

SUNlite

Shedding some light on UFOlogy and UFOs

Let me repeat the lesson learned from the Sturrock scientific review panel: Pack up your old data and forget it. Ufology needs new data, new cases, new rigorous and scientific methodologies if it hopes ever to get out of its pit.

Ed Stewart on UFO Updates October 26, 1998

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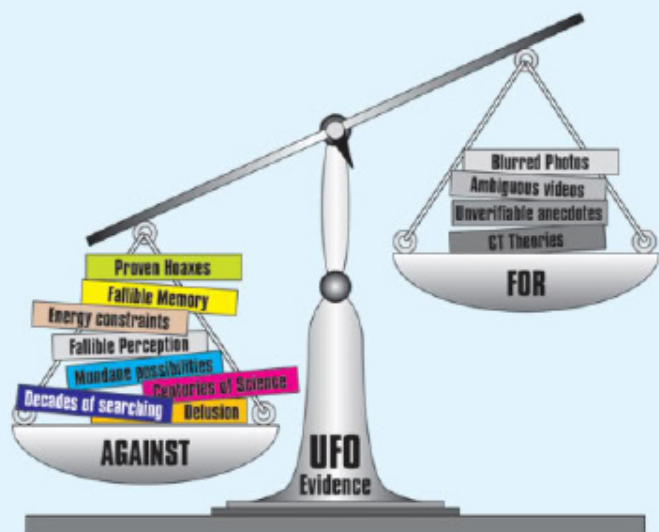
September-October 2011

EXTRAORDINARY EVIDENCE EXPLAINED FOR THE HARD OF THINKING

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Stray Cat

Presently, the weight of evidence means it is most likely that UFO's are not alien in origin.

But what would it take to tip that balance?



Regardless of what the evidence actually was, If it managed to outweigh everything against it,

It would be extraordinary!



Farewell to an era

Recently, I visited the National Air and Space Museum near Dulles airport west of Washington D.C. There, they had the original shuttle Enterprise, which was used for aerial testing before the first shuttle launch in 1981. It was well worth the visit and I highly recommend it to anyone visiting the area. I am sure the shuttle created its share of UFO reports over the years. Goodness knows how much mileage, UFO proponents got from the various videos taken from the shuttle. I just hope NASA comes up with a suitable replacement in the future.

While my comment about an end of an era applies to the Space Shuttle, it can also apply to the unfortunate passing of several persons associated with UFOlogy. Hillary Evans, a prominent British UFOlogist, passed away. Magonia wrote a superb obit that should be read. Stuart Millar, who wrote the newsletter "UFO Review" for several years died in an unfortunate traffic accident some months ago. Because Stuart had apparently retired from UFOlogy, people missed the

sad news until recently. Bob Girard of Arcturus books also passed away. Lastly, was the departure from this earth of Budd Hopkins. He was respected by many in UFOlogy and UFO updates had a long list of responses to the news. It is always disappointing to see anyone pass away no matter how much your opinion differs with theirs. Hopefully, those close to these people will have them live in their memories for many years to come.

In the image above, you can see the stellar work of "Psycho Clown" (aka "stray cat" in the JREF forum). His artwork explains well the concept of Carl Sagan's statement about "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence". His artwork made an on-going UFO evidence debate in that forum an enjoyable experience. As a result, I put together a brief synopsis of that debate along with the artwork to help illustrate some of the humor that resulted.

As always, I want to thank Marty Kottmeyer and Peter Merlin for their contri-

butions this month. They provide some interesting information for the readers of SUNlite.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-------|
| Who's blogging UFOs..... | 2-3 |
| The Roswell Corner | 4 |
| Plenty of IFOS..... | 5-6 |
| Upcoming IFO events..... | 6 |
| The best photographic evidence for UFOs: A status report..... | 7-9 |
| Akhenaten: The heretic pharaoh as history's first UFO fanatic by Martin S. Kottmeyer..... | 10-12 |
| An artistic record of the great JREF UFO evidence debate..... | 13-15 |
| There be dragons!..... | 15 |
| The Rashomon effect, UFO tales, and transmutation of memory by Peter W. Merlin..... | 16-18 |
| UFOs on the tube: UFOs on the record | 19-21 |
| Buy it, borrow it, bin it..... | 21 |

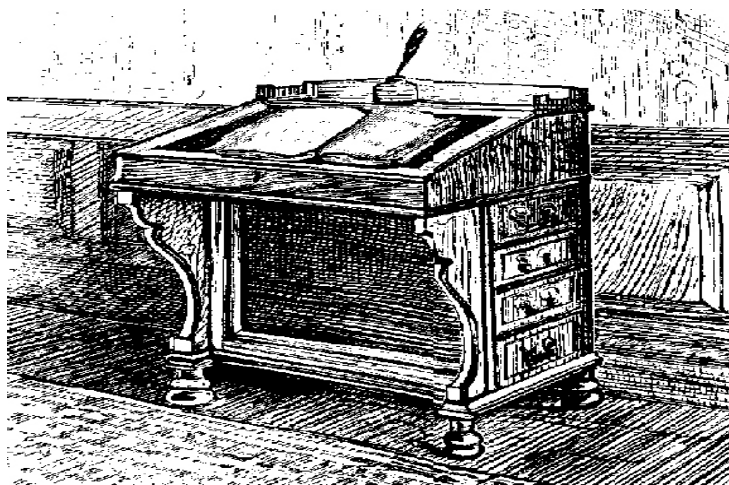
Lance Moody alerted me in early May about UFOlogist Phil Imbrogno's exaggerations of his educational resume'.

Lance had pulled the loose thread on Phil's claims and it was discovered that he was lying about his Massachusetts Institute of Technology education. Once that occurred, the thread unravelled further when other stories that Mr. Imbrogno told turned out to be highly exaggerated. When this news surfaced, Phil promptly "retired" from UFOlogy. In late April, Paul Kimball had announced that Imbrogno was going to be part of his new "Beyond the best evidence" DVD project. That entry and any reference to Imbrogno then disappeared from Kimball's blog about the same time Moody e-mailed me about the problem with Imbrogno. Moody had mentioned that he had told Kimball about the issue. On July 11th, after the news became public, Kimball posted a blog entry, where he did not name Imbrogno or Moody (sort of like Harry Potter's "he, who shall not be named...") but did comment on the news. He implied this was all a waste of time and it made no difference as far as UFOlogical research is concerned. Kimball also stated on the same date that he was putting his "Other side of the truth" blog on hiatus (possibly for a year) and wanted to get out and enjoy life. When I e-mailed Mr. Kimball about all of this, he chose not to publicly comment on the subject.

I have a different opinion than Mr. Kimball concerning how this affects UFOlogy. UFO researchers should be held to the same standards as others in academia if UFOlogy is to be considered something worthy of being called a "science". In a field where credibility is of high importance, being as truthful as possible about these things is critical. How can UFOlogy gain respect as a science if its lead researchers are lying about their credentials? This kind of thing is what causes people to dismiss UFOlogy as a fringe subject. People can claim just about anything and get away with it because there is hardly any fact checking or follow-up. Imbrogno was even able to publish articles with the International UFO reporter, which is supposed to be one of UFOlogy's leading journals where articles are peer

Who's blogging UFOs?

Hot topics and varied opinions



reviewed. If UFOlogy can't clean its own house, it will never impress scientists outside UFOlogy.

A video of a bright fireball in Brazil was characterized by some as a UFO. It looks spectacular but it behaves just like a meteor. It constantly amazes me how UFO proponents so often mistake events like this as something "exotic". The first thing a UFOlogist should do is educate themselves about things that do appear in the sky. Maybe they will then make fewer mistakes like this.

Manuel Borraz sent me a link to a piece he wrote about Project Bluebook's Special Report No. 14. I discussed this in last issue and I believe Manuel's article is something that also has to be considered when evaluating the results of the study.

Lee Speigal seems to have pulled the thread on some of Robert Hastings claims. While his article was biased towards Hastings version of events, he did contact Public Affairs officers Lt. Col. John Thomas, who explained some of Hastings exaggerated claims about the FE Warren AFB shutdown. I am still waiting for better evidence of his "blimp-like" UFO hovering over missile silos and caus-

ing the shutdown. So far, we only have unconfirmed rumors.

Contrails being illuminated by the sun are being recorded on video and described as "flaming UFOs". The plane can not be seen because of the resolution of the camera and the angle at which it is being recorded. In the Mexico video, the plane is reflecting the sun's light preventing it from being identifiable. Again, people are making something mundane into something extraordinary.

Tim Hebert describes how UFOs might possibly shut-down ten missiles at once. Hebert is a former Strategic Air Command missile crew commander and can be considered an expert on the subject. His theory is that the only way a single UFO could shut them all down would be

to located near the flight's Launch control facility/Launch control center (LCF/LCC). The Echo and the undocumented Oscar flight shutdowns supposedly involved UFO sightings near a single silo and not over the LCF/LCC.

Hebert then wrote another entry regarding the Malmstrom Echo flight incident. He concluded there was no UFO involvement and that the case is closed. I wonder if Robert Salas and Robert Hastings think that way? If Echo flight did not involve UFOs, what does it say for the never documented Oscar flight event, which supposedly happened the same month? It gives one another reason to doubt that the Oscar flight shut down even occurred or, if it occurred, it involved UFOs at all.

Last issue, I mentioned a listing of UFO blogs that contained no skeptical links. I was not quite accurate. There were several skeptical links after close inspection. I missed it and apologize to the authors for the error (especially the one who alerted me to this mistake).

Magonia noted that MUFON's journal continues to promote some outlandish stories. The source of these claims come from people like Linda Moulton Howe, who has to be one of the most credulous UFO personalities I have ever seen.

Who's blogging UFOs? (Cont'd)

She promotes just about any UFO related story no matter how unbelievable it is to outside readers. What shocked me was the claim supposedly made by Kathleen Marden, who is the niece of Betty Hill. She co-wrote the book with Stanton Friedman called "Captured". Now she has apparently moved on to abduction stories. According to Magonia's blog, Marden recounted a story told to her about an abductee that received help from her abductors to become pregnant. For some unknown reason, the aliens made it so the baby had some characteristics that were different than its parents. Things that make you go....hmmmm.....

Some of the biggest news in UFOlogy this time period was the revelation that the Petit-Rechain Belgium triangle photograph was shown to be a hoax. The photographer revealed he hoaxed the image using a Styrofoam model! Readers may recall the photo was discussed in SUNlite 3-2 by Roger Paquay. The photograph had been analyzed by many UFOlogists over the years and all determined that it was unlikely or could not be a hoax.

Because of the nature of these revelations, Auguste Meessen went over to the witness' home and began to grill him about technical aspects regarding the images. Anybody reading the story can see that he was speaking way over the witness' head. The witness could only respond that he did not know. This appeared to be a publicity effort to refute his claim.

Meanwhile, there seemed to be more damage control by COBEPS. They tried to spin it to indicate even though they had made an error in analyzing the photograph, it does not mean the other cases making up their Belgian UFO wave case book were invalid. This is true but it does bring into question the rigor to which they performed their investigations in those cases.

I suppose Frank Warren got paid to plug all those Cowboys vs. aliens trailers on his blog? Maybe he thought it was a documentary.

Robert Sheaffer has several blog entries about his recent trip to the MUFON symposium. I always wonder why MUFON

allows so many "fringe" UFOlogists to appear at their meetings. How can they expect UFOlogy to be considered scientific when you have people at their gatherings claiming to be human-alien hybrids? Robert also indicates he is releasing a book called Psychic Vibrations, which looks interesting.

