.

Hastings would reply to Reality Uncovered’s blog posting with the promise, once again, to reveal the taped conversa-

tion from this year with Figel. Either Figel is stating two different things to two different groups of people or Hastings is bluffing. In my opinion, Hastings will never reveal anything Figel states that suggests Salas is lying or that UFOs had nothing to do with the Echo flight missile shutdown. Robert Hastings will probably play back only the sections of any phone call that support his statements. He seems to lack the personal integrity to ask Figel about the statements he made in these recent e-mails and publish them.

Dolan’s Flip-Flop

Richard Dolan entered the fray by writing a blog entry on the 1st of October. He read Carlson’s on-line book and was critical of its content. However, he would eventually write the following about Echo Flight (my emphasis in bold):

*Hastings and Salas have argued that this was a UFO-related event. All I can say about that is, maybe it was. **The evidence on the table currently is reasonable enough to say that there was not a UFO event there,** despite one declassified document confirming that the missiles there did go off line.³*

Within a week, Dolan decided he needed to edit his article. He explains why (my emphasis in bold):

*As some readers commented, I tried very hard to be even-handed in my treatment of the facts. Therefore, I was initially strongly disinclined to make any changes. **Still, I have decided that my initial defense of the reality of the case itself was in fact too tepid.** The case, in my own opinion, is a very strong one.⁴*

The comment about Echo flight not being a UFO event was removed and he changed it to (my emphasis in bold):

*Hastings and Salas have argued that this was a UFO-related event. **All I can say about that is, I believe this is probably the case.**⁵*

Dolan’s flip-flop seems to have been a reversal of opinion because Salas’ Oscar flight story is based on Echo flight being a UFO incident. If the Echo flight shutdown was just an electrical fault as suggested by the documented history, then

Salas’ story lacks the foundation it was built upon. I would not be shocked that Hastings or some other UFOlogists sent some strongly worded e-mails to Dolan that pointed out this issue and forced him to alter his concluding statement.



Bounty hunting?

James Carlson and Reality Uncovered’s blog postings seemed to have caused some problems for Salas and Hastings. Despite having people like Richard Dolan attempting to restore his credibility, Robert Hastings felt there was a need to take more drastic action.

Hastings created an open request in various forums and blogs for people to help him with, what he called, “The Carlson Problem”. His request was for everyone to send him links where Carlson had called him a liar, a fraud, or a hoaxer. His promise/“payment” in return for their assistance (i.e. “the bounty”) was to establish the truth about the Malmstrom incidents “once and for all” by eliminating “The Carlson problem”. Does Hastings and his followers really believe that James Carlson is preventing the evidence from being revealed or is standing in the way of the “truth”?

James Carlson responded in the Reality Uncovered forum’s Malmstrom missile shutdown thread by openly stating that Salas and Hastings were indeed liars, hoaxers, and frauds. Considering the “bait and switch” that Hastings pulled before his press conference, one has to wonder what Hastings really is hiding regarding his recent contacts with Walt Figel. He claimed that Figel told him a different story than what he told Carlson but is this true? The e-mail from Figel that was published in SUNlite 2-3, was addressed to both Carlson and Hastings. However, Hastings has acted as if this communication never existed. Isn’t hiding evidence

you do not want revealed the same thing as a lie through omission?

Robert Hastings continues to attempt to intimidate Carlson with accusations of “mental instability” and threats of legal action. If one has to resort to these kind of bully tactics to defend one’s research, is the research really that good? Is Hastings hiding something he does not want his followers to know about? Do his followers really care about the truth or is this like Roswell, where individuals can lie for years with their supporters blindly accepting what they say because it reinforces what they want to believe?

James Carlson intends to present an open letter on the Reality Uncovered Blog in the very near future. It will be interesting to see how Hastings responds.

More cookies please!!

The culmination of all of this was Hastings press conference about “UFOs and Nukes” at the National Press Club in Washington D.C.. During the press conference I was shocked to hear Robert Salas make the comment that he had recordings of Figel and letters from Eric Carlson supporting his claims! It takes quite bit of daring to say something like this when you know that these gentlemen have repeatedly stated that UFOs had nothing to do with the shutdown of Echo flight and have both stated they have no knowledge regarding an Oscar flight shutdown!

