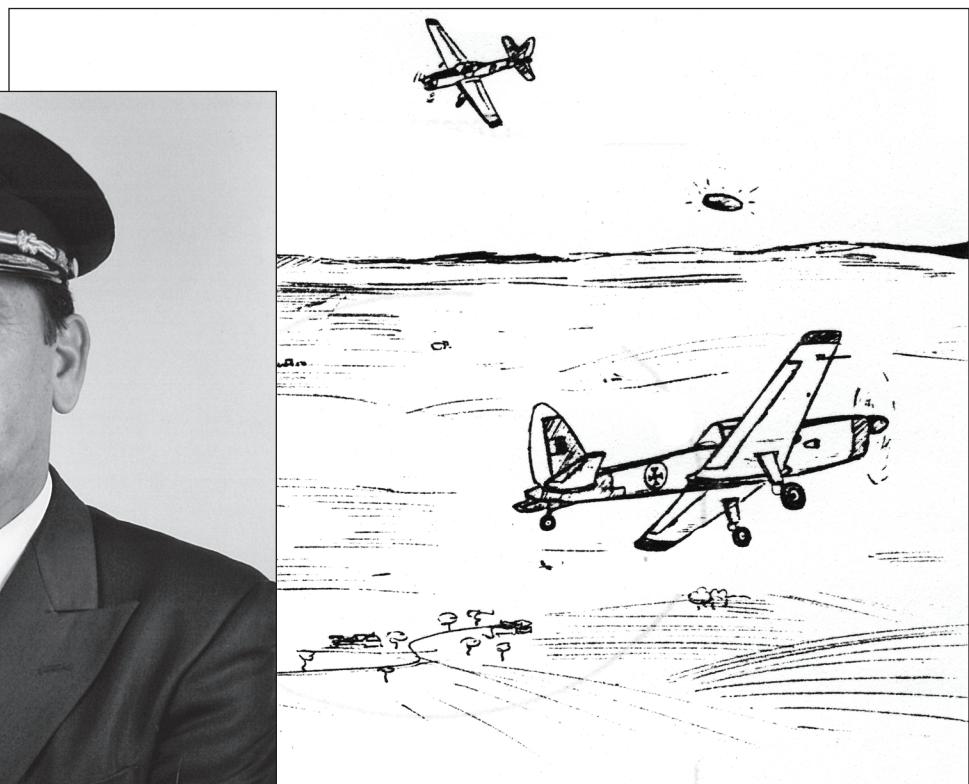
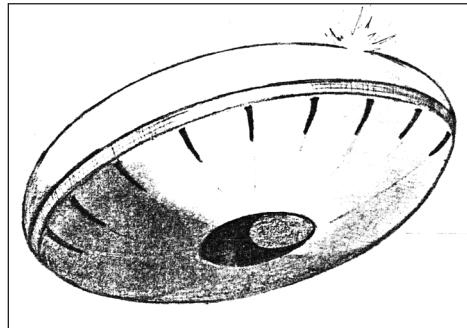


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Portuguese Air Force Capt. Júlio Miguel Guerra (left) was flying a single-engine DHC-1 Chipmunk trainer aircraft near Torres Vedras, Portugal, November 2, 1982, when he encountered a circular object. It was a "metallic aluminum" color on the top and "metallic red" on the bottom. Sketches and photo by Julio Guerra.

CIRCLED BY A UFO

INTERNATIONAL UFO REPORTER

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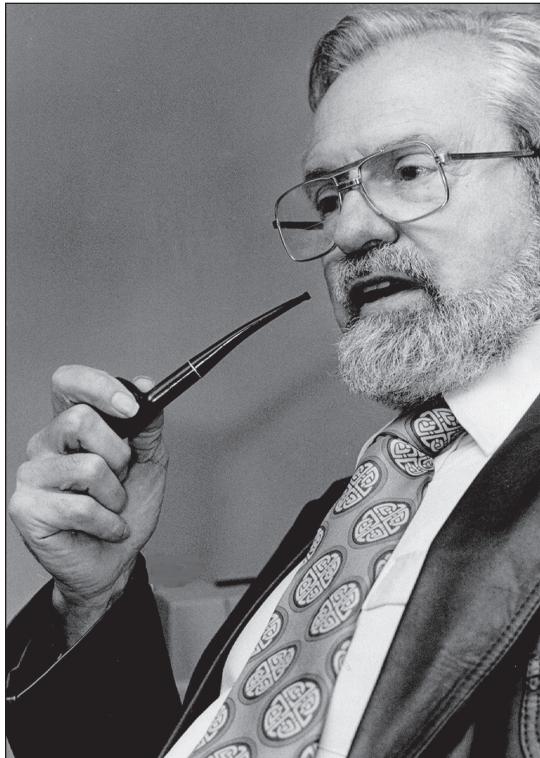
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1910-1986

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CIRCLED BY A UFO

BY CAPT. JÚLIO MIGUEL GUERRA

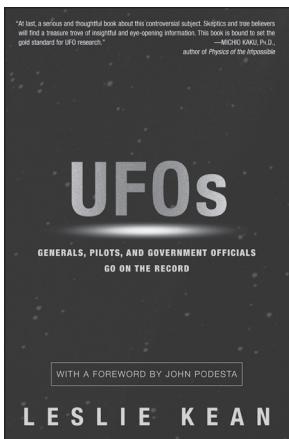
In 1982, Portuguese Air Force pilot Júlio Miguel Guerra saw a low-flying metallic disk while on a flight. He attempted to pursue the object and witnessed it engage in a variety of maneuvers at close proximity, in broad daylight. The events were also observed by two other Air Force pilots. After leaving the Air Force in 1990, Guerra has been a captain with Portugália Airlines, Portugal's largest commercial airline.

On the morning of November 2, 1982, I was flying a DHC-1 Chipmunk northward in the region of Montejunto mountain and Torres Vedras, Portugal, near Ota air base. It was a beautiful, clear day with no clouds, and I was headed in the direction of my work area, E (echo) zone, planning to climb to 6,000 feet for an aerobatic training. As a 29-year-old lieutenant with 10 years in the Air Force, I was a flight instructor as part of 101 Air Force squadron, flying solo in my plane.

At about 10:50 a.m., when I was overflying Maxial zone at an altitude of 5,000 to 5,500 feet, I noticed below me and to the left, near the ground, another "aircraft." But after a few seconds I saw that this airplane seemed to have only a fuselage. It didn't have wings and it didn't have a tail, only a cockpit! It was an oval shape. What kind of airplane could that be?

I immediately turned my plane 180 degrees to the left in order to follow and identify this "object," which was flying to the south. Suddenly the object climbed straight up to my altitude of 5,000 feet in under 10 seconds. It stopped right in front of me, at first with some instability, oscillations, and a wavering motion, and then it stabilized and was still—a

Capt. Júlio Miguel Guerra became a pilot with the Portuguese Air Force in 1973 and was an operations officer specializing in accident prevention at Ota Air Base. Since 1997, he has been a Line Captain for Portugália Airlines. This account is reprinted with permission from Leslie Kean's *UFOs: Generals, Pilots, and Government Officials Go on the Record* (New York: Random House, 2010), 47–49.



metallic disc composed of two halves, one on the top and another on the bottom, with some kind of band around the center, brilliant, with the top reflecting the sun. The bottom half was a darker tone.

At first it moved with my aircraft, then it flew at a fantastic speed in a large elliptical orbit to the left, between 5,000 feet to the south and approximately 10,000 feet to the north, always from left to right, repeating this route over and over. I tried to keep it in sight.

Right away, when I realized it was an unknown object, I called the tower and told the controller that there was a strange object flying around me. He, and others from three or four other airplanes, said it must be some kind of balloon. Some of the pilots flying in other zones made fun of it, and I responded by asking them to come and see it with their own eyes if they didn't believe me. I told them that if it was a balloon, how could it ascend from the ground to 5,000 feet in a few seconds? The response was silence. They started asking for my location, my work zone, and two fellow Air Force officers, Carlos Garcês and António Gomes, told me they would join me.

While waiting and watching it, I wanted to know more about this object. Even though I got close, I didn't know what it was. I was alone with it for 15 minutes—which felt like forever—never knowing what would happen next or if it would come back each time it set out on its course. I stayed there and focused on this thing repeating its elliptical course around my aircraft.

When Garcês and Gomes arrived in their Chipmunk after about 15 minutes, they radioed "Where is it?" I gave them the position, and after they saw it I felt better, because now two more Air Force pilots had seen the same thing I did. They stayed with me for about 10 minutes while the object kept up its circular pattern, each loop almost the same as the previous one, and we conversed on the radio. I was in the interior of the orbit and they were outside of it, so the object

(continued on page 21)

MYSTERY AERONAUTS OF TEXAS

BY JEROME CLARK

An international phenomenon of the late years of the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th, mystery airships were absorbed into the UFO phenomenon before “UFO phenomenon” was a phrase or a concept. They entered the anomalies literature in 1923 in *New Lands*, in whose pages Charles Fort, the first ufologist, raised the possibility that they may have represented “extra-mundane voyagers.” As would many later writers, he also expressed frustration at the many hoaxes, exaggerations, and dubious explanations which frustrated understanding of what Americans were actually reporting in 1897, the principal wave year.

My own involvement in airship research goes back to the mid-1960s, resulting in a long article in *Flying Saucer Review* (“The Strange Case of the 1897 Airship,” July/August 1966) and others in *FSR* and elsewhere over the years.¹ I last addressed the subject in *IUR* in “UFOs or Mystery Airships?” (31, no. 4 [2008], pp. 8–14, 29). A much-revised and expanded version of the latter appears as a chapter in my current book. What follows here updates the discussion that commenced in *IUR* and continued in *Hidden Realms, Lost Continents, and Beings from Other Worlds* (Visible Ink, 2010), highlighting some new developments.