CUFOS has put together a web site with all the old NICAP bulletins. I am sure there are some interesting documents in there for on-line researchers. It is interesting to look back and see that the same kinds of claims being made over fifty years ago are still being made today. The fact that none of these claims have ever been shown to be true indicates that they probably will not be shown to be true in the year 2060!

Dr. David Clark posted a story about Col. Ted Conrad discussing Rendlesham. There was nothing really new as we already knew about his testimony. However, it re-emphasizes how much this story has evolved into myth/folklore.

The latest release of MOD files occurred in August. I think the most revealing document was noted by Dr. Clarke. An MOD official candidly admitted that they did not have enough money to study UFOs and had higher priorities. There also seemed to be a lot of documentation about Nick Pope that was redacted. Mr. Pope's desire to make sure those documents are not released had been discussed in SUNlite 1-3.

An interesting entry was posted in "the glowing raccoon" blog. The author served one enlistment in the USAF as a junior enlisted man. Most of what he repeats are what we in the Navy used to call "sea stories". They were exciting little tidbits of one's career that sounded interesting but, more often than not, were slightly exaggerated in nature. He mentions a briefing to airmen by AFOSI personnel, where they described how exciting it was to investigate UFO reports. The purpose of this briefing was basically a recruitment effort for volunteers. Is it any surprise they might mention "X-files" type stories to eager young men so they might join? Once the blog started to support Bob Lazaar, I figured the source was not very credible.

It is hard to believe that the UFO examiner's blog could come up with a more outrageous UFO report than the one that claimed a five-mile wide UFO was over Kansas City, Missouri. The source of this UFO report is a MUFON investigator, who apparently saw this UFO for several seconds and then it simply disappeared into thin air! The investigator then saw a commercial airplane acting, in their opinion, like a fighter plane as it banked in the sky. After it left, a UFO appeared. All of this and some other events were put together in some sort of bizarre chronology that the "investigator" created to support their wild tale. This is the most worthless UFO report I have ever seen. It is more imagination than informative. Not a single angular size is in the report and I seriously doubt a five-mile wide UFO could appear over a major city and only a few people would notice. File this one in the completely unbelievable and totally unreliable category. Mr. Clift, you need to fix your investigator training program.

John Harney's Magonia Extra blog has been briefly discussing some classic UFO cases. People should take the time to follow the links in his postings especially in the JAL 1628 case.

Stanton Friedman got himself into a rather sticky situation recently. Greg Newkirk of the "Who Forted?" blog reports that Friedman had posted on reddit.com an "ask me anything" question relating to UFOs and, strangely, Apollo 18. When people asked him to answer questions about UFOs, his response was basically, buy and read my books, which angered some. Eventually, it was determined that this was all part of a marketing campaign for the Apollo 18 movie and those asking questions got angry at Stanton Friedman's inability to answer their questions. He received insults and one person wrote, "This guy came totally unprepared for the internet." Stanton Friedman should stick to plugging his books on TV and speaking to those who want to hear his UFO stories. It seems that those on reddit.com are not so willing to drink the kool-aid he is serving.

The Roswell Corner

Another part of the saucer

Frank Kimbler has stepped forward and states that he has found a piece of debris that could have come from the Roswell crashed spaceship. In a rather interesting posting on Openminds, Alejandro Rojas outlines Mr. Kimbler's findings. Among the items described were silver buttons that are tentatively identified as military buttons, a Landsat multi-spectral image that supposedly shows burned/disturbed ground, and a sample of debris he located that gave isotopic ratios that indicated it could not be from this earth.

As always, I am skeptical of the claim and tried to figure out if what he stated was true. The silver buttons have no military markings on them that I saw and could have come from any clothing. Calling them military without evidence is jumping the gun.

The Landsat image is hard to figure. There is no exif data or information of where the photograph was obtained. We don't know the location and one has to wonder why a photograph that was taken by a satellite launched in the 1970s would show something when aerial photographs taken only a few years after the incident showed nothing. Is this a new crashed spaceship location or is it the Brazil debris field? It is hard to draw conclusions without more information and it seems that Kimbler is holding back.

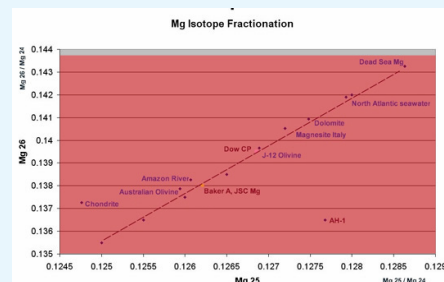
Finally, we have the isotopic ratios. A scan of the report is posted with the table showing the magnesium isotopic ratios. They read:

| Isotope | Abundance observed (%) | Abundance Natural (%) |
|---------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Mg-24 | 79.1 | 78.6 |
| Mg-25 | 10.1 | 10.1 |
| Mg-26 | 10.8 | 11.3 |

Kimbler used these values to calculate a ratio of Mg-26/Mg-24 of .1365, which is less than the natural ratio of .1438. However, is this really accurate? What Kimbler apparently completely ignored in the printout is that there is a margin for error on the observed value of $\pm 0.5\%$. That means the table really should read something like this:

| Isotope | Abundance observed (%) | Abundance Natural (%) |
|---------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Mg-24 | 78.6-79.6 | 78.6 |
| Mg-25 | 9.6-10.6 | 10.1 |
| Mg-26 | 10.3-11.3 | 11.3 |

Suddenly these ranges don't look so unnatural. This also means the isotopic ratio of Mg-26 to Mg-24 would be between .1294 and .1438 (and the ratio of Mg-25 to Mg-24 would be between .1206 to .1349). This range covers the normal ratios for earth as demonstrated in Kimbler's graph. However, he just plots the one point on the graph. Instead, he should have included the margin for error. That means his graph should look something like this (where the red encompasses the margins for error in the data):



The only person that I saw who publicly commented on this misrepresentation of the data was the blog UFO trail. The author of that blog, Jack Brewer, had a friend of his, Frank Purcell, look at the data. Purcell is a retired chemical engineer and he identified the problem I mentioned above. For some reason, he states the wrong value for Mg-26 (it is listed as 10.5 but the image on openminds clearly shows 10.8). Despite this, his conclusion about the graph was, *It is clear that this range does in fact intersect the line and is suggestive that the AH-1 sample is not extraterrestrial.*

This appears to be a case of somebody misreading or misrepresenting the results of the analysis and there is no evidence for this being from outer space.

Former AF officer says Ramey lied BUT.....

Lee Spiegel gave the headline as if some aging veteran of the 8th AF made the claim. However, it was none other than George Filer, quoting Ramey's wife, who stated that Ramey told her that he "lied" about the weather balloon. One can easily conclude that Ramey "lied" to cover up the source of the weather balloon materials. Important to note is that Ramey's wife is over the age of 90 (she was born in 1920). To make things more interesting, she did not marry Ramey until 1950 and Ramey died in 1963. This means that his wife married him over two years after Roswell and he died before it became a major UFO story. There was no reason for him to even tell her about the event. Exactly what part of her story can be considered accurate?

This brings us to the source of this information. George Filer, is not what I would consider the most reliable of people. Remember when Roger Pinson of the National Institute for Discovery Science (NIDS) wrote about their investigation of Fort Dix/McGuire AFB alien shooting? Filer had inserted himself into that story but Pinson found no evidence that the incident had occurred as described and suspected a hoax. The file is no longer available on the internet but you can access it at http://web.archive.org/web/20071023054521/http://www.nidsci.org/news/mcguire_contents.php

The bottom line here is that this claim of Filer's is questionable and appears to be a lot of smoke with no fire. Both Ramey's widow, due to her age, and Filer, due to his past record, are not what I would consider the most reliable of sources. More evidence is needed than this.

Yawn.....Nitinol.....

Anthony Bragalia revealed his latest Nitinol story. About the only thing important was that he talked to retired USAF officer Richard Weaver, who was involved in writing the 1994 USAF Roswell Report. He found Bragalia's research interesting but it did not sway his opinion about Roswell. If Weaver had read SUNlite 1-2, 1-3, and 2-5, he would have known that Nitinol had nothing to do with Roswell. I am sure Mr. Bragalia will be entertaining us with more of his Nitinol "revelations" in the future but he has to do better than this to change my opinion.

sort of tire of the various UFO reporting centers. The UFO examiner's blog run by Roger Marsh and The National UFO Reporting Center's (NUFORC) web site seem to try to make simple IFOs into extraordinary events. Any one familiar with the various types of IFOs, should be able to declare these as not being "unidentified" in short order. Both proclaim they are raw reports and probably are identifiable but they rarely, if ever, post stories where these UFOs are identified.

UFO Wave in Pennsylvania

Roger Marsh seemed to think the number of UFO reports spiking in Pennsylvania in late June/early July was significant. Was this important or just a coincidence? The weather was clear during this time period and people were getting out more now that weather was nice. Evening sky watchers were also going to get a show that they may not have known was going to happen.

Summer in northern latitudes brings about some interesting situations for satellite observers. Because of the sun's position in the sky, satellites are visible all night. Add to this, the appearance of the International Space Station (ISS) and you can get quite a sky show. So, let's take a look at the reports that Mr. Marsh finds significant.

Case 23898 involved a man and his son in Pennsylvania at an undisclosed location playing with a telescope on July 1st. He

Plenty of IFOs



This April 28, 2010 image of the ISS was 30 seconds long. One can see how bright the ISS can be.

reported seeing a bright star that moved at the speed of an airplane across the sky and then it disappeared. No time is given but the person stated he saw that others in Pennsylvania saw the same thing in MUFON's database. On July 1st, the International Space Station (ISS) made a pass that was visible over the entire state. It moved from NW to SE around 9:50 PM and entered the earth's shadow as it moved towards the SE horizon. The ISS behaves a lot like what this witness de-

scribed and probably was the source of this UFO report.

Case 29840 involved an individual who saw his UFOs on two separate nights. He saw it around 10:30 PM on June 29th and July 1st from Philadelphia. Both UFOs went towards "Jersey" (i.e. in an eastward direction) and then vanished. They both were about the same brightness. The ISS made passes at 10:10 and 9:50 PM on those nights (both moving NW to SE). While they are not exactly the same time as reported by the witness, he only states it was "around" 10:30 PM. It seems likely he saw the ISS in both instances if his estimates of the time were off.

One can also match the ISS to the UFO sighting in case 29841. The witness made his observations "around 10PM" and his UFO was moving from north to south (even though he mentions it was headed towards New Jersey). As stated previously, the ISS was making a pass around 10:10 PM from NW to SE making this the probable source of this sighting.

Then there was the fisherman who liked to flash his light at passing UFOs on the night of June 30th in Warren, PA. He reported seeing about a dozen UFOs between 9:15 and 11:15 PM. The first sighting occurred at 9:17PM. Not surprisingly, the ISS made a pass from NW to ESE about the same time! He then saw a brief UFO that lasted ten seconds heading north. More than likely, this was a meteor. His next sighting involved two stars that moved in the sky. One could have been a satellite. The other description was how a UFO brightened very rapidly as if it were coming towards him. About 9:45PM, Warren observers saw an Iridium flare that was as bright as -4 (Venus brilliance), which matches his description. He then saw 3-4 UFOs moving north to south and south to north for about 10 minutes. According to Heaven's above:

| Satellite/ magnitude | time | Start direc- tion | End direc- tion |
|---------------------------|------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Atlas rocket body/+2.4 | 9:47 | NW | SE |
| CZ-4C rocket body/+3.6 | 9:49 | SE | NNW |
| ADEOS II/+2.8 | 9:49 | S | NW |
| IGS 1B/+2.6 | 9:51 | SE | N |
| USA 129/+3.7 | 9:53 | SE | NNW |

They are brighter than magnitude 4 and



Two satellites (SPOT 5 and ALOS) move through the Constellation of Cygnus "in formation" on August 5, 2011. 15 seconds exposure time. Just because they were moving in the same direction together does not mean they really flying together. It is just chance they were in the same area of the sky.

should have been easily visible in a suburban/rural location like Warren, Pennsylvania. If the UFO seen prior to this was the Iridium flare, these satellite passes seem to match the UFOs he described in his report.