Meanwhile, the media’s response to Hastings story was limited to say the least. Washington Post writer, John Kelly stated that the following individuals were there to report on the event.

*One person from UFO Magazine. Two people from the Epoch Times. Someone from the Kyodo News of Japan. Representatives from Stars and Stripes, WTTG (Channel 5), the Daily Telegraph of London and The Washington Post (me). And a “John Bailey” from the House Armed Services Committee.*⁵

I am sure there were probably a few others present but it certainly appears the big city news papers took a pass on the conference. Kelly added that after the press conference, he did enjoy the cook-

ies. The Washington Redskins weekly press conference probably drew more attention.

Kelly was pilloried by UFO proponents for joking about such a serious subject. Hastings wrote a scathing article about the Washington Post article. Considering the types of “serious” questions asked by some of those present, do you blame him?

During the press conference, we received the following:

- A verbose narrative given by somebody from the “Daily Trojan”, which included recommending some UFO “expert” (who seems to have “web expertise”) to help Hastings and his group.
- Another speech from somebody in St. Louis radio, who claimed he was a contactee.
- Somebody from “Tiger News Service”, who said there was archeological evidence of nuclear weapons being used in ancient times as well as having knowledge that the NSA was founded, in part, to monitor UFOs.
- Some gentleman, who claimed to have written for quite a few periodicals including AF Magazine. He then told some story about an AF colonel telling him that government was dealing with the aliens.
- Somebody, who was from Lancaster county, describing the mixing of human and non-human DNA.

There were some legitimate questions asked by a few news reporters but how can you take a subject seriously when these other individuals were allowed to present these “opinions” of a dubious nature?

Hastings did get his television coverage, which was what he desired most from this event. Other than a minor news blip, it disappeared from the media within a week. By mid-October, Hastings felt there was a need to “prime the pump” again and issued another press release to the media. Apparently, this means it is more about Hastings achieving personal

gain/publicity than a serious discussion of the evidence. He has to keep putting his name out there to get the recognition he feels he deserves.

I wonder how hard it would be to rent one of those rooms at the press club and fill it with people who state nothing happened at Malmstrom, Rendlesham, and other locations? Hmmmm....the skeptics would have to remember to bring the cookies but leave the nuts at home.

End game?

Will we ever know the “truth” about the Malmstrom case? The documentation from 1967 does not support the claim that UFOs were involved in the shutdown of Echo flight and there isn’t anything in these documents that supports the Oscar flight shutdown claim by Salas (with or without a UFO). It is all based on the will to believe, which will never establish anything factual. Establishing actual facts is the only thing that will prove what really transpired at Malmstrom. It is a fact that Salas and others have made claims about UFOs shutting down Echo/Oscar flight. It is not a fact that what they have stated is accurate or even true.

Notes and references

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ANOTHER MISSILE SHUTDOWN?

On October 23rd, a missile shutdown occurred at F.E. Warren Air Force Base (AFB) in Wyoming. A squadron of missiles went into "LF down" mode that prevented the Launch control centers (LCCs) from communicating with the missiles. This was traced to an electronic signal being sent out of sequence by a computer at the LCC, which caused many missiles producing error codes. In a nutshell, the missiles were shutdown by electronic noise.



It was revealed that something similar happened twelve years ago at Minot and Malmstrom AFBs. It has also been suspected that back in 1967 an electronic noise pulse shutdown the Echo flight (which UFOlogists claim was shutdown by UFOs). This news supports the theory that electronic noise can produce missile shutdowns and it does not require some alien spaceship interested in sending a message to our government.

Meanwhile, Robert Hastings has promised to "investigate" this event. My guess is that Hastings will try and find somebody who claims they saw a UFO nearby and then try to link the two events. He may even find somebody who claims they were on base and saw a UFO. It only takes an anonymous phone call to get that ball rolling.