Though as early as 1897 an undercurrent of speculation linked airships to interplanetary visitors (always from Mars, then widely believed to be inhabited), most observers who judged the sightings more than mere delusions believed them to be secret inventions. After all, airships—dirigibles

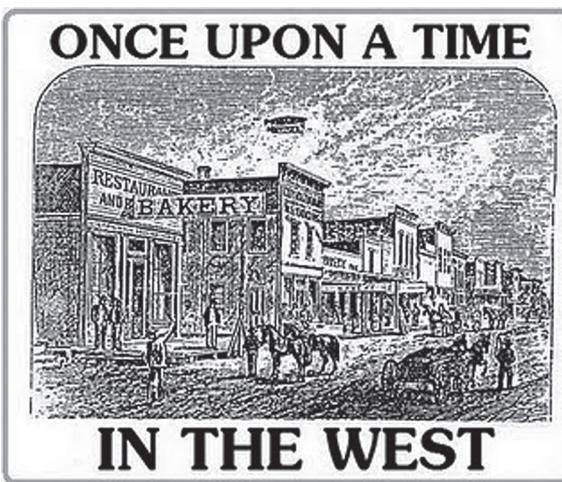
capable of directed flight—did fly, at least in Europe; thus, it was theoretically possible that American inventors were quietly experimenting with their own constructions. Indeed, many of the reports that described the mystery airships as something other than nocturnal lights were unambiguous in their characterization. These were not daylight discs, let us be clear, but period-appropriate flying machines. That no such

machines in any historical sense were passing through the skies of late-19th-century America became apparent only later.

Moreover, one subset of reports—the airship-era equivalent of our modern CE3s—seemed to put the question of the craft’s provenance beyond speculation. According to several dozen accounts, witnesses either glimpsed human crews and passengers inside passing airships or met them face to face when they landed on American soil. Such claims, of course, could not coexist with any notion, proposed by subsequent generations of ufologists, that airships were early examples of ostensibly extra- or otherwise non-terrestrial UFO phenomena. The natural impulse has been to dismiss them all as hoaxes. This impulse is hardly irrational or self-serving. Many of these proto-CE3s are manifestly bogus or at least suspect.

Perhaps not quite all, however.

In ways the controversy over mystery aeronauts anticipates another controversy—now virtually forgotten—over whether claimed encounters with humanoid UFO occupants were credible. Today, practically nobody who holds a sympathetic view of UFOs rejects the validity of CE3s, but in the 1950s the dominant American UFO organization, the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP), refused to acknowledge them, insisting well into the 1960s that no credible person had seen a UFO being. Critics countered with the obvious: that if one took UFO sightings



Jerome Clark, an editor of IUR, is author, most recently, of Hidden Realms, Lost Continents, and Beings from Other Worlds, a survey of modern mythologies and related historical curiosities.

seriously, one had to acknowledge that witness accounts were of structured craft clearly designed to carry crews; they even had windows. There was, in short, no *a priori* reason to discount reports of occupants. The alternative would be to reject all UFO reports as illegitimate.

So it may be argued that human-appearing crews from apparently human-constructed airships are on their face no more or less incredible than nonhuman crews from apparently nonhuman-built daylight discs. The argument, it is true, is not as robust as it may appear. While some modern reports have been capably investigated and well documented, our knowledge of 1897 claims consists in its near-entirety of what is preserved in the (to put it charitably) uncertainly reliable press. Also complicating matters was a tradition of frontier humor in which hoaxing was a perfectly respectable social activity.

One who spends enough time in journalistic archives develops an instinct for what is worth heeding and what isn't. If instinct, though helpful, is finally an insufficient guide, one seeks whatever information survives about the alleged witnesses. On occasion they don't seem to have existed, which tells the inquirer that the story in which they figure is fiction. Sometimes one learns that they were real enough but were known to participate in pranks (e.g., Alex Hamilton of the infamous LeRoy, Kansas, calfnapping yarn, one of the relatively rare cases in which alien aeronauts are alleged). None of this is surprising. On other occasions, though, things get interesting.

In *IUR* and in my book, I look at an incident said to have occurred near Beaumont, Texas, late on the evening of April 19, 1897. Briefly:

Returning to their farm, J. R. Ligon, a brewer by profession, and his adult son Charley noticed lights in a pasture a few hundred yards away. On investigating, they found "four men walking around a dark object," an airship 180 feet long and 20 feet wide with four great wings. When the aeronauts asked for water, the Ligons invited them into the house. Each filled the two buckets he had brought with them. One, who said his name was Wilson, provided a modicum of information, but only when asked, essentially that he and the others had flown over the Gulf of Mexico and were now returning to their base in Iowa.

The account from which the above summary is drawn appears in the *Houston Daily Post* for April 21 (above).

INSPECTED THE AIR SHIP.

Beaumont Man Saw the Mystery Close Range.

CONVERSED WITH THE TRAVELERS

SAYS IT IS PROPELLED BY FOUR BIG WINGS, ELECTRICITY BEING THE POWER USED.

Beaumont, Texas, April 20.—Mr. J. R. Ligon, local agent for the Magnolia brewery of Houston, this afternoon informs *The Post* correspondent that the airship visited Beaumont Monday night, and that he only saw the flying machine, but he had a chance to inspect it from the outside and conversed with one of the men who was traveling in it. "I and my son Charley drove home at 11 o'clock Monday night," said Mr. Ligon, "and were unhitching the horse when we saw lights in the Johnson pasture, a few hundred yards distant. We went over to investigate and discovered four men moving around a large dark object, and when I hailed them they answered and asked if they could get some water. I told them that they could. They came to my house, each bringing two buckets and after filling them, started to return. I accosted one of the men and he told me his name was Wilson and that he and his companions were traveling in a flying machine. They were returning from a trip out on the gulf and were now headed toward Iowa, where the airship was built. Mr. Ligon says he accompanied the men to the ship, and describes it as being 180 feet long and 20 feet wide. It was propelled by four large wings, two on either side, and steered by propellers attached to the bow and stern, electricity being the power used. The hull of the ship is made of steel and contains apartments into which compressed air is pumped when the ship is in action. The ship carries a water ballast that is pumped to the bow when it is desired to bring the vessel to the earth and that is pumped to the bow when it is desired to bring the vessel to the earth and to the stern when the course is skyward. Mr. Ligon says the workings of the ship were thus described to him by the man Wilson, who also stated that this ship was only one of five that had been built in a quiet Iowa village."

Beaumont had a newspaper, but I am told that no copies from the period survive. One wonders if the Ligons's story appeared the next day in a late edition of the *Beaumont Enterprise* and if the *Post* printed a version, whole or partial, of it.

Ligon is a long-established family name in Texas. Someone named J. R. Ligon—who did not respond to an inquiry—lives in the state today. Marine Corps Maj. Charles Ligon, surely another descendant, was killed in Vietnam in 1967. The J. R. Ligon of Beaumont, 1897, certainly existed, as I established via correspondence with an archivist in the Beaumont Public Library System. He died sometime between 1897 and 1900, when census records list his widow.

I also uncovered other *Houston Post* references to Ligon and his airship. On June 20, 1897, the newspaper mentions Ligon's intention to participate in a July 3 Beaumont trade gala. He would exhibit an airship, which "will not be the same flying machine that Mr. Ligon saw but it will be a fair simile of that remarkable vessel and will be complete in every detail. At the grounds the ship will be placed on exhibition and no charge will be made for examination of the plans of construction or the method of operation." Among the participants in a related parade, according to the *Post* of July 4, was "Ligon's airship, poised over twenty little girls singing National Airs."

While surveying 1897 accounts in the course of research for my *UFO Encyclopedia* in the 1990s, I came upon an extraordinary interview in the April 25 issue of the *New Orleans Times Picayune*. The article noted that a Beaumont resident, Rabbi A. Levy, was visiting New Orleans on the occasion of his niece's wedding. Levy told the reporter of a strange recent

experience. One night, having heard that the much-discussed airship had landed on a farm near Beaumont, he rushed to the scene. He saw the ship, which had large wings and was (in his estimate) something like 150 feet long. "I spoke to one of the men," Levy recalled, "when he went into the farmer's house and shook hands with him. . . . Yes, he did say where it was built, but I can't remember the name of the place, or the name of the inventor. He said that they had been traveling a great deal. . . . I was so dumfounded that I could not frame an intelligent question to ask."

If modern airship students have overlooked this astonishing article—which clearly refers to the same incident with

which the Ligons have been associated—no less than the *New York Times* (April 28) quickly appreciated at least some of its significance. It noted, “If there is any confidence to be placed in the evidences of witnesses, whose trustworthiness on other subjects would not be doubted . . . the *New Orleans Times Picayune* has been interviewing Rabbi A. Levy of Beaumont, Texas, and quotes him as declaring, with all the solemnity a ministerial position and unimpeachable character will give, that he has himself seen the sky boat close at hand and has conversed with its passengers.”

Levy, who was a real human being, would have been a mature 49 years old at the time. My research uncovered flattering references to the rabbi in contemporary press accounts and in the work of Beaumont historian W. T. Block. Levy was Beaumont’s first rabbi, serving Temple Emanuel between 1895 and 1901, winning “many friends during his stay,” according to the *Galveston Daily News* (November 30, 1896) and other accounts. A short biography appears in a locally published volume titled *The Advantages and Conditions of Beaumont and Port Arthur of Today* (1901):

Dr. Aron [or Aaron] Levy was born in Sarrebourg, Meurthe, France, on the 14th of September, 1848. Graduating in the St. Jermain University in 1865 in Paris, and entered the Rabbinical College and graduated in Metz Moselle, in 1871. In the same year, by a ministerial decree, Dr. Levy was called to Lischeim, and afterwards removed to the United States of America. In 1874 he officiated for a short time at the Rampart Street Temple, in the city of New Orleans. In 1875 he organized a congregation in Brasheon [Brashear], now called Morgan City. In 1878 the Rabbi was elected in Austin, Texas, their spiritual leader, W. Moses being then the President of Bethel Congregation, and in 1895 the reverend gentleman was called to Beaumont to officiate. On Oct. 1st of the same year, on New Year’s of the year 5655, at residence of Mr. Hirsh about 14 Jews assembled and there organized Emanuel Congregation, with Dr. A. Levy as its Rabbi. He organized the Sabbath school, and today he is also the teacher of his private English Elementary School, which is highly regarded by the community.

Rabbi Levy, in short, is as believable a witness as one could hope to find. J. R. Ligon seems equally sincere. As always, however, we would like to know more. The *Post* account, the only surviving narrative of the Ligons’s testimony, does not mention Levy’s presence. This in itself means little, given the manifest limitations of period journalism, which often lacked crucial detail. It is at least possible, in any case, that the initial—and missing—version in the *Beaumont Enterprise* did mention others at the site. If Texas journalists were aware of the account from the *Times Picayune*—I infer they were not—they failed to mention it. Still, given the overlap in stories, it is exceedingly difficult to resist the conclusion that the Ligons and Levy are recounting, to all appearances truthfully, the same incident.