The only sighting in this list (case 29827) described an observation of a bright stationary light. We had no location given and the object disappeared after a few minutes. It could easily have been an airplane flying towards the observer with landing lights on or it could have been an alien space cruiser. I prefer to think it was probably the airplane.

Marsh did not stop with the Pennsylvania sightings as he promoted a Maine family's observations of dozens of UFOs each night. No details were given but their observations of lights appearing and disappearing sound a lot like satellites.

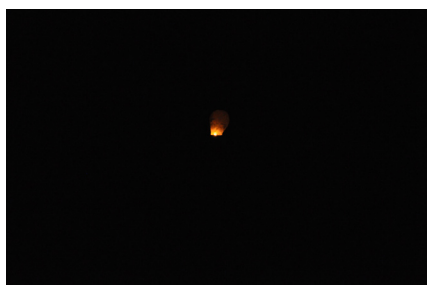
What this demonstrates is that these cases all appear to have reasonable explanations and there was no need to make a production about it the way Roger Marsh did. A cursory check of Heaven's above, could have presented most of these possibilities to him.



Fourth of July IFOs

Peter Davenport seems puzzled that he received a great number of "fireball" UFO reports on July 3rd and 4th in

the United States. Considering the 4th of July is a big celebration in the United States full of fireworks at just about every block party, I am puzzled by his confusion. He suggests that some might be "Chinese Lanterns" or other types of fireworks but feels not all could be of terrestrial origin. Many of the reports sound a lot like "Chinese Lanterns". The photograph shown for Moses Lake, Washington looks like the photographs I have taken of my "Chinese Lantern" test (see below). The Barrington



Illinois photograph could easily have been a formation of these lanterns.

I am simply amazed that Davenport finds these reports the least bit compelling. He is also under the false impression that flying these lanterns are illegal/dangerous. I am unaware of any laws that state the sale and use of these Chinese lanterns is illegal. I would compare these to the same danger one gets from the normal fireworks lit by US citizens.

Is it really about UFOs?

I am always fascinated how UFOlogists, who should be familiar with these IFOs, fail to recognize them. This brings up the question, is it really about UFOs or is it something else? I guess when you are in the business of promoting UFOs and your UFO organization, any nocturnal light will do in order to make a headline.

UPCOMING IFO EVENTS

The next few months have several astronomical events that can produce UFO reports. I feel it is important to remind readers of SUNlite to be on the lookout for reports that might be related to these events.



October usually only has one major meteor shower but this year there may be two. The Orionid meteor shower peaks on October 21-22 but one can see meteors from this shower a few days before and after. It can produce bright fireballs. I have seen several before that were as bright as the first quarter moon and can cast shadows. They are mostly visible in the morning but they can be seen before midnight coming out of the eastern sky. The second meteor shower is the Draconids. They normally are inactive but predictions indicate there may be a major outburst on the night of October 8-9. Europe is favored but North America may see some activity after sunset.

The planet Jupiter reaches opposition on October 29. It will be a bright yellow beacon in the east around sunset. I am sure there will be a few UFO reports involving this planet.



Jupiter playing peek-a-boo with the trees in late August.

Finally, our old friend Venus has just past conjunction with the sun and is now an evening sky object. It probably will not become visible until mid to late October low in the southwest. I always look at it as a challenge to see Venus as soon as possible after superior conjunction. When can you first see it?

Recent revelations about the Petit-Rechain photographs got me thinking again about UFO photographs. In SUN-lite 3-3, I ran an article about how UFOs (as craft) rarely, if ever, are photographed convincingly these days. Almost all of the recent imagery surrounding UFOs has been shown to be hoaxed or are indistinct blobs/lights. So, I thought I might take a look back to all those UFO photographs (I will not mention films or videos in this article) that have been prominently displayed over the years.

Photographic hoaxes

Ian Hendry notes in his book, *The UFO Handbook*, that when it comes to UFO photographs, there are a significant amount of hoax pictures:

*I noted earlier in examining the conclusions of the 1,307 UFO reports that hoaxes did not figure at all into the scheme of things--rather misperceptions of some existing stimulus were responsible. This situation is not the case, however, when it comes to cases involving photographs, where a significant population of deliberate fraud exists. The failure of photographs to serve as impersonal proof of the existence of UFOs up to now lay largely in the ease of fabricating fake photos of small models that couldn't be distinguished from the real thing.*¹

Detecting hoaxes depends on the expertise of the hoaxer and the experience of the investigator. Photographic analyst William G. Hyzer once wrote:

*In my opinion, fakery is virtually impossible to prove in a well-contrived image. If certain anomalies are detected, the best that any photographic analyst can do is to point them out as possible or probable artifacts of photographic fakery.*²

So why do people want to create a photographic UFO hoax? Many people suggest it is for money or fame. However, I think it is something more simple. While some are interested in money/fame, others just do it to see if they can get away with it. It is a challenge to them. Dr. Frank Drake described it as:

*... a desire to pull the wool over other people's eyes and to do it very cleverly for surprising reasons.*³

The best photographic evidence for UFOs: A status report

Simply stating the witness showed no desire to gain from hoaxing the images is just not good enough. Why people would choose to deceive others could be as simple as a personal profit or as complex as trying to validate their own personal UFO experience or belief.

A flying wedge?

There aren't many photographs from the 1940s that have been promoted over the years. The only one that stands out to me is the July 7, 1947 images by William Rhodes. It really was not considered much of a photograph until Roswell became a household word. Suddenly, people tried to relate the Rhodes photographs to Roswell. The photographs themselves show very little more than a dark wedge or V-shaped object that could be just about anything. It could be a huge craft or it could be a piece of scrap thrown into the air.

The best UFO photograph ever?

The 1950s brought with them, the most prominent UFO photographs ever published. They consisted of two

photographs taken on May 11, 1950 by Mr. and Mrs. Paul Trent. According to most UFOlogists, these photographs have withstood scientific scrutiny and are considered as the best UFO photographs ever taken.

Even Dr. William Hartmann, of the Condon study, could not find any fault with the images when he initially examined them. However, when Robert Sheaffer wrote a paper regarding the images exposing some inconsistencies, Dr. Hartmann reversed his opinion and considered them a probable hoax.

Dr. Bruce Maccabee has been a strong supporter of these photographs and can find no fault with them. He has considered the arguments put forth by Sheaffer and declared them inconsequential to the photograph's authenticity. Other UFOlogists have basically repeated the claim that the arguments are invalid.

In the late 1990s, Joel Carpenter suggested the shape of the UFO looked like a side mirror for old trucks. He also pointed out that the photographs were taken very close to the ground. This was consistent with the idea of this being a probable hoax. By photographing low to the ground, the model would appear high in the sky. Quite a few in UFOlogy dismissed this idea but it seems rather odd that the photographer would choose to kneel down to take his photographs of an object that was moving across the sky.



The simplest method of UFO hoax photography - suspending a model (in this case an aluminum pie pan with a screw through it) from a thin thread or a piece of fishing line. The image was taken using a 6 megapixel Pentax digital SLR camera and the fishing line is invisible in most of the images.

This photograph from Life's photographic archive showing one of the Trent children on a ladder, is somewhat suggestive as to how high the model could have been.

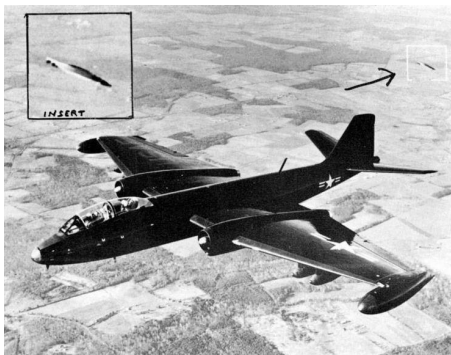


Despite the claim that this is the best evidence ever, there are circumstances about the photographs that suggest the possibility of a hoax. One can never say for sure but if this is the best case, it really is not that compelling.

The first flying formation?

On August 31, 1951, Carl Hart, took the famous Lubbock Lights photographs. While most of the observations of the lights indicated faint objects, Hart's photographs were very brightly lit. Using ISO (then ASA) 80 film and a 1/10th of a second exposure, it would be hard to record anything that was fainter than a bright airplane light. So what did he photograph? The photographs never have been proven to be a hoax but it is peculiar that nobody else saw the same brightly lit UFOs he photographed. One can't prove these were hoaxed but the fact remains that there are inconsistencies that brings into question their authenticity.

UFO or scratch?



A common photograph published in UFO books is the famous B-57 pho-

tograph taken in September of 1957. The common belief is this was a defect on the film and that seems to be the case as at least one image has been found where the UFO is missing.

Island hopping

On January 16, 1958, Almiro Barauna took the infamous Trindade Island photographs. Many have suspected it to be a hoax but nobody could say exactly how it was done. Barauna never publicly confessed but several people have recently stepped forward claiming he told them it was a hoax. There are also some very odd circumstances surrounding the photographs like Barauna maintaining them in his possession for several days after they were exposed. UFOlogists have always claimed that the case could not be shown to be a hoax and used that as proof the photographs were of an actual craft of some kind. However, after examining all the evidence there seems to be enough indicators to suggest a hoax. If it were ever proven to be a hoax, would UFOlogists be willing to admit it after defending it for so many decades?

Out on the highway

On August 3, 1965, Rex Heflin took several photographs of a UFO with his Polaroid camera. Heflin claimed that the photos were taken from him by the USAF or other government agents. These

photographs then magically reappeared in the 1990s. When the Condon study examined copies of the photographs, they felt some of the circumstances surrounding the photographs were suspicious. They also mentioned that it was possible to duplicate the photographs using a small model and some string. More recently, people have suggested the model used was a wheel from a electric train. While some in UFOlogy think this case is good evidence, there are indications that this was nothing more than a hoax.

Christmas tree light?

On the same date Rex, Heflin was obtaining his photographs, a young man in Tulsa, Oklahoma took an image of a rather strange looking UFO. To me, it looked something like the camera probe the martians used in "The War of Worlds" movie (1953 version). Many suggest it was just a Christmas tree light of some kind. The conclusion is that this was probably a hoax.

Mapping image

A September 1971 Costa Rican mapping photograph is often presented as one of those "UFO best evidence" images. To me the image looks like a defect of some kind but those who have examined the negatives state this is not the case. As best I can tell, nobody in the plane that took the photographs saw the



An unretouched image I took one day using a penny I tossed in front of the camera. The spots are dust specks on my camera's sensor. It certainly looks like a disk in the sky and did not require it to actually fly like a frisbee or toy airplane.

UFO and it did not appear in any of the other frames. Is it possible that it was something in the negative or previously on the film? While it is interesting, there is the possibility that it may be something other than an actual craft of some kind that was recorded on the negative. Exactly what is hard to say without more information.

The Canary islands photograph

The 1976 Canary Island photographs still seem to make the rounds as some sort of photographic evidence. However, they were long ago revealed to be photographs of test launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles from American Submarines in the Atlantic.