When I first read this article, I knew that somebody like Hastings might try and link UFOs to this event. So, I quickly checked the MUFON UFO database for potential UFO reports on that day. On October 27th (when I first checked the database), there were 14 reports (2 GA, 3 NJ, 2 MI, 2 AZ, 1 LA, 1 MD, 1 HI, 1 PA, 1 TX) filed for the 23rd of October but no reports from Wyoming, Colorado, or Nebraska, which surround the AFB. The NUFORC database has not been updated in some time but it will be important to note how many UFO reports appear after October 26th (when the story first appeared). I am sure UFOlogists will try and find a way to turn this into a UFO event. However, the facts right now indicate UFOs were not involved at all.

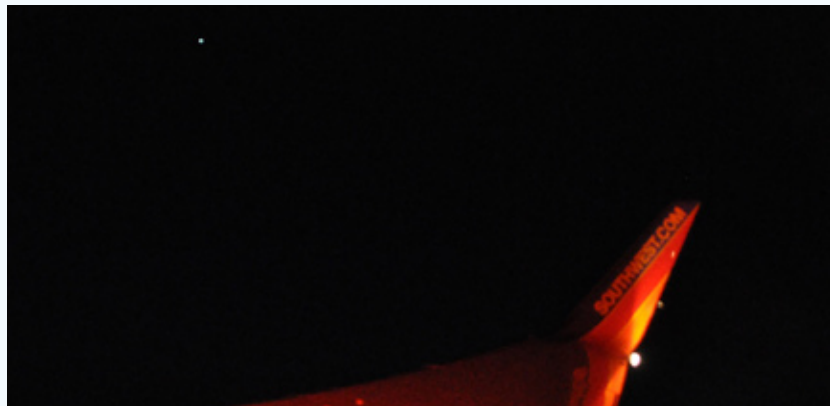
Jupiter sparks UFO reports

Jupiter reached opposition in September and was a very bright beacon in the east shortly after sunset and in the west before sunrise. In early October, a community in Washington called the Sheriff's office to report a UFO in the morning sky. The source of the reports turned out to be Jupiter. MUFON also had a few UFO reports in September that were probably Jupiter.

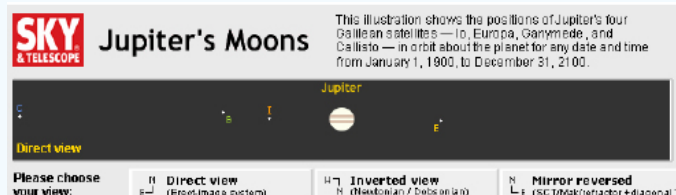
I had some experiences with Jupiter over the last two months myself. Over the Labor Day Weekend, my wife and I were returning home after a long trip. Because Jupiter's location in the sky during this opposition, it rose in the east. As we drove, it looked as if we were pursuing it and it kept getting higher the farther east we drove! Of course, we had to drive about 30-50 miles to notice this effect.



The second interesting event occurred on an airplane flight I took right around sunset. I glanced out the window to see Jupiter "pacing" the plane.



One of the best Jupiter-UFO events came right after the balloon-UFO event on the 13th of October. Interested in a news story, the local Fox station sent a reporter out that night to do a story. She noticed a bright light in the sky and had the cameraman zoom in on it. To her it appeared as a star but when examined with the zoom lens, it was a UFO with some satellite objects!



Sky and Telescope's Jupiter and its moons applet shows the moon configuration that night (The time was for 8:00PM on the 13th of October).

Compare those moon positions with the frame from the FOX reporters video clip. The bright spot to the lower right of Jupiter in the video is probably an internal reflection in the lens from the planet. The moon Callisto is barely recorded at the far lower left.

UFOs on the tube

UFOs over the earth: The Bucks county flap

The first thing I noticed in this show was that some of the MUFON investigators from Pennsylvania were rather biased in their approach to UFOs. Elisa Simon professed that she was "excited" because "THEY" were appearing in her "backyard". Who is this "they"? Does she have evidence who "they" are? The other player on the show, who demonstrated intense bias was Pennsylvania's MUFON state director John Ventre. He professed that the government knew all about UFOs and that there was a conspiracy of some kind. Ventre believes in a 2012 doomsday event and his daughter reported "entities" in his home last April. Can this really be the head of an organization attempting "scientific" research?

The show documented a "wave" of UFO sightings that occurred in eastern Pennsylvania during the summer. They concentrated most of the show on Denise Murter, who claimed she saw UFOs on several nights. On one occasion, a UFO supposedly sprinkled some sort of illuminated "dust" on to a tree.