CLARIFICATION, OR MAYBE NOT

An aeronaut identified only as “Wilson,” no first name, is mentioned in two other airship accounts. In three others, someone who for various reasons sounds like Wilson is described.² For purposes of this discussion, we focus on an incident which supposedly took place on April 20 at Uvalde, Texas, 360 miles southwest of Beaumont. The case—though not its sequel, which here sees print in the UFO literature for the first time—is often mentioned in airship treatments; thus, our account will be an abbreviated one.

As the *Galveston Daily News* for April 23 tells the story, an airship came to earth around 10 p.m. On investigating, Sheriff H. W. Baylor encountered three crew members, one of whom introduced himself as Wilson, a native of Goshen, New York. Wilson went on to state that in 1877 he lived in Fort Worth, where he knew C. C. Akers, who would become Zavala County sheriff. (Zavala County borders Uvalde County to the south.) Baylor replied that Akers, now retired from that office, was currently employed as a customs officer in Eagle Pass (along the border with Mexico in Maverick County, directly west of Zavala, immediately southwest of Uvalde). Wilson in turn asked to be remembered to Akers. He and his companions then drew water from Baylor’s hydrant, boarded their ship, and sailed off to the north toward San Antonio.

The *Daily News* wrote that County Clerk Henry J. Bowles, who lived just north of Uvalde, observed the ship as it passed overhead. It added, “Mr. Baylor is thoroughly reliable, and his statement is undoubtedly true. His description of the ship does not differ materially from that given by Mr. J. R. Ligon of Beaumont and the gentleman who saw it at Greenville.”

In its April 28 issue the newspaper published a statement by C. C. Akers, who affirmed, “I can say that while living in Fort Worth in ’76 and ’77 I was well acquainted with a man by the name of Wilson from New York state and was on very friendly terms with him.” That Wilson was financially comfortable enough to devote full time to his fascination with aviation technology. Furthermore, Akers said, “I have known Sheriff Baylor many years, and know that any statement he may make can be relied on as exactly correct.”

Baylor, a well-known figure in south Texas, was a veteran frontier lawman with a tough reputation, whose career is well documented in contemporary press accounts. Concerning his less-known associate, a *Galveston Daily News* story for July 8, 1894, relates, “Mr. C. C. Akers, who was first elected sheriff and tax collector of this county [Zavala] in 1884 and has filled that office ever since, tendered his resignation last Monday to the commissioners’ court, to take effect on the 1st day of August. . . . Mr. Akers goes to Eagle Pass to take the position of mounted inspector under Mr. Fitch.” On the evening of July 18, two weeks before he left office, Akers arrested a murder suspect in Batesville. As he was escorting the man to jail, the prisoner ran off. Akers emptied his pistol at the fleeing suspect but missed every shot. Before

disappearing, the man stabbed Akers and left him with minor injuries (*Galveston Daily News*, July 20).

Three decades ago, efforts by author Daniel Cohen, himself a resident of upstate New York, to locate a relevant Wilson in 19th-century Goshen came up empty.³ My own research into late-1870s Fort Worth records found a few male Wilsons but none who could be immediately identified as a well-to-do inventor. Even so, since aviation historians attest that no airships of an event-level kind were sailing over Texas in 1897, the existence of an event-level Wilson in an airship is a moot point. The question of an experience-level Wilson may be a more cogent one.

On April 21, 2010, as I searched through an online newspaper archive, I came upon an article I immediately regretted not seeing before I discussed—favorably—Baylor's testimony in *Hidden Realms*, then in press. The story appears in the May 22, 1897, issue of a small Texas paper, the *Weimar Mercury*, reprinted from another village organ, the *Beeville Bee*. I have been unable to locate the original but assume it was accurately reprinted:

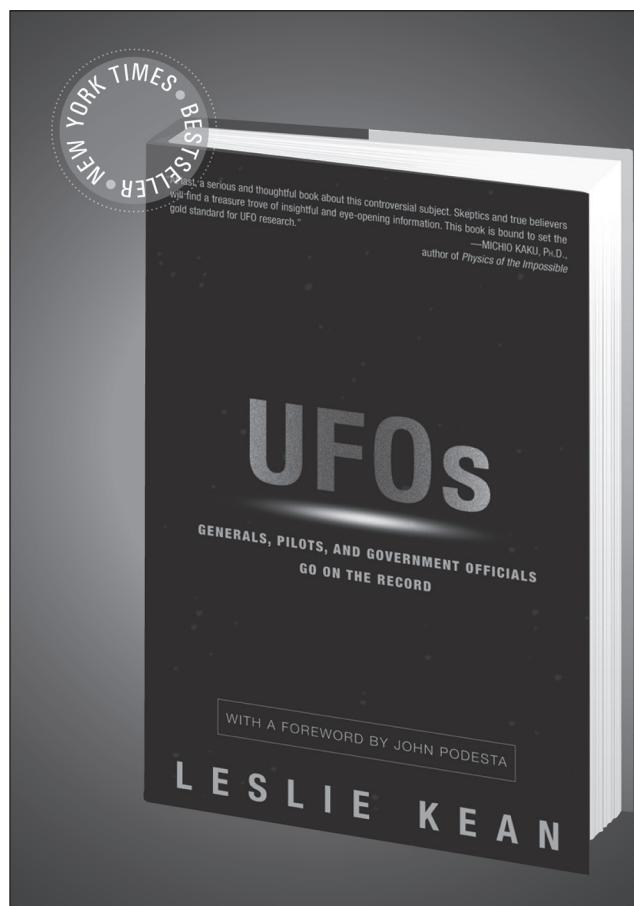
The following card from Sheriff Baylor of Uvalde county will be of interest to all of those credulous people who have believed the stories that have been published in many of the reputable papers concerning the presence of an airship in Texas. It will be remembered that the Galveston News, the first paper to work the fake in this

state, vouched for the veracity of Sheriff Baylor. Wearied of the many questions submitted to him through the mails and repentant of the hoax he had perpetrated on a credulous public, he now endeavors to correct the story.

"I have received letters and telegrams from every quarter of the globe asking what I know about airships. Now to set at rest every question on this subject I wish to say that I never saw an airship, and patience has ceased to be a virtue. The reporter who perpetrated that yarn upon a confiding [sic] public and dragged my name through the press of the country as the originator of such a Munchausen tale, was by orders shot this morning."

We will have to take Sheriff Baylor's word for it even as we dispute his claim that he has "set at rest every question on this subject." Some restless questions remain: How did the hoax come about? Did Baylor collaborate with the unnamed reporter? If so, why? And what was the role of C. C. Akers? Was he sincere? Was he a dupe or another collaborator? And what of another public official, County Clerk Bowles? One might go so far as to speculate—though I am disinclined to do so—that Baylor's confession was itself a fabrication, intended to deflate all the unwanted attention. On the other hand, a postcard to an obscure small-town paper is not exactly the most effective method of achieving that goal.

As with the airship affair generally, things are often not
(continued on page 21)



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—MICHO KAKU, Ph.D.,
author of *Physics of the Impossible*

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VEHICLE INTERFERENCE NEAR SÉZANNE

BY MARK RODEGHIER

The French government's UFO project, now named GEIPAN (Groupe d'études et d'informations sur les phénomènes aérospatiaux non identifiés, or Group for the Study and Information on Unidentified Aerospace Phenomena) has continued without interruption to record and investigate UFO sightings in France since the late 1970s. Although a funded project, it has relatively limited support and, as a consequence, only investigates a small subset of cases in depth. On other cases of interest, even some of those that are classified as unidentified (category D in GEIPAN's system of classification), little field investigation is done. In those instances, GEIPAN's staff relies upon the local Gendarmerie to interview a witness and record the details.

Although rare, vehicle interference cases do still occur, and though the event discussed here happened over a decade ago, it is worth placing into the English-language literature. GEIPAN did classify it as category D, even though no distinct UFO was observed. Rather astoundingly, the witness was interviewed just a couple of hours after the sighting by the local police, as he promptly reported the experience to them. And intriguingly, a female witness had a comparable experience just 10 days before this sighting.

An investigator from GEIPAN (then called SERPA) did an onsite investigation, but for some reason, that information is not included in the publicly available documents on GEIPAN's website (www.cnes-geipan.fr). But I presume that it was this visit, in concert with the initial interviews, that led to the classification as unidentified.

These two vehicle interference cases occurred near

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Mr. B.'s van in the approximate location where he encountered the light.

Sézanne in the District of Épernay in the northeast of France, within a region famous worldwide for its production of champagne. It was on the evening of January 10, 2000, just after 9 p.m., when Mr. B., a young man (names are deleted from public UFO records) living in a small village, took a quick ride in his small van-like vehicle, which was his regular evening habit. He was alone and had only been driving for a few minutes when, near the small water tower in the village, he was dazzled by a bright light. As he stated in the interview:

This very high-intensity white light came through the glass of my sun roof. It happened suddenly. I was driving at 40–50 kilometers an hour. My engine cut out, my car radio stopped working. I had just adjusted it [the radio] and could see that it was 9:02. As I said previously, everything stopped when this white light came into the vehicle. I was so dazzled that I had to protect my eyes. I tried vainly to see what was going on, but it was impossible to see, even my car radio. Keeping my hands to my face, I was able to lock my door with my left elbow.

There were no other vehicles on the road in his village at that late hour, although there were a few houses nearby. The witness then continued:

I think that this intensity of light lasted one minute. When darkness returned inside my vehicle, my dashboard lights switched on again, and my car radio again functioned.

Mr. B. explained that the engine contact indicator was lit (the key was still in the ignition), but that the engine was not working. He then restarted his car and went home to tell his parents, with whom he was living.

The gendarmes met with Mr. B. at his home for the

interview. He was, they wrote in their report, shocked, very upset, and pale. He never used the word "UFO" (OVNI, in French) to describe the bright light.

After taking the report, they accompanied him to the location of the event, near the water tower. They noted that the sky was clear, very starry. It was cold, but not frosty, and as one would suspect, there was nothing unusual to be noted about the spot where Mr. B.'s vehicle was affected.

Later, the gendarmes contacted the inhabitants of the nearby homes. None of them saw anything strange in the sky that evening, and none experienced any problem with their electrical service.

They also contacted the local electrical company, which had reported no problems on that evening in the vicinity of the sighting. Nor did the company have an explanation for what could have caused the effect on Mr. B.'s vehicle or the bright light. Another check verified that there was no military activity in the area that evening that could have accounted for the bright light, if not the other effects.

In conclusion, the gendarmes stated that Mr. B. was of good character and had, from his comments and gestures, lived through an unusual event.