Something tossed in the air?

In October 1981, Hannah McRoberts took an image in Vancouver, Canada that showed a disc-like object near a hill. According to the witnesses, they never saw the UFO until the film was developed. However, the image tends to look something like a model (or frisbee) simply tossed up into the air and photographed. While it has been presented by several people as "UFO best evidence", the possibility of a hoax can not be ruled out.

A stage show image?

The 1987 Waterbury, Connecticut UFO photograph is a popular UFO photograph but there is reason to doubt its authenticity. This photograph, according to various web sites, was taken by Randy Etting. However, this is not correct as it supposedly was taken by an anonymous police officer or educated person (depending on the source) around or at the same time Mr. Etting made his sighting. The photograph apparently was given to Philip Imbrogno for publication.

Back in 2002, James Easton noted that the Waterbury photograph lighting looked amazingly like the Nashville UFO photographs without all the smoke. These were nothing more than photographs of a disco lighting ring that appeared in a German Magazine in 1980. I have seen similar lighting arrangements in music concert photographs.

Considering the source of the photo-

graph was never identified and that the point of origin can only be traced to Philip Imbrogno, who's integrity is in serious question these days, one can conclude that this may be a hoax.



A double exposure of a model (poorly constructed by me) lit from the inside and the sky at night.

Mr. Ed

The many photographs taken by Ed Walters between 1988 and 1992 have stood out as a good example of an elaborate hoax. While Dr. Bruce Maccabee and those close to Ed will strongly disagree, I have seen quite a few UFOlogists who concur with this assessment. If one can not convince UFO proponents that the photographs are authentic, how can one expect scientists to accept them? There is plenty of circumstantial evidence that suggests that these were hoaxes and no evidence to indicate they were actual photographs of alien spaceships.

Belgian Waffles

The 1990 Petit-Rechain photograph was once considered one of those "UFO best evidence" photographs. Skeptics have suggested it was a hoax since it first appeared. However, proponents managed to see an exotic craft and convinced themselves that the photographs showed unique characteristics that could not be hoaxed. This is very similar to what happened with the Warminster photographs in the 1970s.

The photographer recently confessed that he had created a hoax from a Styrofoam model and some lights. With this confession, it seems that this photograph can no longer be considered evidence

of anything other than some UFOlogists can be easily fooled by photographs.

Attack of the Drones

In 2007, the Drone photographs began to appear on the internet. No source was clearly identified but even MUFON concluded these images were crude hoaxes using photoshop or other software. This web site (www.dronehoax.com) about the Drone hoax is very informative. The drone saga is an example of how easy it is to produce a photographic hoax these days and how many people are willing to blindly accept it as "real".

What's left?

If you ask me, this leaves us with just a few images (that have the potential for being hoaxes or film flaws/artifacts) taken after sixty-plus years of UFO photography that might be considered good evidence. With the ever increasing amount of cameras present in today's society (cell phones, security cameras, weather cameras, live television coverage of outdoor events, etc.) it seems that there would be a lot more photographic evidence for these exotic craft. This would include images from different locations of the same event. However, this has yet to happen. Are these craft that elusive that only a farmer and his wife are able to obtain clear photographs of them? The lack of any clear-cut unambiguous photographs in just the past ten years says a lot about the photographic evidence. As of today, the photographic record is not very compelling.

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Akhenaten: The heretic pharaoh as history's first UFO fanatic

by

Martin S. Kottmeyer



Aten's ufo radiating on He who served it

The first two entries in Chris Aubeck & Jacques Vallee's official chronology of ancient ufos for *Wonders in the Sky* involve Egyptian civilization. According to the first entry, Thutmosis III was in a war with the Nubians around 1460 B.C. when a star fell to the south and struck the Nubians. None could stand. It positioned itself above them "as if they didn't exist and then they fell upon their own blood." The star was behind them illuminating their faces with fire; none could defend himself and none looked back. The horses fled in panic. Thutmosis III interpreted this to be a miracle designed by the god Amon to impress upon foreign lands his

power and majesty. The Amun priesthood usually was supportive of imperial conquests since the plunder and subsequent tribute of the vanquished vastly enriched Egypt's economy.

This was inscribed in the Temple of Amun erected to honor Thutmosis III's victories in Asia. The temple sits at the base of Gebel Barkal Mountain in the great Bayunda desert. There are plenty of ambiguities here for a skeptic to grouse about. How precisely does one position a star to make anybody seem as if they didn't exist? Does that mean anything? How can it illuminate the Nubians' faces

if it is behind them? Did any Nubians actually die from the star's striking to the South? Was the blood they fell in from prior combat or from injuries from the star's striking them? Could it be they just dropped down in simple panic of a sudden flash of light?

A skeptic tends to gravitate to the assumption this may be an impressive fireball, a meteor, particularly if nobody was killed and this is just a visual spectacle. Even if there was something more physical, this could be something akin to a Tunguska event, in which case it would be interesting to know if anybody has stumbled upon physical evidence for it.

Pertinent to the purposes of Aubeck and Vallee's study, though, is the question of whether this plausibly helps demonstrate their claim for a constant & robust core ufo phenomenon? The answer is obviously No. This event violates one of the more fundamental laws of the ufo phenomenon. Richard Haines stated the law in these terms: "The likelihood of a UFO manifestation decreases as the number of potential observers increase." (Haines 1979; Story, 1980) Hynek made a similar point when he lamented that unexplained ufo events that present with large numbers of witnesses invariably collapse upon investigation. Ufo events are isolated in space and cases that seemed to stretch over towns and states "always turned out to be an IFO." (Hynek 1978) We are left with two options. The entry had no business being in a catalog of allegedly true and anomalous ufo events and it is an IFO that would be easily solved if more information was turned up. The alternative is the core ufo phenomenon is inconstant and broke laws in antiquity it has adhered to since 1947.

We must add that if this is some sort of (deadly?) ETH intervention in earthly affairs, does the fact that it happens to the detriment of the Nubians and to the benefit of a rich and powerful imperial conqueror befit one's ideas of how an advanced intelligence ought to behave? Does this accord with one's ideas of how aliens meddle in earth history in modern times? Is there a consistency of purpose evident in ufo intelligences siding with the Egyptians in helping them steal from their weaker neighbors?

If we toss out the Thutmosis III ufo as an IFO, we move entry #2 of Aubeck & Vallee's case catalog to the position of oldest ufo experience and this is an interesting move indeed for the Akhenaten ufo encounter is quite delicious, a juicy piece of history engorged with irony and naughty gossip. There is a veritable industry of scholarship surrounding Akhenaten and we know a lot and suspect even more about his reign thanks to the accident that he built a city that was abandoned to the desert soon after his death. It had been forgotten for millennia. Then archaeologists over the past century began to dig it out. Due to this situation, we have a lot of strikingly well-preserved artifacts concerning his period.

It also helps that Akhenaten started a religion that many moderns thought was the first example of monotheism and thus a forerunner to Judeo-Christian culture. Though this is now largely discounted, for a few decades this made Akhenaten the subject of extra attention among scholars in a spectrum of subjects like comparative religion, psychoanalytic theory, atheist rhetoric, and anthropology.

The ufo incident is set in summer 1347 B.C. along the Nile. Pharaoh Akhenaten (a.k.a. Amenophis IV) strolls along the Nile, admiring Nature's splendors, when he looks up and sees "a shining disc" descend from the sky. He hears the voice of the Solar Disc tell him to build a new capital with the name of Akhetaten. Part of this reads,

Then said his majesty to him: Behold Aten! The Aten wishes to have made for him [...] as a monument with an eternal and everlasting name...It was the Aten, my father, who advised me concerning it, so that it could be made for him as Akhetaten... Behold, fill Akhetaten with provisions – a storehouse for everything, while my father proclaimed to me: It is to belong to my majesty, to be Akhetaten, forever and eternity."

Akhetaten's name translates to "The Horizon of the Solar Disc" and its symbol was a disc floating over a mountain range.

Aubeck and Vallee make various claims on the incident's behalf. It was "a unique experience that was to shape Egyptian

history." They state, "Akhenaten also founded a new religion based on the worship of the Solar Disc, thus assuring his immortality in our history books as the most powerful heretic of ancient Egypt." They grant this involved worship of the Sun, which is indeed perceived as a flat disc when one can look upon it, usually near the horizon or when sufficiently veiled by clouds. They seemingly felt obliged to include this case as a genuine ufo since other contemporary writers tend to consider this a match to flying saucer iconography. Beyond the entry, they also bring up Akhenaten in a listing of eight ufo incidents that made "a major impact on human history and culture."

This is all comically problematic. Until Napoleon Bonaparte brought attention to the ruins of the city in the desert, Akhenaten had been successfully erased from history. His name had been removed from lists of kings, his monuments had been defaced to remove all signs of his existence. Records rarely mentioned his name except obliquely and always unfavorably. This was all done by adherents of the older religion of Amun that Akhenaten had been trying to escape by the creation of the new religion and the new city in the desert.

We can't be absolutely sure, nobody can read the mind of man dead for millennia, but the suspicion is strong that Akhenaten created both the new solar religion and the city of Akhetaten as ways of undercutting the existing priesthood which had grown powerful in prior generations off the plunder of expanding empire. Victories were officially credited to Amun's divine intervention and support. The Amun priesthood existed as a veritable state within a state and they had interfered in the ruling of the royal family with their support of a woman pharaoh and her choice for subsequent king a man from northern regions of the Egyptian empire. Akhenaten's family lived in the southern region. Court intrigues involving the rival families and the Amun priesthood created bad blood among competing factions. Whether it rose to the level of attempted assassination is unknown, but something of the sort is speculated to have triggered the desire to escape the existing capital and create a new one protected by the military whose support Akhenaten still had.

The new religion of Aten, sun-worship, was cobbled together from an existing cult of the sun god Re at Heliopolis mixed with a hymn to Amun lightly rewritten to now honor Aten. Some motifs in the new state religion were stolen from still earlier material called Coffin Texts. The architecture at Akhetaten reflected solar worship with open-air temples distinct from the closed temples used in worship of the dead. The original Heliopolitan theology was not monotheistic but assimilated other gods of the region and was not inherently hostile to Amun. But once Akhenaten got rolling, he started a campaign against the Amun religion. He would purify Egypt, return it to first principles by all means in his power. He ordered statues of Amun be smashed, the name and image hacked from temple walls, shrines, and obelisks. The pharaoh's men set towns and villages on fire, pillaged temples, and made a practice of forcing priests to butcher sacred animals, roast them, then strip the men naked and cast them away.

In a word, Akhenaten was a fanatic.

Akhenaten seems to have had strong and strange sexual appetites. He fathered children from several women, at least six daughters with Nefertiti. He had a skilled harem that was constantly being replenished. While harems are nothing unusual in royalty in the region, we do have clues his tastes may have extended to father-daughter incest which strays beyond the norms of even that time and place. In this he was emulating his father, Amenophis III, who had collected women from far and wide; foreign princesses and some known for special skills like the lady Sati aka Miss Whiplash and Lady Tawosret who was blessed with sexual zeal. It is suspected that Akhenaten justified incest in his own mind after he had elevated his father to the position of godhood in the Aten religion. Hints exist, around Year 12 of the Aten, Akhenaten then elevated himself to godhood. At that time, a co-regent was inducted to eventually take over his rule. Some depictions of worship seem to show people groveling before Akhenaten and his family. They are surrounded by troops with batons.