John Ventre used a "geiger counter" with some indication of activity. What the "geiger counter" monitored and what were the actual radiation levels was never described. Was it measuring Beta, Gamma, or Alpha radiation? What levels of radiation were measured? Waving a handheld geiger counter around is not really scientific is it?

Samples of the trees leaves were obtained and sent to Dr. W. C. Levengood, who has made a name for himself researching crop circles. His examination of the leaves from the tree was presented and he concluded they were affected by some form of microwave radiation. In order to verify this, James Carrion had Dr. Frank Salisbury examine his results. Dr. Salisbury stated the analysis was full of Levengood "jumping to conclusions". In other words, the data did not support the conclusions drawn.

Another "research scientist", Nick Reiter, studied more leaves and found the affected tree had a higher content of Boron and some sort of white flakes in the

leaves. The show failed to do any follow-up and simply left this hanging, which was disappointing. As a side note, I was curious what kind of scientist Mr. Reiter was. I discovered (according to the BLT web site) that he only has an associates degree in applied sciences. Since he really is not a true scientist and his work is associated with a group focusing on crop circle research, one really has to question his results.

Denise Murter, who saw the UFO "glitter" sprinkled on the tree, had also obtained photographs of some of her UFOs. To his credit, photo analyst Marc D'Antonio determined that one of her photographs was of the moon and Jupiter. If she tried to pass off this as a photo of her UFOs, why should we consider her a credible witness about the dust on the tree?

The other prize witness was Cliff Thomas. He was interviewed early in the show about a UFO sighting he had. Was it any surprise that, after appearing on TV with one UFO sighting, he then reported having another, more spectacular event? Despite proclamations that he had no reason to make it up, there was no evidence to confirm either of his sightings. As a result, MUFON investigators did the next best thing. They created a rumor that the UFO was detected on FAA radar but presented no radar data or tapes. The person who stated this to a MUFON investigator did not come forward.

One would think that an organization like MUFON would immediately request the radar data from the FAA for the time in question. One would also think that this organization would take a proactive approach at researching UFOs during the middle of a UFO flap. Had they done that, they might have been able to confirm the Thomas sighting. Then again, they might have shown that there was no UFO and MUFON never would want that to happen.

The show could have been a good exercise on how to conduct UFO investigations. Instead, the standard UFOlogical/MUFON thought process and acceptance of substandard evidence got in the way. Watch it but be prepared to shake your head in disgust frequently.

Book Reviews

Buy it! (No UFO library should do without it)

Roswell: Inconvenient facts and the will to believe -Karl Pflock

This is probably the best Roswell book ever written. It is an expansion on his original "Roswell In Perspective" (which is also an excellent book). Obviously, Karl's skeptical approach towards Roswell makes it worth buying for me. Beyond that, his assembly of various documents and the affidavits of all the pertinent witnesses makes it an excellent resource for those interested in reading details that can be verified. Even his footnotes are worth reading! This is Karl's legacy and is well worth adding to any library, skeptic or proponent.

Borrow it. (Worth checking out of library or borrowing from a friend)

The Real Roswell crashed-saucer coverup - Philip Klass

This book is a good addition to Roswell collections but not that important for a UFO library. This is essentially an expansion on his writings in the Skeptic UFO Newsletter (SUN). Phil, in his usual way, takes jabs at all the proponents of a crashed saucer. He focuses his concern on some of the Roswell witnesses who fabricated tales and also on those writers who were gullible enough to believe them.

Bin it! (Not worth the paper it is written upon - send to recycle bin)

The Roswell files - Tim Shawcross

I bought this book in 1998, read it once, and it now collects dust on my shelf. It just does not provide much in the way of new information. I am not even sure if it is in print any more. If you see it for sale, don't waste the money.

Correction: Last issue I put up a link to a video I recorded and some frame grabs of what I determined to be a point meteor. After discussion with Ian Ridpath, I recognize that this was more than likely a glint off of a satellite. There was no iridium flare scheduled for that night but an iridium satellite was in that area of the sky around the time of the event. Even if it was a satellite glint, it still was a pretty cool video clip and demonstrated the usefulness of my meteor camera for recording UFOs.