I would like to know more about the details of restarting the car and whether the electrical system of his vehicle began working at exactly the moment the light vanished or was delayed a bit. Understandably, the gendarmes are not UFO investigators and don't have in mind the need to document every last case detail (or even recognize what is important).

Vehicle interference cases are often brief in duration. My research shows that about 25% of events last no more than one minute. More than half occur in a clear sky, more than half occur in a rural area, and these days, almost 100% of reported events happen at night with the peak hours between 9 p.m. and 12 a.m. And in rural areas, there is usually only one witness in the vehicle.

In many ways, this French case fits the pattern of such events. It is true that a UFO is usually seen. And technically, some might not consider this a UFO experience because Mr. B. observed nothing but a bright light. If a UFO was hovering straight overhead, however, it wouldn't have been visible, and Mr. B. pointedly locked his door and did not look up. Also, Mr. B. reported the light as dazzling, and it is difficult to think of any terrestrial or natural explanation for such illumination that would last up to one minute but wouldn't reveal its origin to a witness.

A RELATED EVENT?

UFO investigators often learn about other cases when investigating a first report, and the same is true for the French Gendarmerie. When the police went to the local electrical company's office on January 11 to ask about outages, a female employee, Mrs. L., overheard their conversation and later came to the department to report her own experience. Although we don't know the exact location, it wasn't far from Mr. B.'s sighting.

As Mrs. L. reported:

I am here . . . to relate to you a phenomenon which I experienced a little more than eight days ago, that is to say December 31, 1999. I was in my vehicle on Highway _____ near to the village of _____. I was driving at a speed of 90 kilometers per hour. My radio was not on.

There was a whitish glow, like a flash, before my eyes, coming from a height above me. I had not thought it important at first; it was not blinding. All the warning lights on my dashboard lit up. The engine stopped. I found myself coasting. A fraction of a second later, everything returned to normal. I did not need to turn the engine on again; it restarted itself.

It was about 7:30 p.m. or 8:00 p.m. This is the first time that such a phenomenon happened to me. At first I ascribed it to the fatigue that I was experiencing. I spoke about it to my husband, who didn't seem to me to be worried about it.

I had my battery connections checked at the urging of my father, whom I had told about the event. This check was made by a mechanic, and no anomaly was found.

As with Mr. B.'s experience, she heard no sound and suffered no lasting physiological effects.

Mrs. L.'s experience was very brief, and vehicles can have transient faults, so it would be easy to dismiss it as unrelated and not worthy of follow-up (in fact, she was not interviewed by the investigator for SEPRA, which the Gendarmerie noted in their report), but in combination with Mr. B.'s report, I wouldn't do so. What are the chances that, within a 10-day period, two witnesses would have similar experiences in the same area involving vehicle interference and a bright light from above? I'd say almost nil, although I still wish that we had more details on both cases.

We have learned from the UFO literature and case files that similar experiences can happen to more than one witness within a span of a few days or miles, and these two events might be another example. This raises the question of why sometimes there are two or more similar events, but usually UFO experiences seem to be unique and isolated.

There are probably more cases like this than we know about. This is because at least two witnesses have to come forward, and we already know that most people don't report their sightings. Consequently, by the simple laws of probability, we are likely underestimating the number of such UFO sightings that occur over a short period of time. As an illustration of this point, we only know about the pair of experiences discussed here because Mrs. L. overheard the gendarmes speaking to her supervisor. Otherwise, she may never have reported it.

This analysis suggests that UFO investigators should be more wide-reaching in their efforts to seek other witnesses, broadening the search to other dates and other nearby areas.

For those interested in the original case reports, open this link at the GEIPAN website: www.cnes-geipan.fr/geipan/regions/cha/etude_2000-01-01542.html. ♦

BOOK REVIEWS

Hunting Marfa Lights, by James Bunnell. Benbrook, Texas: Lacey Publishing, 2009. ISBN 978-0970924940. 320p.

What would a scientific ufology resemble? What does it mean to seriously investigate an unknown, transient phenomenon in the field? We can learn much about such a project, including its difficulties and successes, from this no-nonsense, straightforward book about the legendary Marfa Lights.

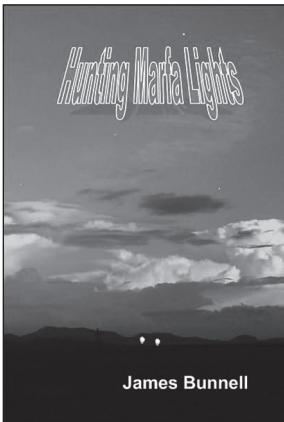
Marfa is a small town in the west of Texas. For generations, odd and strange lights have been observed to the southeast of town, in the area south of U.S. Highway 90. Several books have been written about the lights, which are seen only at dusk or when it is dark, and often seem to move erratically about the landscape. This area is sparsely populated, although there are ranches dotted throughout the area where the lights appear, as well as a few dirt and gravel ranch roads.

Skeptics have claimed that the lights are most likely caused by car headlights seen at great distance on U.S. Highway 67, or on the unmarked ranch roads. Other purported explanations are aircraft, ranch lights that appear odd because of atmospheric effects, train headlights, and astronomical objects. While it is certain that many lights seen by the casual visitor are not mysterious and can be explained, that's not true for all reports, and certainly not for the data gathered by the author.

James Bunnell grew up in the area, and worked as an engineer on a variety of aerospace-related projects, including the Apollo program. He is now retired, back living in Texas, and had the time to devote to investigating the Marfa mystery. Although he is not wealthy, he did have the resources to acquire a variety of equipment that was absolutely necessary to reliably and systematically observe and measure the characteristics of the Marfa lights.

Hunting Marfa Lights is a bit of a hodge-podge of a book, but perhaps that is an advantage. Bunnell describes in much detail how he began watching for the lights—he initially believed just a few days would be sufficient to figure out the source of the lights—and how gradually his efforts and equipment became more and more sophisticated. He is nothing if not a dogged investigator, and one who is willing to go to great lengths to extend his investigative capabilities.

Eventually Bunnell collaborated with Karl D. Stephan, professor at the Ingram School of Engineering in nearby Texas State University—San Marcos, to extend his investigation. An illuminating sociology-of-science slant on the Marfa lights is



how it took a retired engineer to begin a serious, technically competent investigation of the phenomenon. Where were the atmospheric physicists all these years?

The reasons for this neglect of a true mystery are worth recounting because they apply equally to a study of the UFO phenomenon. First, although there have been reliable observers of the Marfa lights, the great majority of reports are by the public and are of poor quality, and so have led some to skeptically dismiss all the sightings as explainable, hence no mystery at all to investigate. (Sound familiar?) Second, the lights don't appear frequently, at least the ones that aren't due to car headlights, etc., and that means that investigating the lights requires great patience and long hours in the field. Since scientists don't usually spend long periods in the field (with some exceptions, such as primatologists), they instead have to rely on equipment to do the job. And that means funding is needed, along with a secure place to site the equipment and arrangements for data storage and collection. Scientific funding agencies have been loathe to provide money, even to established scientists, to investigate transient odd phenomena—think earthquake lights—that don't have any obvious scientific payoff.

So there are practical challenges, skeptical ones, and then career-related ones, because scientists often don't want to study something that doesn't align with the mainstream paradigm of their field. It won't lead to career advancement, especially when there is a good chance that the research may not lead to publishable results.

Fortunately, Bunnell is not hampered by these concerns, and because he has the time, he can spend days and days in the field, working to improve his equipment, and even negotiating with ranchers to put cameras on their buildings for better viewing locations.

The book is filled with observations of the lights, some by the author, but many by others who have had vivid encounters. Most, but not all of the sightings occur at great distances from the witness, over Mitchell Flat. As an example, here is an account from the author, which included other witnesses, of a pulsing light on the side of a mesa on November 21, 2002:

This observation was made from inside the View Shelter and it occurred at approximately 7 PM CST before moonrise. There were a number of other witnesses present and we all agreed regarding what we were seeing.

Background for this ML [Marfa Light] was Mitchell Mesa that extends approximately 500 feet above the basin floor and is located approximately 19 miles southeast of the View Park. The ML at first appeared to be positioned about halfway up the mesa. It was yellow in color and “pulsed” in typical fashion. The light initially remained stationary on a magnetic bearing of 157 degrees from our location. . . After perhaps 8 or 10 minutes of variable intensity flashing, the ML began slowly descending. It then extinguished and reappeared as a bright red light that lasted only 2–3 seconds. The light did not reappear after that.

An extensive network of ranch roads and trails seem to go almost everywhere in Mitchell Flat but none could be found near where the ML was observed. . . . The pulsing behavior of this light combined with the unavailability of roads on the side of a very steep mountain slope makes it unlikely that this light could have been a vehicle.

This is a typical sighting that, although not sensational, has multiple witnesses, was observed for more than a few seconds, and places the light in an area with little, if any, vehicular traffic.

The evidentiary core of the book is the photos and other scientific data collected by Bunnell, including spectra of some of the lights. Rarely have spectra been recorded for unusual lights of this type, but Bunnell’s doggedness, and willingness to self-fund his investigations, allowed him to collect this valuable data. I suspect that his photos comprise possibly the largest collection of well-documented images of unexplained phenomenon that exists anywhere, save Hessdalen in Norway.

His work demonstrates, though, the difficulty we face in investigating the UFO phenomenon. The genuinely mysterious Marfa lights, he estimates, occur on about 3% of all nights, or about one per month or so. We could label this frequency as rare, but compare this with viewing UFOs from any one location. Although UFOs are reported from all over the globe, all the time, UFOs in the same small area occur very, very infrequently, except for a few favored locations, such as the Hudson Valley in the early 1980s. So even when we have all the equipment and everything else it takes to do a competent field investigation, the chances of recording several UFOs in a reasonable time period are vanishingly small (which should make those who have had a sighting feel somewhat fortunate).

After throwing out some earlier instrumented data for quality-control reasons, his database has 52 events, collected from 2005 to 2008. He has learned to filter out artificial lights of all types. One great help has been his use of multiple cameras to triangulate the position of a light. His steady progress is an excellent example of how experimental science proceeds. You don’t get equipment or protocols right the first time; it requires tweaking and adjustment, and sometimes wholesale changes, to collect solid data. As proof of that, his cameras can capture sprites and the even more elusive giant



Marfa lights viewing platform, 2004. Creative Commons photo by Daniel Schwen.

jets above thunderstorms. In September 2005, he was the first to record a giant jet over continental North America. (For a description and images, see the *Journal of Geophysical Research* 112, D20104(2007), at people.ee.duke.edu/~cummer/reprints/069_vandervelde07_jgr_giantjet.pdf.)