Akhenaten's reign became something of a disaster. He didn't pay much attention

to the good foreign relations Egypt had developed with major foreign powers and let matters degenerate. Trade caravans were subject to increasing theft and foreign trade declined. Mayors panicked as pleas for military support against pillagers went unheeded. Income from tribute and taxation began to decline and the new capital Akhetaten became a money pit, draining the empire of resources. No surprise therefore that when Akhenaten died, the city was sealed up, plundered of what could be carried, and left to the desert.

At this point, we must note that the message of The Aten to create a new capital to proclaim the majesty of his father, "eternal and everlasting," was in some degree probably foredoomed if one takes the natural sense of Akhetaten being a city that should thrive and ever honor the one who started it as a mecca for worship. The sacred city suffered a quick death. Millennia passed before the city was exhumed by modern archaeology. The Aten religion similarly quickly died, erased with prejudice from the historical record by the Amun priesthood.

For non-specialists who need to be brought up to speed because popular works still keep the idea alive, we need to state of the claim that Akhenaten was the first monotheist and that he bears responsibility for the innovation leading to Judeo-Christian monotheism; scholars don't think that is true anymore. Even learned atheists accept that parallels between Akhenaten and later religions are too few to accept there was some sort of conceptual continuity. Doubt even exists that his religion should be considered a true monotheism for it was mainly a throwback to a form of ancestor worship and the ancient Heliopolitan cult of sun worship. If the Aten religion venerated both Akhenaten and his father as seems true near the end, the obviousness of the error comes down to what do you think one plus one equals?.

Now, let us come back to Aubeck and Vallee's claim that Akhenaten's ufo had a major impact on history. First off, do we even know Akhenaten had an ufo experience? Scholars have gravitated to the idea that the whole thing was a cynical political gambit to escape the political snake-pit of the existing royal court. The

material rewritten from the Amun hymn and Heliopolitan belief seems to undercut any presumption of a novel infusion of extraterrestrial guidance or even visionary hallucination. It seems unnecessary to bother with offering interpretations of the material offered by Aubeck & Vallee as involving over-interpretation of natural stimuli, though, if you want to be tactful to tender alternative-prone minds, it would be simple to invoke the observation that the sun veiled by clouds can create imagery matching a shiny, even silvery, disc.

The visual representations of Aten in Egyptian iconography are not compelling matches to contemporary saucers. Early versions have falcon wings. On seeing this, I was immediately reminded of Jacques Vallee's discussion in *The Invisible College* of Phoenician amulets that show discs possessing wings and tail feathers. He unfortunately compared one to the Hamilton calf napping case of April 1897, which would be thoroughly debunked merely a couple years later - the hazards of comparative analysis based on simple iteration of a parallel or two. The Phoenician art had a quite exciting similarity to a daylight disc, beings riding the birds creating a parallel to center domes. Aten imagery disappointingly lacks even a hint of a true domed disc. Aten images tend to involve simple circles with rays extending outward, entirely appropriate to a solar disc and rays of sunlight not unlike one sees created by holes in clouds. There is frequently the interesting detail of the rays having hands holding symbols on the ends and some of them seemingly about to shove ankhs up the noses of the royal family.

The Aten religion existed too short a time to consider any impact long-lasting. The effect Akhenaten had on Egyptian history was mostly negative and wholly temporary. What influence his name wields in our present history books is mostly inflated by the accident that so much associated with him was preserved in the desert, untouched by the ravages of life and commerce that erased so much of the rest of Egyptian civilization.

If ufo buffs desire to embrace Akhenaten as history's first contactee, personally they have my blessing and bemusement. The man was, by any objective measure, a

freaky self-glorifying fanatic. He ordered towns burnt down, had priests tossed naked into the streets, committed incest, and single-handedly brought the Egyptian empire to the precipice of ruin.

Now that's a guy you really need to start your ufo history with.

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An artistic record of the great JREF UFO evidence debate

Readers of SUNlite might be familiar with the artwork of "Psycho Clown". He did the poster art for my articles about Malmstrom and the Arizona UFOs in SUNlite 2-2 and 2-3. Psycho Clown goes by the name of "stray cat" in the James Randi Education Foundation's (JREF) skeptics forum and often creates some interesting artwork that highlights many of the discussions about UFOs.

When a UFO proponent, who went by the name of "Ramjet", had started several threads about UFOs (One of those was titled "UFOs: The research, the evidence"), Stray Cat and another member by the name of Akhenaten were inspired. I have been collecting many of their images and, with their permission, I desired to share them with the readers of SUNlite. Hopefully, you will find them as humorous as I did.

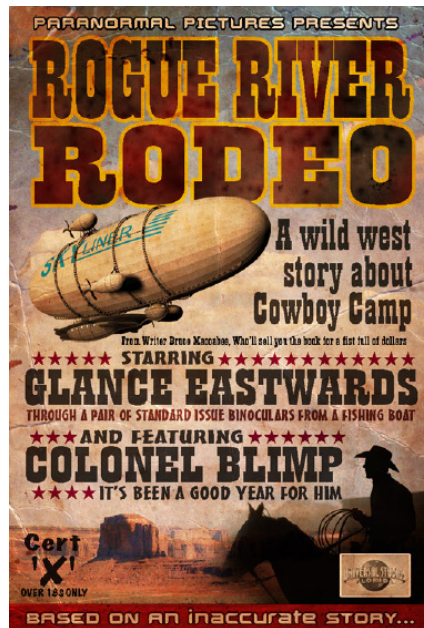
ECREE

This was a thread, where a Ramjet wanted to declare Carl Sagan's statement of "Extraordinary Claims Require Extraordinary Evidence" (ECREE) as nonsense. In his way of thinking, there was no such thing as an extraordinary claim or extraordinary evidence. By declaring that all claims and evidence were the same, it implied that anecdotal evidence would count just as much as physical evidence. After almost a hundred pages of discussion, forum member Akhenaten tried to point out the ridiculous nature of Ramjet's argument by illustrating how a headline about physical evidence for alien spaceships would appear using this philosophy:

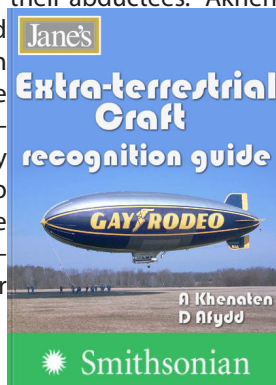


The Gay rodeo?

The Rogue River sighting sparked several month's of debate about if the UFO might have been the Goodyear blimp (which had been in Oregon that month) or possibly another blimp. The drawings by the witnesses look something like a blimp and one has to note this is one of the few UFO sightings where the UFO has a tail fin. I tend to think this might have been an aircraft seen under conditions similar to the Catalina island UFO movie of 1966. Whether it was a blimp or not isn't really important. The extent to which Ramjet wanted to dismiss the Goodyear blimp as an explanation inspired this movie poster:

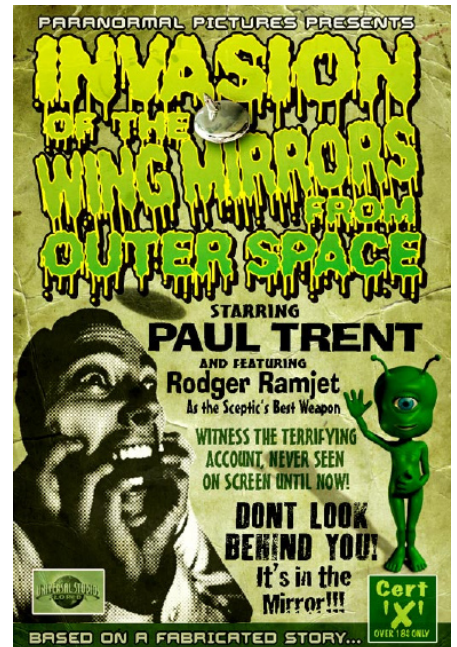


The Goodyear blimp theory was "anagramized" into the "GayRodeo" blimp. This anagram was chosen because of the tendency for some aliens to do invasive probing on some of their abductees. Akhenaten generated this recognition guide for those alien space-ships. The "Gay Rodeo" blimp would make further appearances in other cases.



The Trent pictures

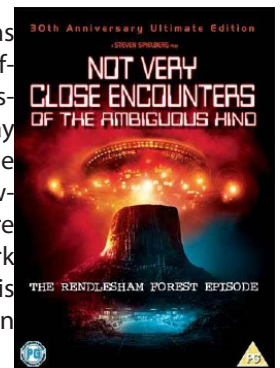
When this case was presented as UFO best evidence, I pointed out to the forum, Joel Carpenter's theory that the UFO may have been a suspended model made from an old truck mirror. Stray Cat produced this movie poster to commemorate the idea:



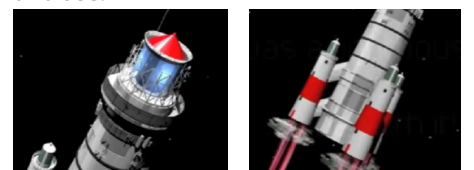
One can't say for sure if the images show a truck mirror or not but it is worth considering instead of being dismissive of the idea.

It was a lighthouse!

Rendlesham was mentioned briefly in the discussions and Stray Cat offered some poster art. However, his more interesting work concerning this case can be seen on Youtube.



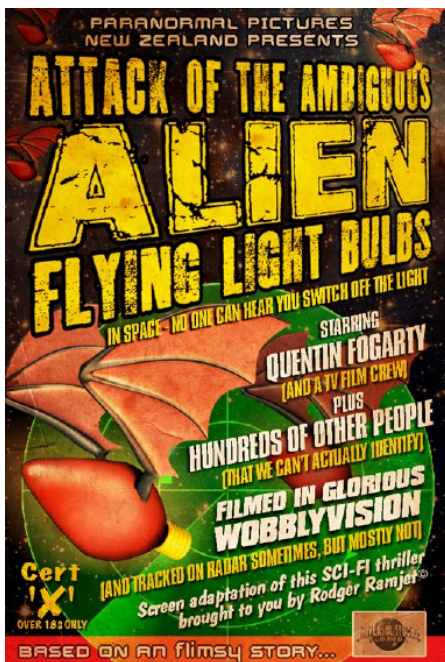
In his Psycho-Clown TV episode, we see lights flying about Rendlesham forest and then disappearing into space. We then zoom into the light as it leaves earth and see:



He closes with the statement, "It was a lighthouse....live with it!" These are my sentiments towards this case, which, somehow, was considered worthy of being considered a top case in Paul Kimball's documentary about UFOlogy's "best evidence".

Squid fishing monthly

Probably the most extensively discussed UFO case was the New Zealand UFOs of 1978. Quoting Dr. Bruce Maccabee's web site regularly, Ramjet felt he had the ultimate case. Of course, the skeptic forum found the videos of lights jumping about and moving in and out of focus less than compelling:



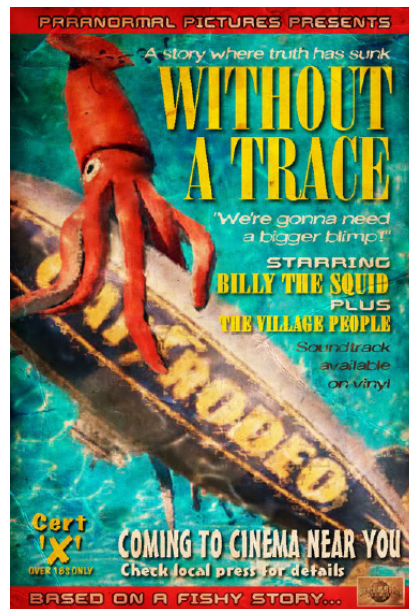
Another movie poster took its inspiration from the debate that went on for months.



When the discussion about the squid fishing fleet occurred, Stray Cat produced this magazine cover for Squid Fishing Monthly:



Not to be left out, the Gay Rodeo Blimp made a cameo.

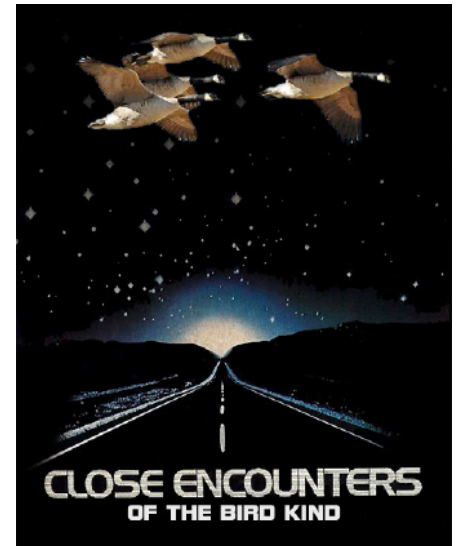


While the debate seemed endless, it was these moments of humor that made the discussion tolerable.

Birds or satellites?

Ramjet's extensive presentation of RUFO evidence in the JREF forum reached its peak when he published his own UFO sighting as an example of a reliable UFO report. He challenged skeptics to explain it. The sighting consisted of an observation of four nocturnal lights mov-

ing in formation in a straight line near midnight on New Years eve on the Southern Australian coast. Two of the lights appeared to oscillate around a central point. Several proposed that they might have been birds (possibly geese) in flight.



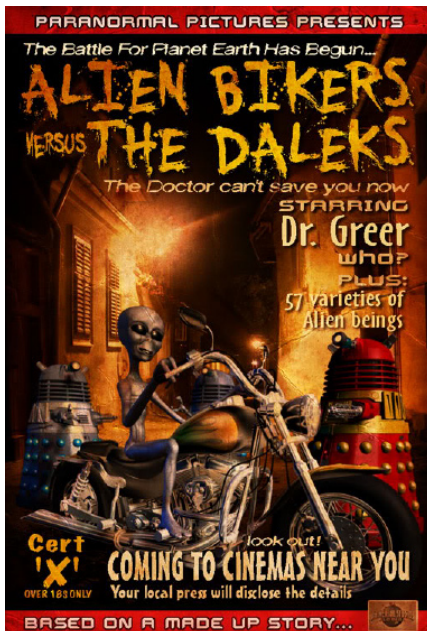
I suggested they might be satellites and the two lights only appeared to oscillate around a central point. I thought it might be rare for four satellites to be seen in this configuration. However, a check of Heaven's Above revealed that it would not be too unusual to have four satellites moving in the same general direction around the same time.

Was this the source of his sighting? Nobody really knows and, without a time machine, one can never be sure. It is important to note that the witness was speaking from memories over two years old and they were never recorded in a way that can be verified (i.e. a UFO report). I believe in the old Chinese proverb that states, "The palest ink is better than the best memory". Without the sighting being recorded in a manner that can be verified, it is just an anecdote that carries little weight and is not very reliable.

Other items of interest

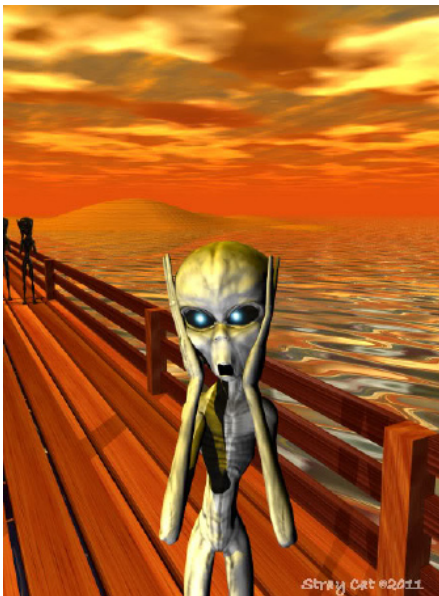
These were the highlights of the "great UFO debate" at the JREF forum. The UFO cases I described above weren't the only ones discussed and there were more opportunities to produce some interesting artwork. However, the thread became moderated for some time, which hindered the creative talents of Stray Cat and Akhenaten. Despite this handicap there

were some other gems that surfaced. Dr. Greer's disclosure project claims inspired this poster art from Psycho-clown/Stray Cat:



The never-ending debate

It is important to note that in all of these cases that were presented, nobody claimed that these cases were positively solved as blimps, airplanes, stars, truck mirrors, geese, satellites, etc. It was just that the skeptics felt these explanations were more probable than the Extra-Terrestrial Hypothesis (ETH) explanation implied by the proponents. If Ramjet had taken the approach that some of these "classic cases" had plausible explanations instead of bitterly disputing any explanation other than the ETH, the debate might have taken a different path.



There be dragons!

Over the years of discussing UFOs with UFO proponents, I have noticed that many claim to be skeptical of certain types of UFO reports but are more than willing to blindly accept others without any proof at all. That seemed odd to me and I have begun to offer the following hypothetical question, "If the witness reported they saw a dragon or a witch in this UFO report, would you be just as willing to accept it?"

Invisible dragons

Dr. Carl Sagan sort of took this approach in one of his chapters in "The demon haunted world". He described the claim of an invisible dragon being in his garage. Every time somebody suggested a way to prove the invisible dragon was there or not, he had a ready made excuse as to why it was not detected. In this scenario, the invisible dragon acted the same as if there were no dragon at all. The bottom line is that these kinds of reports really are just based on the person's say-so and are unverifiable.

Dragons vs UFOs

So far, when I have brought up my hypothetical question about substituting a dragon for the UFO, I have been criticized or ignored. Many state, "everybody knows that dragons don't exist but UFOs (as some form of craft) do". This is not really true. We have evidence that UFOs exist because people can not identify things they see in the sky. However, nobody has ever shown that what they have seen are real craft that are "not of this earth". So, when people are describing UFOs in this sense, substituting a dragon (or witch, fairy, etc.) is appropriate since there is the same amount of evidence for their existence.

Many UFO reports involve single eyewitnesses that may have simply misinterpreted what they saw or they could have made it all up. As Dr. Phillip Morrison once stated,

I would say that NO witness is credible who bears a sufficiently strange story. The only hope is for independent chains, several independent witnesses, and then credibility certainly rises. Moreover, inde-

pendence is most important (I shall return to this point). I want to emphasize that the singleness of a witness necessarily puts his case into some sort of doubt. All of us know how people have been mistaken with the best will in the world.¹

It is these single eyewitness UFO reports that I focus my hypothetical question upon. UFO proponents should have a certain degree of skepticism when it comes to these types of reports. This is especially true if the report includes exotic details like missing time, alien entities, spaceship landings, or some other claim. Without any confirming evidence for their story, they might as well say they saw a witch or dragon.

A prime example

The most classic example of these kinds of single person stories is the Kenneth Arnold case. Other than the Fred Johnson letter, which did not surface until two months later (possibly being influenced by reading the newspaper accounts), the report by Arnold is simply a single person report with no supporting evidence. If Arnold's report was not such an important case in UFOlogy, it might have been easily dismissed by some as being unverifiable. Had he stated he saw dragons or some other mythical creature that day in June of 1947, people would have ignored him.

Where does skepticism start?

The whole point of this exercise is to ask the question, "When does a UFOlogist suddenly become skeptical of a UFO report?" In my opinion, if they can substitute a dragon for the UFO and can not present a valid argument that states it could not be a dragon (other than dragons do not exist), then the report is essentially worthless. Either more evidence is required to support it or it should be discarded as being unreliable.

Notes and references

1. Sagan, Carl, and Thornton Page, eds. UFO's: A Scientific Debate. New York: Barnes & Nobles, 1972. P. 282-3.

The focus of Annie Jacobsen's *Area 51: An Uncensored History of America's Top Secret Military Base* was not, as might be supposed, the history of the infamous facility that spawned the U-2, the Blackbird, and various stealth aircraft. The poorly sourced and error-filled book instead focused on a bizarre new story about the "Roswell Incident."

Passages throughout the book serve as a set-up for the final chapter in which the author claims that in 1947, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin was responsible for a UFO crash hoax in New Mexico that was meant to cause panic in America. Stalin supposedly enlisted the aid of the Horten brothers (inventors of German flying wing prototypes) to create a fake spaceship with advanced hovering capabilities, and Nazi doctor Joseph Mengele to genetically engineer children to look like an alien crew. Two of the crew members allegedly survived the crash. Comatose but still alive, they were transported to Area 51 in tubular tanks filled with a gelatin-like substance.

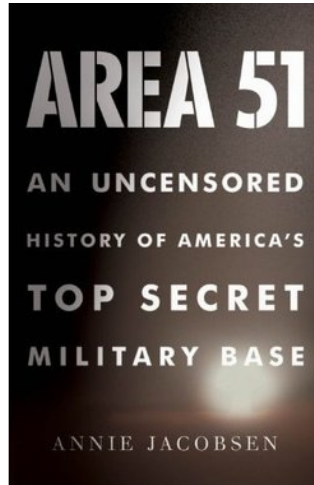
Upon hearing such a preposterous story, any real investigative journalist would have attempted to corroborate the details before going to press. Jacobsen, however, cited only a single, unnamed source for this tale. She claimed he was a former employee of Edgerton, Germeshausen & Grier, Inc. (EG&G), and the last surviving member of a five-man team who had direct access to the Roswell "equipment." According to her source, the truth about Roswell was covered up to hide the fact that the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission was conducting similar secret experiments and atrocities in Nevada. While Jacobsen has repeatedly claimed to believe that her source was sincere, she concedes that his information about Roswell was relayed to him by his supervisor, who supposedly received the it from a government official.

Anonymous source

For anyone trying to follow up on this dubious anecdote, the murky trail begins and ends with Jacobsen's anonymous source who has since been identified as retired EG&G engineer Al O'Donnell of Las Vegas. O'Donnell, 89, joined EG&G in 1947 and is the last living person to have witnessed the inaugural nuclear detona-

The Rashomon Effect, UFO tales, and transmutation of memory

By Peter W. Merlin



tion at the Nevada Test Site in 1951. While his background checks out, his story has more holes than Yucca Flat.

During an interview with the author on ABC's Nightline, Bill Weir asked, "Surely you must have obsessed over how to double-source this? How do you confirm this?" Jacobsen replied, "Well, I'm not sure that it's my job to prove it. I do know it was my job to report it, and that's what I did."

Weir managed to set up an off-camera interview with O'Donnell. Afterward, he described O'Donnell as appearing confused, telling conflicting accounts, and saying he was motivated to tell his story "in order to help Annie's book."

Jacobsen has been widely criticized for including O'Donnell's unsubstantiated tale in her book. The details of the story itself have been parsed and analyzed, revealing numerous logical and factual flaws. If O'Donnell's story is bogus, then where did it come from, and why does he seem sincere in his belief that it is true?