Bunnell’s data allows him to test, in a rough way, several of the more reasonable theories advanced to explain the Marfa lights. There are several ideas about the lights. Some theorize that they are a chemical phenomenon, caused by the burning of substances in the atmosphere, probably released from underground. Others suggest the lights are more likely to be some type of electromagnetic phenomenon, caused by piezoelectric effects or some other electrical discharge that ionizes the atmosphere. There are pros and cons for both hypotheses, which you can read about in the book. The spectra taken have been inconclusive because they haven’t had the necessary resolution (although Bunnell is working on that). Spectra have been both continuous and discontinuous (showing emission lines), so he can’t yet pin down the source (although there is nothing to preclude multiple causes for the lights).

The lights sometimes change position, and when distance and direction are accurately calculated, tend to move from the southeast to northwest, or vice versa. Although geological maps showing fault zones are not very precise, it does appear that faults tend to run in these same directions.

Bunnell presents abundant data for the interested reader to ponder (including specifications for his equipment). One point that caught my attention was how 88% of all his recorded events occurred within four hours of sunset (the time of which varies during the year). Although we don’t normally compare the time of UFO sightings to sunset, the general pattern is the same. UFO sightings occur most frequently in the evening, after dark but before midnight. With UFOs this is often attributed to the fact that more people are outside at those times than in the middle of the night, but since Bunnell’s data mostly comes from automated cameras, this restriction doesn’t apply.

There is no other book in the literature comparable to *Hunting Marfa Lights* except Harley Rutledge's *Project Identification* (Prentice-Hall, 1981), which reported on Rutledge and his students' investigation into a small flap of UFO sightings in southeast Missouri in the early 1970s. They also took many photos, triangulated positions, and made some serious measurements, but eventually had to stop because the lights ceased appearing regularly.

You can read Bunnell's tome for some intriguing and weird sightings of strange lights. You can read it to learn about one man's determined quest to investigate the lights despite many challenges (his first wife died soon after he began this work). Or you can read it to learn how to do fieldwork on elusive phenomena. The UFO field should learn from his approach.—*Mark Rodeghier*.

Hidden Realms, Lost Civilizations, and Beings from Other Worlds, by Jerome Clark. Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 2010. ISBN 978-1-57859-175-6. 300p.

Lest anyone has forgotten, trying to understand UFOs is a walk through a maze. The typical ufologist wants a straightforward problem, usually one that resolves into nuts-and-bolts vehicles from another planet and provides ample evidence to persuade any rational person of this fact.

The reality is far less clear-cut. Explanations that UFOs are extraterrestrial visitors, military black ops, or angels and demons demonstrate that the same evidence can fit, or be forced to fit, multiple contradictory theories. Even basic observations in ufology are not so much immutable facts as starting places for argument, blamed on human error, seen as being under the influence of expectations, and devalued as evidence by the critics.

What the field of ufology is all about has no firm boundaries; rather, it opens the door for ancient astronauts, crop circles, conspiracy theories, and various other associations with more or less relevance. What ufologists do all too often is promote an agenda, defend turf, or engage in unsupported speculation, so that outsiders see nothing to take more seriously than a circus of true believers and ranting cranks. Even the most scientific ufologists, those who know that something interesting underlies the mess, may ignore the faults and follies of their field as they focus narrowly, even desperately, on the best evidence.

In most other contexts this exclusiveness would make perfectly good sense, but not in ufology. Here the surrounding baggage is too heavy, its distractions too burdensome on the very goals of understanding UFOs and appreciating their importance. The phenomenon cannot be understood apart from its human entanglements. Too little reckoning with the human contribution leaves ufology looking more like a club for the faithful than a pursuit with scientific ambitions.

If the human element confuses the understanding of UFOs, the phenomenon itself refuses to make things easier.

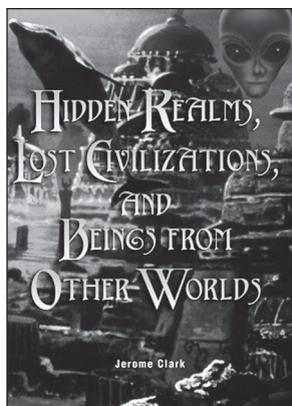
Many sober reports from reliable witnesses describe UFOs that move like immaterial objects, disappear rather than fly away, or bend light as if it were a solid substance. A stock materialistic explanation for these apparent impossibilities calls on an alien technology so advanced that it seems like magic, but this recourse echoes with a hollowness that only emphasizes the strangeness of the descriptions and leaves the class of high-strangeness events as one of the most puzzling aspects of UFOs. A robust level of strangeness seems inherent in the phenomenon and joins with human distortions to lower a double whammy of difficulty on our efforts to understand.

One response has been an attempt to reduce the whole mystery to human terms. The psychosocial school designates UFOs as a human phenomenon with nothing unconventional left over, proclaiming that cultural content and psychological predispositions are sufficient to explain all the apparent strangeness of the subject. Another response poles apart from this one seeks to account for the high strangeness of UFOs as part of a still larger mystery. Some 40 years ago Jacques Vallee pointed out the numerous parallels between UFOs and fairy lore, and John Keel emphasized the likenesses between UFO occupants and demons. These inquiries

broke the bounds of ufology by recognizing that isolation of UFOs from other anomalous manifestations takes too limited an approach. If common threads underlie all things strange, an understanding of one part requires an understanding of all. The real goal of ufology, in this view, must expand to a unified field theory for all anomalies.

Perhaps no one has explored UFOs as anomalies with more persistence and discipline than Jerome Clark. He joined Vallee and Keel in the early exploration of continuities between UFOs and other anomalies, drawing on fairies, phantom airships, mystery monsters, and even the discredited tales of contactees to build a case that some broader phenomenon connects these various parts. In *The Unidentified* (with Loren Coleman, 1975), he veered away from the extraterrestrial hypothesis, but later repudiated the book as youthful excess and returned to the ETH as a seemingly inescapable conclusion. One issue that has never escaped him throughout his career is the inherent complexity of UFOs. They join the material and the immaterial, observational experience with human concerns and traditional attributes, the unique manifestation with a network of ties to other anomalies.

Clark's recent thinking has centered on "experience anomalies"—the sincere and circumstantial testimonies of people that they have encountered something that cannot be. UFOs, fairies, monsters, and supernatural apparitions do not belong to consensus reality, yet they continue to pop up unannounced and unexpected to baffle honest people, who continue to report seeing them despite rejection and ridicule. These sightings appear to be observations of a physical phe-



nomenon, but Clark takes care to recognize that "reality" is a thing of many layers and distinguishes experience from event. We cannot know the event behind an observation in many cases, but we can treat an experiential description on its own terms, as folklorist David Hufford does in his experience-centered approach to extranormal experiences like Old Hag attack. For Clark the often-intractable strands of the UFO mystery converge in some semblance of manageable form at the level of experience anomalies.

Any publication from Clark is a welcome event and his latest book, *Hidden Realms, Lost Civilizations, and Beings from Other Worlds*, more than fulfills the reader's high expectations. It is not, strictly speaking, a "UFO book." Its first section deals with lost continents and supposed underground civilizations; the second section treats ideas about life on the moon, Mars, and other bodies of the solar system; the third section addresses experiences with fairies, spectral apparitions, and phantom airships.

If these materials seem at first glance to be hodgepodge and peripheral, Clark applies them to the common goals of illuminating both the ideational and the experiential sides of the UFO mystery. Each selection has served as a feeder idea with influence on the development of ufological thinking.

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Ad from inside cover of Summer 1948 issue of Fate.

Each of them has also become the subject of experiential claims within ufology or in instances that closely parallel UFO experiences. The result is a rare perspective on the human relationship with the UFO phenomenon.

Readers who followed the UFO literature of the 1950s and 1960s probably have a keener awareness of lost continents than any ufologist today. The idea of advanced civilizations on earth in former times still figures in some ancient-astronaut and alternative-history writing, but any supposed ties of Atlantis and Lemuria with UFOs are largely forgotten now. It was a different story in the early years of modern ufology. Issues of *Fate* magazine were full of advertisements for the writings of Doreal and Edgar Cayce, books about Rainbow City and Inner Earth. Ray Palmer, whose magazine *Flying Saucers* shared with *Fate* the distinction of newsstand circulation and therefore reached a wide audience, promoted an underground civilization left over from the age of lost continents as an alternative to the extraterrestrial hypothesis.

Contactees and ancient-astronaut proponents of the generation before Erich von Däniken, like Desmond Leslie, George Hunt Williamson, and Brinsley Le Poer Trench, spun elaborate tales of visiting aliens shaping the ancient history of mankind and catastrophic destruction of these civilizations. Donald Keyhoe and other evidence-based ufologists had no use for these wild speculations and they collapsed largely of their own unsupported weight. The creative talents of ufological speculation have since turned elsewhere.

Though much of this history goes unfelt and uncredited today, it established a continuing relationship between UFOs and occult ideas that helped define the scope of ufology. Clark raises this history from its sunken depths to our awareness once again. He traces the theme of Lemurians residing inside Mount Shasta, California, to an occult novel, *A Dweller on Two Planets*, written in the late 19th century, and follows additions to this tale by Rosicrucians, the "I AM" cult, channelers, California newspaper columnists, and writers for science-fiction magazines. This artificial local legend entangled with UFOs in stories of the Lemurians flying their saucers out of the mountain, and in yarns of encounters with beautiful, spiritually advanced beings much like the Space Brothers of 1950s contactees.

The curious case of Edgar Cayce concerns a man widely recognized in his own time as a genuine psychic, whose visions also uncovered a lost history of the world. He built a story of spirits trapped in material bodies after the original creation. On Atlantis these beings achieved a high civilization, but conflicts between good and evil elements led to the destruction of the continent and the scattering of remnants of Atlantean culture to Egypt, Yucatan, and other corners of the earth where suggestive ruins are found. Thanks to Cayce's groundwork, later writers on ancient astronauts needed little originality.