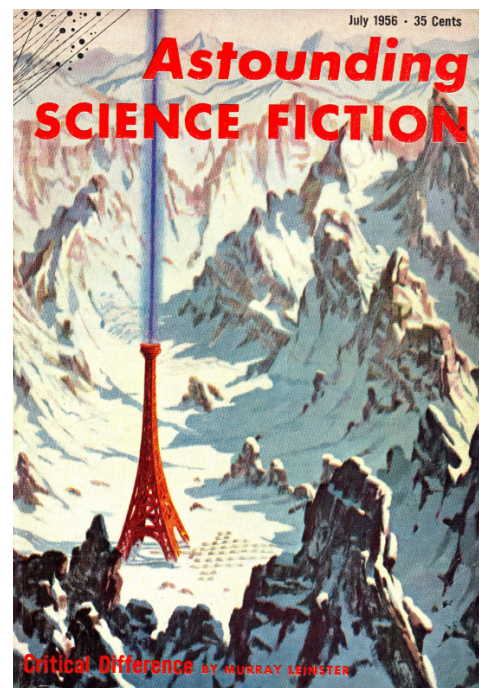
Fiction as fact

Aerospace historian and policy analyst Dwayne Day may have answered the

first question. In a May 2011 article for The Space Review, Day noted similarities between O'Donnell's account of the Roswell Incident and "Tomb Tapper," a short story by James Blish published in the July 1956 issue of *Astounding Science Fiction*. Blish's tale follows two men investigating what they at first believe to be the crash of a Soviet bomber on U.S. soil. Instead, they find a rocket ship made of advanced alloys. When they finally gain access to the cockpit, they discover that the pilot is a little girl, barely eight years old and apparently equipped with an enhanced brain. To survive extreme acceleration forces during flight, the child-pilot was enclosed in a tubular tank filled with a viscous substance. "And of course," wrote Blish, "this way, the USSR could get a rocket fighter to the United States on a one-way trip."

Parallels between the Blish and O'Donnell stories are hard to ignore. Perhaps O'Donnell read the story or perhaps he heard of it from his EG&G supervisor. It may have been passed down as something heard from a "reliable source." Eventually, perhaps, O'Donnell integrated it into his own memories, conflating fact and fiction. This hypothesis is by no means farfetched. It has happened before.

In May 2005, historian and author Curtis Peebles wrote an article for *Magonia* magazine about a UFO abduction story that had been passed along from one



person to another as fact and eventually published in Ann Druffel's book *Firestorm: Dr. James E. McDonald's Fight For UFO Science* (Wildflower Press, 2003). McDonald, a senior physicist at the University of Arizona's Institute of Atmospheric Physics in Tucson, became interested in UFO phenomena and amassed a large collection of research material.

In 1968, according to Peebles, Robert M. Wood, deputy director for research and development at Douglas Missile and Space Division, told McDonald that an X-15 pilot on a planned 15-minute flight had disappeared (along with his airplane) for three hours. Wood reportedly identified the pilot as Gene May of Douglas. He said the source of the abduction story was a colleague who worked at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., and Wood considered him "very reliable."

Although McDonald made note of the X-15 story for future reference, he apparently never followed upon it before his death by suicide in 1971. Had he done so, he might have discovered that there was no substance to the claim of an X-15 disappearing during a flight and, more important, that Gene May never flew the aircraft. So, where did the story told to Wood originate?

Peebles learned that several years before Wood told the tale to McDonald, NASA engineers Kenneth W. Iliff and Lowell Greenfield (both assigned to the X-15 project at the time) attended a UFO convention at Giant Rock Airport in the Mojave Desert. One of the speakers claimed to have been involved with the X-15 program for the previous several years, and that he was on active duty with the Air Force at Edwards Air Force Base. He told a story about the X-15 disappearing for several hours during a flight that was only supposed to last a matter of minutes. He claimed that all the participants were sworn to secrecy. The speaker said that, despite his security oath, he had to tell the truth about what had happened on the flight, that the X-15 and its pilot had been taken aboard a UFO intact, examined for several hours, and then returned to where the aircraft had been flying.

Being intimately familiar with X-15 operations, Iliff and Greenfield knew the story was false. No X-15 had ever disap-



peared during a flight. Iliff told Peebles that he was horrified at the speaker's lies but figured the man was just trying to promote the book he was selling at the convention.

Frank John Reid, in an August 2005 *Magonia* article, revealed that on December 24, 1949, the *Saturday Evening Post* published "Outer Limit" by Graham Doar (reprinted in 1950 for Groff Conklin's anthology, *Big Book of Science Fiction* from Crown Publishers). "Outer Limit" was a fictional story of a test pilot who is abducted by aliens for 10 hours while flying a high-altitude research aircraft on what was supposed to be a 10-minute flight.

Could this have been the origin of a story that, passed from person to person, eventually came to be considered as truth by anyone not willing to do a little research? If so, then this is a perfect example of how fiction can morph over time through the fog of memory until it is perceived as fact.

Deceptive memories

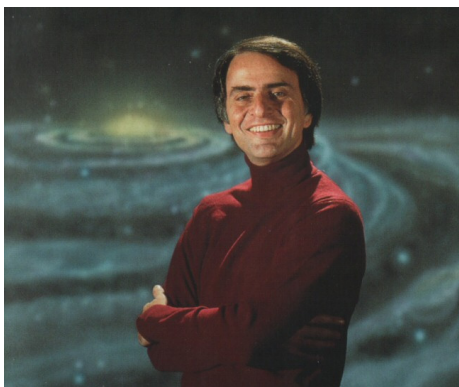
Memory encompasses a variety of cognitive mechanisms by which we retain information and reconstruct past experiences. Recollection of past events is different from perception of the present, and because we recall real events, memory is different from imagination. In practice, however, people can experience close interactions between remembering, perceiving, and imagining. According to John Sutton ("Memory," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2010 edition), "*Memory goes wrong in mundane and minor, or in dramatic and disastrous ways.*"

Human memory can be surprisingly unreliable. Most commonly, individuals misremember details or sequences of events. Sometimes, groups of people can share a single false memory. There is also subjectivity of perception, known as the "Rashomon effect," in which multiple observers of a single event produce substantially different accounts of it. This phenomenon is named for Akira Kurosawa's 1950 film *Rashomon*, in which a crime is witnessed by four individuals and described by each in mutually exclusive contradictory ways.

In an example of misremembered details, a retired test pilot who had flown the YF-12 and SR-71 Blackbirds wrote in his autobiography of an event that had occurred some 20 years earlier. In 1981, he had a unique opportunity to fly a U-2 high-altitude reconnaissance plane for more than two hours. He recalled the airplane's challenging handling characteristics and described the landing procedures in great detail. In the original manuscript, he wrote that the event took place in the "spring of 1981," and recalled that a fellow Blackbird pilot traveled with him to Beale Air Force Base and also made an orientation flight in a U-2. Prior to publication of the manuscript, an examination of flight logs from 1981 revealed that the U-2 sortie took place in summer rather than spring and that the second pilot was not the one remembered by the author.

This same author also described a major NATO exercise in which he had participated while serving in the Navy in 1953. He remembered that several aircraft carriers from the United States, Canada, and Great Britain participated, and specifically named the British carrier H.M. S. Ark Royal. Although the British Royal Navy operated several ships of this name at various times, none existed in 1953. Prior to publication, a vigilant fact-checker noted that the Ark Royal's sister ship, H.M.S. Eagle, participated in the exercise.

There are numerous examples of small and large groups sharing identical false memories. In one case, two men were searching the desert for parts of a crashed airplane. They had explored the area on several previous occasions with mixed success. Another, much larger search team also visited the debris field and collected a variety of artifacts over a two-



day span. The two-man team recalled that shortly afterward, they found a very large and impressive piece of wreckage. In the ensuing years, they often shared this anecdote, always expressing their amazement that the larger team had missed this piece. Eventually, upon reviewing long-forgotten field notes, they were surprised to find their recollection of the sequence of events was inaccurate. They had found the large piece long before the other team arrived. Both team members shared the same false memory, apparently reinforced through verbal repetition.

Some false memories become part of popular culture. Ask most anyone who watched the 1980 television series *Cosmos* what they remember most, and they will likely say it was the way host Carl Sagan said “billions and billions,” with his distinctive delivery that emphasized the first syllable. This catchphrase became a popular target for parody among stand-up and late-night-television comics. The only problem is that Sagan himself never said it. While narrating the show he used the word “billions” on numerous occasions to describe the number of stars in the universe, but the closest he ever came to his supposed quote appeared in the book *Cosmos*, where he wrote of “billions upon billions” of stars. Nevertheless, many people still remember him saying “billions and billions” on television.

A study by James Ost, a psychologist from the University of Portsmouth, England, found that people easily convince themselves that they have seen things that never happened. *“Some people think that our memories are like video recorders and that if you press play the memories come flooding back,”* said Ost in an interview with Becky McCall for *Cosmos Online* in September 2008. *“It doesn’t work like that*

at all.”

To investigate the reliability of memory, Ost surveyed people in England and Sweden about their recollection of the July 2005 terrorist bomb attack in London. He asked his subjects if they had seen closed-circuit television footage of the bus bombing in the city’s Tavistock Square. Eighty-four percent of British respondents said they had, compared to 50 percent of Swedish participants. In fact, no such footage exists. Some participants in the false memory investigation even provided explicit details of events they had seen in the non-existent footage. McCall reported that in response to the question *“Was the bus moving when the bomb went off?”* Ost received such detailed responses as: *“The bus had just stopped to let two people off when two women got on and a man. He placed the bag by his side, the woman sat down, and the doors closed. As the bus left there was an explosion and then everyone started to scream.”*

“Play it again, Sam”

Some researchers believe that the very act of remembering can change our memories. Karim Nader, a neuroscientist at McGill University in Montreal, says it may be impossible to bring a memory to mind without altering it in some way. Greg Miller interviewed Nader, an expert on memory, and, in particular, on the malleability of memory, for *Smithsonian* magazine in 2010.

Neuroscientists and psychologists believe that most people have so-called “flashbulb memories” of where they were and what they were doing when something momentous happened. Examples include events such as the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the explosion of the space shuttle *Challenger*, or the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. But as clear and detailed as these memories feel, Nader believes they are more susceptible to change than others, possibly because we tend to replay them over and over in our minds and in conversation with others. Oliver Hardt, a postdoctoral researcher in Nader’s lab interviewed by Miller, said that recalling an experience to other people may allow distortions to creep in. *“When you retell it, the memory becomes plastic, and whatever is present around*

you in the environment can interfere with the original content of the memory.”

The mutability of memory comes as no surprise to psychologists, whose experiments have suggested that people’s memory can be distorted without their realizing it. In Miller’s article, “How our brains make memories,” he cites a 1978 University of Washington study in which researchers showed students a series of color photographs depicting an accident in which a red Datsun car knocks down a pedestrian in a crosswalk. The students then answered various questions, some of which were intentionally misleading. The results showed that students who had been asked a misleading question were more likely to give an incorrect answer than the other students.

It is clear that under the best of circumstances, memory can be unreliable. Even vividly striking images can be distorted by the mind’s eye as a result of a variety of factors. People can recall things that never happened, conflate details to alter time lines, and co-opt a fictional tale as a memory of a supposedly real event. Another factor for consideration is normal cognitive decline due to aging. While people of any age can experience memory lapse and distortion, it is particularly pronounced among the elderly.

Al O’Donnell was 89 when interviewed by Annie Jacobsen, and was recounting memories nearly 60 years old. She has repeatedly told interviewers that she stands by the veracity of her source, supposedly because his recollections of other unspecified events proved accurate. It remains impossible, however, to ignore the similarities between O’Donnell’s Roswell tale and James Blish’s “Tomb Tapper,” and the precedent set by Robert M. Wood’s tale of the X-15 abduction that was apparently drawn from Graham Doar’s “Outer Limit.” Most important, O’Donnell had no documentation or additional witnesses to corroborate his story. Perhaps Jacobsen should have been less credulous when presented with such a dubious yarn.

UFOs on the tube - Secret access: UFOs on the record

Leslie Kean's book, UFOs: Generals, Pilots, and Government officials go on the record, was a big hit last year and she managed to get a television producer to make a documentary based on it. The History Channel presented the program on August 25th with the usual applause from the UFO aficionados. Most notable was that not one skeptical voice was presented on the program. I can only conclude this was because Kean or her producer did not want to present an opposing point of view. As we will see, there was a reason for this approach.

The show was two hours long and broken up into several "landmark" UFO cases that were supposed to be the best they had to offer. Added to the Kean commentary was the face and voice of Nick Pope, who has made sure evidence about his actual performance at the MOD never surfaces in the public eye. This brings into question his integrity as somebody, who is interested in pursuing the truth.

Rendlescam

The first case presented was the Rendlesham affair. In addition to the usual story, the show made the claim that the radiation readings were ten times background radiation. Research has shown this was a false claim made by Pope, which is repeated as fact by Kean. This will not be the first time that Kean gets her facts wrong.

Charles Halt recounts his usual tale but added a new twist. Instead of two star-like objects being visible in the north (as stated in his memo), we now are told there were four or five and they were actual craft. He pretty much repeats the rest of his story about the winking eye and the various other claims. Most of these can be attributed to the lighthouse



and stars. Recent revelations by Colonel Conrad have shown that most of Halt's conclusions are bogus. His changing the number of objects in the sky is an example of trying to make a good story better. It is the evolution of a myth based on actual events.

Discussing Rendlesham on any UFO show means we get to hear about Nick Pope making the usual claims about him performing some form of investigation while he was at the MOD. For somebody who spent, according to the program, three years investigating the case, he really hasn't done much beyond repeating what was already known at the time by UFO investigators. There were claims of 60 and "over 80" Air Force Personnel supposedly seeing the object take off from the forest yet we did not see one statement from any of these individuals. They might as well have said that 600 or 6000 people saw it. Those numbers are meaningless without any evidence.

The show calls the Rendlesham case, *"one of the most conclusive UFO sightings in history"*. I almost fell out of my chair with laughter because if that is the case, it is the most convincing case of misperception and UFO mythology one can present. Leslie Kean goes on the record as stating that Rendlesham *"stands as a benchmark against which all other UFO cases can be measured"*. I am not sure what benchmark she is talking about but it certainly has a lot more to do with myth-making than scientific investigation. No wonder they did not invite Dr. David Clarke or Ian Ridpath to discuss the case.

The Arizona UFOs

In the Arizona UFO segment the witnesses briefly tell their usual story about the massive triangle they claim they saw.

Kean implies the AF lied when they explained the event away as flares because they dropped the flares at 10PM and the bulk of the sightings were at 8-8:30 PM. Of course, if Kean would have done her research, she would be aware that Captain Bienz never stated that the flares explained the earlier event. In the July 25, 1997 Arizona Republic story, Captain Bienz stated they only explained the videos shot around 10PM. Of course, Kean also makes the claim the event transpired for 106 minutes, which implies that she was including the 10PM sightings! It is statements like these that indicate she is either clueless or deliberately misleading the viewer.

The show also attempts to present the theory floated by some that the 10PM flare drop was staged to divert attention away from the 8-8:30PM event. This conspiracy theory completely ignores the fact that the A-10s were scheduled to conduct this exercise long before the night of March 13th and that the flares were ejected on the return back to base because they were left over from their exercise. It also indirectly calls the pilots, who have described their participation in this event, liars.

The program played the NUFORC tape of an anonymous person on the phone claiming an F-15 pilot (Luke air force base only operated F-16s and there is no evidence for F-15s being present) attempted to intercept the UFO that night. Upon his return, the base was supposedly "locked down". No evidence was presented to support such claims but it was presented as factual. It makes one laugh at Kean's statement, *"Always focus on the hard core factual information... and not on the more conspiracy-oriented material..."*



Disgraced governor Fife Symington recounted his recent revelations that he

also saw the UFO. However, his story appears fabricated. According to him, he was watching the news reports of the UFO on TV while dining with his family. Intrigued, he then drove out to a park. After being there five to ten minutes, he saw the UFO. The problem with that story is that the local television apparently did not report the UFO event until the late evening news. This was hours after the event occurred. If the media were aware of the event in real time, one wonders why not one camera crew was able to go out and record it the same way Symington supposedly saw the UFO. Unless there were interruptions of regular broadcasts at 8-8:30 PM, it indicates that Symington probably fabricated his story. This is probably to gain some publicity so he can reinvent himself as an honest person. After all, he IS a politician and they always want to tell you what you want to hear.

The real story about the Arizona UFOs can be told if one just reads SUNlite 2-3. The claims about "thousands" seeing a massive object are exposed as inaccurate by looking at the data in the NUFORC database. Additionally, I present the one piece of evidence that totally debunks the claim there was a massive craft involved. That being the Terry Proctor video, which shows only lights shifting in formation. One wonders why Kean and the producer never bothered to show actual evidence like this?

The O'Hare UFO

This case was probably one of the better UFO sightings brought to the table. Unfortunately, we have just a bunch of anonymous reports. At one point we have a claim made that somebody took a picture of the event. The photograph has never surfaced indicating there was no photograph or that the photograph showed that the event was not that extraordinary. Missing from the story is that only a few people confined to a small area saw the UFO and those in the tower saw nothing.

Kean turns this into a theory that states the FAA purposefully discourages pilots and personnel from reporting UFOs. Additionally, if they do make public reports, they are ridiculed. Finally, the government will make any explanation in order

to explain such a public report. To her, this is the standard operating procedure. If this was so, why are all these people, who reported the UFO still working for the airlines?

The golden age

I found it funny that Leslie Kean referred to the days of project Bluebook as *"the golden age of UFO study in America"*. This implied the USAF did a better job of studying UFOs than all these private UFO organizations (CUFOS, MUFON, NICAP, APRO, etc.) combined. I am sure many UFOlogists would have a different way of describing Project Bluebook's efforts in investigating UFOs.

Alaskan adventure

Another case that made the cut into the show was the JAL 1628 event. A lot of data about this case was presented by John Callahan but I am unaware of that data being presented to the public. If Callahan can present all these graphs and radar tapes, why isn't this readily available for all to see and evaluate. Clearly, science would be interested in analyzing this information.



Callahan also repeats his claims about the CIA shutting down the investigation. Unfortunately for Callahan, Dr. Bruce Maccabee and Ron Pandolfi were also at the meeting. They confirmed to Reality Uncovered that no such thing occurred and Maccabee was able to publish the information with no interference! This was all missing from the story. Once again, Kean blindly accepts the story told by Callahan without bothering to check up on the claim. So much for relying upon "factual information" and ignoring "conspiracy-minded" claims.



The Belgium wave

Presented as a primary source in this segment was Patrick Ferryn, who was the head of SOBEPS, the civilian UFO group that investigated the wave. The wave has been discussed in SUNlite several times, so I will skip the details concerning most of the witness reports. However, they did mention the F-16 chase and presented one of the pilots. He stated that they chased an object on radar. Missing in all of this is the fact that they never actually saw the UFO visually and only chased a radar return. Also missing from the discussion was the analysis by Salmon and Gilmard, who stated one pilot accidentally locked on to the other F-16 at one point and that the radar returns were explainable. The same can be said for the study by UFOlogist Auguste Meesen, who also concluded the radar returns could be explained! Ignoring all of this evidence, Kean chooses to refer to the Belgium wave as "historic" because of one photograph.

The Petit-Rechain photograph produced all sorts of claims by UFO scientists. One even claimed they could see the effects of a magnetic field in the image! Of course, the show was shot before the photographer had publicly announced that he hoaxed the image, which makes one question the "scientific analysis". It also invalidates Kean's statement that, *"In the history of UFO studies the Petit-Rechain photograph stands out as one of the most convincing pieces of evidence of a sighting to date."* Her statement was not based on any independent investigation but on her blind acceptance of what these UFO proponents told her!

Even more amusing was Nick Pope stating they had a similar incident in the UK three years later. He is referring to the Cosford incident, which was caused by a Russian booster rocket re-entry. There was

also another sighting about that night, which has been determined to be probably a helicopter. I am not even sure why people find Pope credible at all.



Enter Doug Trumball

Doug Trumball was the only thing I liked about the show. He at least presented how UFO research should be done. Trumball also demonstrated skepticism towards UFO photographs stating that he has never seen a UFO photograph that he could not duplicate photographically or digitally. Kean should have had him analyze the Petit-Rechain photograph before making her statement. It might have saved her the embarrassment of being completely wrong when she declared the photograph one of the most convincing pieces of evidence in UFOlogy.

Closing statements of credulity

Kean and Pope closed the program with some comments that deserve to be quoted and answered.



POPE: *Potentially, it has incredible things to teach us.*

In over sixty years of UFO research, the only thing that has been learned is people misinterpret things they see in the sky and others like to exaggerate/make up stories. What does Pope propose to do to collect data that will teach us these incredible things? Not once has he ever suggested a new way (like Trumball's) to approach the problem. He is too interested in selling himself and his books.

KEAN: *It's really an exciting time to be involved with UFO research and there seems*

to be greater chances that we are going to capture even more solid data. But, we also have to be extremely careful to hold it to the absolute highest standards.

Yet, Kean drops those "high standards" time and time again in this program and in her book. The only thing she has ever proposed was that the US government take over UFO investigations. If the tax payers would not fund SETI, what makes her think they will fund a boondoggle for UFOlogists?

KEAN: *It's the accumulation of overwhelming evidence from pilots, generals, government officials, that prove, in my opinion, that we have an actual physical phenomenon that has not been explained.*

In every case that was presented, important information was ignored/not mentioned that could shed some light on these events. This means the evidence is not as good as claimed. Her claim about the "accumulation of overwhelming evidence" is flawed because, as Brian Dunning stated, "*you can stack cowpies as high as you want, they won't turn into a bar of gold. Good evidence is composed of good evidence, not lots of bad evidence*".

The sales pitch

By not presenting an opposing opinion, the producers and Kean were able to sell their product to the uninformed viewer. Like those late night commercials, designed to get you to purchase their product using gimmicks, the show withheld information that demonstrated their product was flawed. While this show may satisfy all the UFO proponents, its failure to present all the evidence makes it no better than a UFO hunters episode. Move over Bill Birnes, Leslie Kean and Nick Pope want some of your limelight.



Book Reviews

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

UFO Sightings: The evidence - Robert Sheaffer

This is a good skeptical UFO book that should be in any UFO library. It basically is an updated version of his previous book, The UFO verdict. Some of it is most of the same old stuff about eyewitness reliability and perception. There is also worthwhile commentary/analysis about many of the UFO events that Robert investigated. I found his section on UFO photographs highly informative.

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

Project Moon Dust - Kevin Randle

This book is a mixed bag. A highlight is his evaluation of the Cash-Landrum incident. My motto here is find the source of the helicopters and you will verify the story. Nobody has been able to do this, which means there are problems with the story as told. The low light is his appendix, where he desperately tries to convince the reader that the government documents denying they had any crashed spaceship debris does not necessarily mean they did not recover a crashed spaceship at Roswell.

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

Conspiracy of Silence - Kevin Randle

Too much of this book is about Randle trying to breath life into the Roswell story. His section, "The truth about Frank Kaufmann", shows how he went to great lengths to convince himself and others that Kaufmann was telling the truth. When I bought this book back in the late 1990s, I marked it up with highlighting and commentary. Looking back on the comments on those pages and what we know about Frank Kaufmann today, I can see that I and other skeptics were accurate in our assessment.