Much credit for steering the idea of inner-earth civilizations into ufology goes to Ray Palmer. As editor of the science-fiction magazine *Amazing Stories* in the early 1940s, he published a story by Richard S. Shaver concerning an



*Cover of March 1945
Amazing Stories featuring
Richard Shaver's story, "I
Remember Lemuria"*

advanced Atlantean race that fled the earth when the sun began giving off degenerative radiation, leaving behind a remnant of good beings, the *teros*, and a more populous race of evil-doers, the *deros*. Both groups lived in caverns deep within the earth and used

the ancient technology to influence human behavior, for good or ill. Palmer served as ghost writer and “enabler” of the Shaver Mystery until he lost his job as editor. He took immediate interest in flying saucers as a continuation of his previous interests and promoted both Shaver and other inner-earth tales as a publisher and editor of his own magazines during the 1950s and 1960s. If the Space Brothers became technological angels within the contactee movement, the *deros* served as popular ufology’s first technodevils. The Shaver Mystery set a pattern for paranoia and hidden forces of evil that conspiracy theories have taken over today, but despite a new cast of villains, considerable continuity characterizes the old and the new in ufological demonology. Clark restores Palmer and Shaver to their proper places in ufological history.

Important as the history is in its own right, Clark highlights experience as another factor vital to understanding these strange claims. They were not presented as fiction, and they often gathered supporting testimony from purported eyewitnesses. People asserted that they actually met the Lemurians or entered the cities inside Mount Shasta. Others stepped forward to say that they encountered the *deros*, and Shaver himself described both psychic and physical contact with the underground races.

Without a doubt hoaxes, self-delusions, and mental disturbances can explain most of these tales, as well as the use made of them by contactees, but these examples also serve as a reminder that experience consists of multiple layers. The testimony of a witness can support a fictitious history as well as a factual one and only a full background check on a story, its content, and its narrator allow separation of the true from the false.

Clark’s section on the moons and planets of the solar system provides background on one of the central ideas of ufology, the extraterrestrial hypothesis. The notion that all heavenly bodies are worlds, that is, homes of living beings, goes back to ancient times and enjoyed support with both the public and astronomers well into the 19th century.

The “plurality of worlds” doctrine attracted philosophical discussions of how the people of Mercury must be quick and vivacious, while the inhabitants of Saturn are thoughtful and melancholy. Expectations of life on other worlds led noted astronomers to find cities on the moon or conclude that a layer of clouds protect the inhabitants of the sun from its fiery upper atmosphere. Even after scientific findings of the late 19th century demolished the optimistic views of pluralism, discovery of linear features supposed to be canals concentrated expectations of intelligent life onto the planet Mars. In scientific dispute, science fiction, and popular belief, Mars enjoyed a long career as the home to an old and technologically advanced civilization struggling to survive on a dying planet, aliens that, ever since the appearance of H. G. Wells’s *War of the Worlds* in 1897, might seek their salvation by invading the earth.

Clark explores at length the widespread suspicion of early ufologists that UFOs arrived from nearby planets. Donald Keyhoe speculated that atomic explosions on earth alarmed the Martians and brought them in unprecedented numbers for surveillance and perhaps to plan an attack. The contactees embraced the whole solar system. They favored the prettiest planets, Venus and Saturn, but traveled by spaceship to the moon and Mars as well, while inhabitants of Jupiter and the rest chimed in with messages to their chosen contacts.

Ancient astronaut theories postulated that the Garden of Eden existed on Mars, while whole books have interpreted lunar features as the structures and mining operations of aliens. The Face on Mars renewed interest in an alien presence on the Red Planet for recent readers. In a deeper sense, many tenets of the current ETH originate in previous ideas about other planets; for example, abductees receive messages about ecological catastrophe that parallel the dying-planet motif in speculations about Mars from a hundred years ago.

In his excursion across the planets Clark presents new facets of the experiential conundrum. The Martian canal

Collier's, April 30, 1954

IS THERE LIFE ON MARS?

By DR. FRED L. WHIPPLE

Chairman, Department of Astronomy, Harvard University

Astronomer Fred Whipple speculates about life on Mars in this April 30, 1954, issue of Collier's.

controversy demonstrates that hopes and expectations can build on observational errors to create an appealing, even convincing case for a version of reality that proves utterly false.

This episode of history serves as a cautionary tale for ufologists, but equally troubling is the human capacity to internalize the beliefs of a time. The visionary interplanetary journeys of 18th-century mystic Emanuel Swedenborg led him to describe aliens that were largely human in appearance and behavior. A spate of psychic visits to Mars around 1900 resulted in reports that the planet was indeed covered with a system of canals. Noted inventors like Tesla and Marconi jumped to the conclusion that disturbances picked up by their radio apparatus resulted from signals of the Martians.

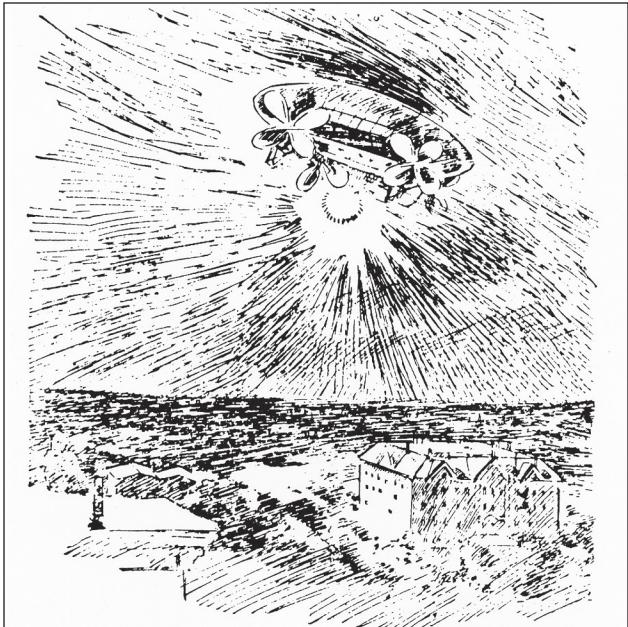
The contactees had a choice of ideas in the 1950s of what Venus might be like, whether its surface was a hot desert, a steaming jungle, or an ocean world. It comes as little surprise that they favored a lush and beautiful paradise, their claims supportive of one another yet altogether wrong. Experience emerges in Clark's historical exhibits as anything but a straightforward relationship between inner and outer truth. What we see instead is the potential for both deception and self-deception, with the influence of ongoing beliefs always intrusive into the mix.

The issue of experience comes to the forefront in the third section, where Clark treats fairy encounters and strange sights in the sky like spectral armies, flying serpents, and phantom airships. In these accounts the witness is less often some shadowy narrator from the remote past but an eyewitness, someone with a name and a familiar face within a community and sup-

ported as truthful by its members. These cases present anomalous experience as a strange, even impossible event that happens to ordinary people going about their everyday business, not psychics, New Agers, or true believers. These witnesses expect nothing unusual to occur and scratch their heads in wonder once the event has passed, leaving them with nothing but the experience to confirm that anything happened at all.



A prayer from Cornwall called the Cornish Litany goes like this: "From ghoulies and ghosties and long leggety beasties and things that go bump in the night—good Lord deliver us."



The Mysterious Flying Light That Hovered Over St. Mary's College, Oakland, and Then Started for San Francisco. It Is Exactly Like That Described by Sacramentoans, and Similar to the Cut Published a Few Days Ago in "The Call" From a Description Furnished by One Who Saw It.

Herein lie perhaps the most baffling aspects of extranormal experience—the certitude of the observation, the fact that multiple witnesses may report the same thing, the continuity of the reports through time, and the ephemeral, apparition-like quality of the encounter.

Similarities between close encounters and fairy legends have armed psychosocial critics with one of their favorite arguments against UFOs. Clark cautions that these comparisons are often overstated, but he also notes that on occasion parallels like lights in the sky, diminutive entities, and missing time can be striking. Yet while the particulars have little more than a coincidental quality, fairy and UFO encounters share something more substantial as experiences. The puzzlement of the witnesses, the oddity of the encounter, and its indelible impression earmark both types of experience. They differ in content but not in form. This same formal likeness carries over to apparitions of aerial armies and ghost ships, often witnessed by multiple observers, or in recurrent accounts of flying snakes or dragon-like monsters, seemingly physical in nature yet as elusive as UFOs.

The closest likenesses associate modern UFOs with the phantom airships of the 1890s and early 1900s. No pre-1947 aerial phenomenon seems more UFO-like than these sightings. They came in intensive waves and the reports describe a technological device, but one always a step ahead of its time, seen by thousands but never traced to the supposed inventor. Little wonder that modern ufologists have suspected that witnesses mistook an alien spaceship for an earthly flying machine. A hard look at the reports offers little support for this supposition. None of the phantom airships looked like a flying saucer or anything other than

the fanciful aircraft that so many people anticipated at the time. Hoaxes and mass hysteria undoubtedly account for many of the accounts. One of the pioneer investigators of the 1897 wave, Clark continues to find a remnant of intriguing cases wherein demonstrably real citizens of high repute affirmed close views of a mysterious craft and meeting with its occupants (see pp. 4–7, 22). Whatever the nature of the airship—whether it was the work of secretive inventors or a spaceship in disguise—the experience of something out of the ordinary lingers as a seemingly inescapable fact.

Clark points out that some few UFO cases of a modern sort turn up in old newspapers. Such findings undercut the case for expectations creating a mystery out of observational errors and suggest that an independent phenomenon exists. But for him the broader issue of experienced anomalies eclipses the issue of UFOs alone. Many strange things besides UFOs go on in this world; some have their answers in human foibles and fallibilities, others grow more and more mysterious as we search for the answers.

Like Charles Fort, Clark quests for a unified understanding of these anomalies, for a theory not yet in hand. As a result the book does not end with any neat resolution, rather with a certain sense of awe. “It is likely,” he concludes, “that if mystery airships are not poorly described UFOs, they are something almost infinitely stranger. To all

available appearances, the airship sightings . . . are not just unexplained but inexplicable—an impenetrable enigma . . . its source invisible to science and understanding, vanished but for the testimony of the long dead.” With this insight the ending becomes a necessary beginning, an acknowledgment that our understanding is not just incomplete but actually somewhere back near square one.

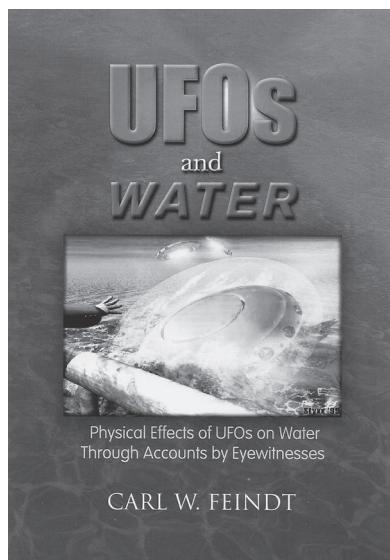
Guided by Clark through these diverse mysteries, readers are in good hands. I doubt that anyone, however well-versed in the main currents and byways of ufology, will come away without learning much or finding ample reason to reflect. Enlivening his subject matter with drama, elegance, and wit, he makes deep scholarship a pleasure to read and the hard thinking that these issues require an adventure rather than a chore. The book itself is an attractive production with many color pictures.

If I can find any fault at all, it is a need to explore even further the culture of hoaxes and practical jokes that surrounded the airship waves. I also came away wishing that he would elaborate more on his thoughts about experience anomalies, but perhaps that remains a story for another day. For now *Hidden Realms, Lost Civilizations, and Beings from Other Worlds* comprises a masterful exploration of the ideational and experiential underpinnings of ufology, in another must-read contribution from one of the leading scholars of the field.—Thomas E. Bullard.

Wonders in the Sky: Unexplained Aerial Objects from Antiquity to Modern Times, by Jacques Vallee and Chris Aubeck. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2010. ISBN 978-1585428205. 528p.

The past is old and weird. It gets weirder, too, as it gets older. It is weird—as culture critic Greil Marcus famously noticed in his *Invisible Republic* (1997), immersed in the otherworld of America’s folk songs and ballads—even when it is not trying to be. Worse, the past recedes daily, growing ever more distant from our reach and ever more incomprehensible. Almost as vexingly, there is the present. After Marcus’s book was published, I happened to discuss it with a knowledgeable acquaintance, the late folk-blues singer Dave Van Ronk. Notorious for his caustic iconoclasm, Van Ronk professed himself unmoved by Marcus’s much-remarked-upon notion of an “old, weird America.” “America’s always weird,” he growled.

Wonders in the Sky isn’t specifically about America, which as a young country only sporadically figures in a book that ends in 1879, but it is about the kind of weirdness that was considered weird even in its time, mostly long ago and far away. It is a kind of sequel to Jacques Vallee’s *Passport to Magonia: From Folklore to Flying Saucers* (1969), which for good and ill changed ufology in all sorts of ways that Vallee is curiously—one might say stubbornly—unwilling to concede even four decades later. *Passport* sought to steer the discussion away from hard-core UFO cases (radar/visuals and close encounters of the second kind) and toward pre-UFO-era supernatural traditions, a path down which in fact



Have you ever wondered what effects UFOs have on water? Find out through eyewitness accounts and other documents as detailed in Carl W. Feindt’s *UFOs and Water*—an informative and eye-opening book with hundreds of descriptions of UFO sightings on or near bodies of water. Visit waterufo.net/book/buy.html for ordering information.

all too many ufologists and anomalists rushed without pausing for breath. (Including me. The embarrassing details are preserved in nearly everything, including a couple of books, that I wrote in the 1970s.) Still, whatever its shortcomings, *Passport* offered an intriguingly fresh view, and few who read it put it aside unmoved in some fashion.

As an extended appendix *Passport* featured “A Century of UFO Landings (1868–1968).” Though this catalog, which attracted nearly as much attention as the text preceding it, proved flawed, it was a praiseworthy effort to launch the essential business of making lists. After all, nobody expects, or ought to expect, the first explorers to get the geography any more than imperfectly mapped. Wonders returns to the country of the past, its contours now better known but still not so well as to be definitively delineated.

Vallee and anomalist Chris Aubeck take on historical strangeness, retrieved from a wide range of protoscientific records and oral traditions, in search of the “true” UFO phenomenon, its nature unstipulated except—so we are sternly and repeatedly assured—that it has nothing to do with either skeptics’ visions on one side or extraterrestrial hypothesizers’ on the other. Moreover, it has always been here. Vallee lambastes me for public suggestions to the contrary, derived from the conclusions—of which Vallee is evidently unaware—of the deeply informed folklorist/ufologist Thomas E. Bullard. In the definition here, “UFO” often appears to be anything extraordinary seen, or allegedly seen, in the sky or descending from it, and otherwise unexplainable.

Broadly speaking, however, the data are subjected to a more than usual degree of critical screening, whose purpose is to eliminate at least the bogus and the prosaic. What remains, however one interprets it, seems beyond prosaic accounting, or so it does if one thinks (as the authors, I, and most *IUR* readers do) that phenomena “beyond prosaic accounting” occur. This is *Wonders*’ single greatest strength, one that on its own places the book on the top shelf of UFO/anomalous literature and makes it one that all who are interested in the questions it raises will have to read.

Five hundred instances of high strangeness (ca. 1460 B.C.E. to 1879) fill the first 352 pages, with occasional stops for comment and analysis. Subsequently, the book studies related materials which are interesting for their own reasons, though either demonstrably false or so shakily documented as to be unworthy of inclusion as anything arguably factual. It must also be said, though, that some of the 500 “best” cases are not always convincing, as the authors are frank to acknowledge with perhaps a few exceptions.

Those taken from UFO literature, which has not done well by early aerial anomalies, are especially suspect. Vallee and Aubeck, who know as much, cite some notorious examples. Over the history of that literature, beginning in the very first books issued in 1950, misrepresentation and outright fiction have been dismally close to the norm.

Here is an example (not in the book but from my own personal observation).

According to a June 1873 account from a Texas newspaper, the *Bonham Enterprise*, a man who lived in the country east of town sighted “an enormous serpent floating in a cloud that was passing over his farm. Several parties of men and boys at work in the fields observed the same thing, and were seriously frightened. It seemed . . . to be of a yellow striped color, and seemed to float along without any effort. They could see it coil itself up, turn over, and thrust forward its huge head as if striking at something.” This is the sole contemporary account of the alleged incident.

Consider, then, its retelling in Donald Keyhoe’s *The Flying Saucers Are Real* (1950): “It was broad daylight when a strange, fast-moving object appeared in the sky, southwest [sic] of the town. For a moment, the people of Bonham stared at the thing, not believing their eyes. . . . This thing was tremendous, and speeding so fast its outlines were

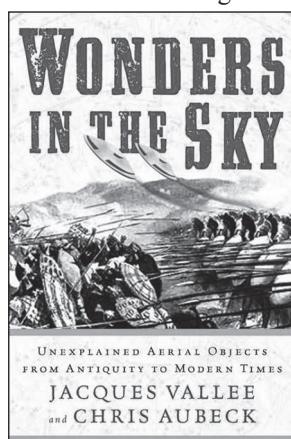
at most a blur. Terrified farmers dived under their wagons. Townspeople fled indoors. Only a few hardy souls remained in the streets. The mysterious object circled Bonham twice, then raced off to the east and vanished. Descriptions of the strange machine varied from round or oval to cigar-shaped.” Consider, too, that Keyhoe was the most reputable public UFO proponent of his time.

Happily, this sort of thing is not the problem with *Wonders*. Its problem, on the other hand, is that its definition of “UFO” is an elusive thing, always serving—so one cannot help inferring—Vallee’s determination to beat the

ETH heresy to death, displaying an irritation of temper sufficient to interfere with his ability to think measuredly about what is in front of him. I learn that my two-centuries-old UFO phenomenon—or, more accurately, my endorsement of Bullard’s 200-year-old mystery—is intended to demonstrate that “UFOs are extraterrestrial spacecraft bent on studying or inspecting the Earth, perhaps as a result of the atomic explosions of [sic] Hiroshima and Nagasaki.” Well, no. (A note: I wish to make it clear that in my criticisms I exempt Aubeck, the researcher, from Vallee, the ideologue.)

As usually stated, proponents of the ETH hold that the phenomenon is thousands of years old. One strain of thinking, going back to the earliest days of the UFO controversy, is that sightings merely increased after World War II, which is to all appearances the case, whatever it means (though in his *Strange Company* [2007] Keith Chester finds reason to think that the modern wave may have begun during World War II). Bullard and I have separately written that UFOs as generally understood are hard to find prior to the 19th century. (See, for example, Bullard’s “Anomalous Aerial Phenomena Before 1800” in my *UFO Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., 1998, pp. 121–38.) Rather than attempting to promote the ETH as such, we were criticizing one popular aspect of it.

Of course, the ETH neither stands nor falls on how old



its proposed alien visitations are. But it is useful to know how long metallic discs, spheres, and cigars and puzzling nocturnal lights have been reported. Specifically, if people were seeing unknown aerial phenomena answering to these descriptions before they could have heard of flying saucers and all that would be associated with them, the cliché objection that UFOs are a fantasy creation of popular culture falls. People were seeing what sound very much like modern UFOs in the 19th century, and some of these sightings were reported in contemporary papers and documents. One example I uncovered in the course of archival research is in a December 6, 1887, letter to the editor printed in an upstate New York paper, the *Gouverneur Free Press*. A correspondent from the nearby village of Fine wrote to chronicle his October 24 sighting of “silver balls, reminding me of silver coin of all denominations, bright and sparkling, rumbling and rushing through the air” against the wind. “This grand phenomenon was visible about 4 minutes, and was seen by several persons in this town. Can any one tell me . . . what it was, and the cause of it?” That question resounds more than a century later.

It bears mentioning, incidentally, that even after the summer of 1947, UFOs and ET visitors were not routinely linked. According to polling data, that didn’t happen until the early to mid 1950s. In short, Vallee to the contrary, “hasty conclusions” were not what brought people to the ETH. The ETH became dominant only when it dawned on people that if you put skeptical explanations and secret-weapon speculations aside, visitation from elsewhere in the universe—wrongly or rightly—seemed the most logical one left standing. (Yes, ufologists arrived there a little sooner, for the simple reason that they were paying closer attention than most.) Very well-documented hard-evidence cases—radar/visuals, close encounters of the second kind—have long lent plausibility to the notion that the core UFO phenomenon is the physical product of somebody else’s advanced technology. Moreover, as astronomers discover ever more extrasolar planets and discuss openly the prospect of a densely populated galaxy, it is hardly a stretch to deduce that if those much-vaunted potential millions (in some estimates, tens of millions) of civilizations, many far older than ours, are out there, visitations from ETs are not just possible but predictable. Actually, their absence could indicate that intelligent life is rare to nonexistent outside the earth. The ETH may be correct or it may be not so, but it is hardly absurd or stupid.

In common with nearly all other UFO theorists, Vallee is an absolutist operating in a narrow playing field. All UFO phenomena are one thing if they’re anything, and since he’s been crusading against the ETH for 40 years or more, he’s eliminated that option, at least in his mind and (as I know well as a frequent recipient of the requisite polemics) the minds of his legion of followers within ufology, where—stereotypes aside—the ETH has turned into something of a heresy in the years since *Passport to Magonia*. The only alternative for Vallee, apparently, is some shadowy supernatural manifestation, linked in some of his lesser works to

enigmatic, sinister—or, anyway, unclearly defined—earthly conspirators.

Given Vallee’s manifest intelligence and erudition (notwithstanding a lamentable, inexplicable turn toward exclamation points—“screamers” to our British friends—in the present volume), I have always found this depressing. It is discouraging that even after all this time, he refuses to reexamine or modify his position. Anomalists know that all kinds of odd experiences happen to people, both currently and historically, but few would deny that their causes are various and usually unrelated. Not even Vallee—at least I haven’t seen such in any of his published work—would argue that haunted houses and landing traces have any discernable connection. Strange things happen in this world, as a popular song—about a vanishing hitchhiker, not to be confused with a humanoid UFO occupant—once observed, and one is not necessarily the same as the other.

The ETH works for a subset of reports—let us call it the core phenomenon, the one that generated all of the excitement to start with—and it doesn’t work so well for others. Not coincidentally perhaps, the latter comprise, without exception, those carrying the least evidential weight. These are the reports of highest strangeness, dependent in their entirety on testimony (even if, frequently enough, sincere and striking) and little more. There is, in short, no abduction equivalent to the RB-47 case, nor, I am confident, will there ever be. The RB-47 cases are anomalous events; abductions, otherworld journeys, men in black, Mothman, and the like are anomalies of experience only. Which doesn’t mean that they are easily explainable; to the contrary, they may defy current knowledge in ways the ETH, easily containable within—even if, for muddled reasons, rejected by—the thinking of any SETI astronomer, does not.

Experience anomalies are vividly perceived, startling, often frightening, but they don’t show up on radar screens. They assume variable forms, and they are the experiential side of supernatural belief, where people “see” fairies, entities, monsters, and more. They are encountered in liminal space, somewhere between an individual’s awareness and a culture’s imagined otherworld. They are what cause thoughtful folklorists (Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan, authors of *Scottish Fairy Belief* [2001]) to declare, “It should be possible to believe one’s informants without believing their explanations,” without meaning anything reductive by it. Experience anomalies don’t even have to take as their models supernatural traditions. Even poorly understood natural phenomena will do. As sociologist James McClenon writes in *Deviant Science* (1984), “An effect that occurred during an electrical storm would be termed ‘ball lightning.’ . . . Other cases with the same exact appearance but occurring in other circumstances”—in some of which the phenomenon appears to act purposefully—“would be called UFOs, psychic lights, or will-o’-the-wisps.”

As the most visible modern symbol of the otherworld, the UFO image calls up cultural memories and may generate experiences that transcend what arguably actual UFOs—those

with which unexplainable traces and instrumented observations are linked—appear capable of. As with, as just noted, the event anomaly ball lightning and its fantastic experiential correlates. Does any evidence compel us to believe that all reported UFO phenomena are in some broad sense identical? A metallic disc that leaves extraordinary ground traces that can be analyzed in a laboratory need not to be the same one that takes a claimant to another planet and leaves him with a disturbing memory and the rest of us with a strange story, and no more. Those kinds of fabulous tales, as Vallee himself was the first to make something of, betray a long history in supernatural testimony in which UFO-like phenomena are strikingly absent.

Some of that is here, as are assorted apparitional figures (typically, phantom armies) in the sky along with “ships”—not as in spaceships but as in ones that, in ordinary circumstances, float above water as opposed to witnesses’ heads. Luminous shapes (as often as not the Blessed Virgin Mary) show up, with messages or directions to an object (e.g., a statue) of sacred significance. Flaming dragons and horse-drawn chariots charge through the air. A farm worker is carried off by a “large black cat,” and elsewhere the sun and the moon split into two or more pieces, voices echo from on high, and blood falls. Demons and angels enter people’s houses, and stars engage in combat. Aerial giants hold snakes in their oversized hands.

My personal favorite (case #157) is a 1491 experience told by Facius Cardan and recorded by his son, the better-known Jerome Cardan:

When I had completed the customary rites . . . seven men duly appeared to me clothed in silken garments resembling Greek togas, and wearing, as it were, shining shoes. The undergarments beneath their glistening and ruddy breastplates seemed to be wrought of crimson and were of extraordinary glory and beauty. Nevertheless all were not dressed in this fashion, but only two who seemed of nobler rank than the others. The taller of them who was of ruddy complexion was attended by two companions, and the second, who was fairer and of shorter stature, by three. Thus in all there were seven. They were about forty years of age, but they did not appear to be above thirty. When asked who they were, they said they were men composed, as it were, of air. . . .

The metaphorical air in *Wonders* is rich, and the book’s content is undeniably riveting. Even so, those inclined to conflate such manifestations with the UFO phenomenon of daylight discs, electromagnetic effects, and radar/visuals need to keep in mind that comparably miraculous visions were reported as late as the 19th century and into the 20th; some examples can be found in my *Hidden Realms, Lost Continents, and Beings from Other Worlds* (2010) and elsewhere. UFOs as such did not exactly or entirely supplant them, in other words, but they did relegate them to the background. If more than six decades into the UFO controversy witnesses still face ridicule, imagine what the sighting of an army in the

sky or the experience of visitation from middle-aged tog-clad air-men would do. I am sure that experience anomalies of preposterous outlandishness still are undergone. It’s just that we don’t hear about them because of well-founded fear of fierce social backlash.

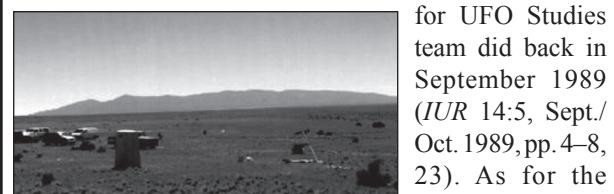
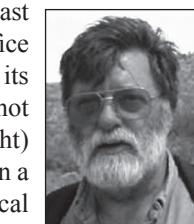
Wonders also records some instances of nocturnal lights which can plausibly be called UFOs and would probably be thought of as such if they dropped into our own time. Ironically, they look tame next to much that enlivens these pages. There’s enough here to make a case that UFOs are more than two centuries old, but even more to underscore something we knew already: The past is weird, just like the present.—Jerome Clark. ♦

UNM ROSWELL SITE REPORT

In 2002, the Sci-Fi Channel (now known as Syfy) provided over \$25,000 in funding for a two-week excavation at the site on the Foster ranch near Corona, New Mexico, where in 1947 Mack Brazel found the debris that has come to be associated with the Roswell incident. The investigation was conducted by Dick Chapman and William H. Doleman of the University of New Mexico’s Office of Contract Archaeology, and much of the story was covered in *The Roswell Dig Diaries*, published in 2004 by Simon & Schuster for the Sci-Fi Channel, with contributions by Doleman, Tom Carey, and Don Schmitt.

According to a November 5 newscast by KRQE-TV in Albuquerque, the Office of Contract Archaeology published its final report in May (although it is not available on the web). Chapman (right) was quoted as saying, “We engaged in a highly credible standard archaeological investigation of a piece of landscape that has been warranted to be the location of a flying saucer event.” The team also discovered a stratigraphic anomaly (a possible gouge or furrow).

CUFOS Scientific Director Mark Rodeghier comments, “They essentially went to the same place the Center



The debris field in 2002.

for UFO Studies team did back in September 1989 (IUR 14:5, Sept./Oct. 1989, pp. 4–8, 23). As for the anomaly, I think they are stretching things a bit to connect it to the event. There was no report that the object made a deep gouge, which is what would be required, I think, to create the anomaly. It’s definitely too uncertain to tie it to a crash or any other event. The key points of the UNM investigation are that they looked seriously for evidence and didn’t find anything close to definitive, but certainly they didn’t do everything possible, and therefore a crash still can’t be ruled out.”

LETTER

FLAWED MEMORY

To the editor:

I found the latest issue of *IUR* quite interesting, particularly the article titled “NARCAP’s Project Sphere” (33:2, pp. 3–7) by Richard Haines. NARCAP might be the single most important UFO (UAP) investigative group currently on the scene anywhere in the world. The legitimate tie-in to aircraft safety might attract many intelligent people (some with technical expertise) who might otherwise be turned off by the subject matter. NARCAP is deserving of widespread media attention, and one day might hopefully get it.

My comments are directed toward one specific aspect of the article, the (approximately) 1962 B-52 report. This is a report that—taken at face value—is not only fascinating, but potentially very important as well. But therein lies the problem: Can we take it at face value, or should we regard it with considerable caution?

Frankly, I’d love for it to be an accurate representation of what occurred, but wishful thinking doesn’t by itself make it so. We have two problems here that need to be addressed: the more than 20-year lag time between the event itself and the reporting of it by the retired USAF officer to Haines, then the reporting of it by Haines to his UFO colleagues.

Regarding the witness, the problem of flawed memory must be taken into consideration. More than 20 years is a long time to retain in one’s memory an event absolutely accurately, even if it was one that made a deep impression at the time. In this incident, the witness might well in a reasonably accurate way recall what occurred, but can we be certain that various specifics of what he recalled are themselves accurate? Would his recall jibe more or less with the accounts of the other crewmen aboard the B-52? The sad truth is that we simply don’t know, and probably never will. The contemporary documents that almost certainly were drawn up (if they still exist) will probably forever lie beyond our reach. For all practical purposes, it’s a one-witness report, though it’s certainly not the fault of the reporting witness.

Second, with the report by Haines, we have another possible memory problem to consider, though of a less serious nature. Though unable to record it at the time, he presumably did so as soon as possible. But the words that Haines ascribes to the retired USAF officer are his, not that of the witness. I’ll accept that the words are close, but they’re not direct witness testimony. That could make for some differences (perhaps only minor), but that still presents a problem.

If we could ever get our hands on those almost certain contemporary documents, that would make for a major coup for ufology. Not just for this report, but for so many others of similar dramatic nature. However, barring a near miracle, I seriously doubt that this will ever occur. It does seem likely that somewhere, someplace, a treasure trove of valuable documents lie hidden, whose exposure to public view would forever vastly alter the present perception of

the UFO problem. And perhaps even of man’s perception of his place in the universe.

Herb Taylor

The author responds:

Having read and thought about Herb Taylor’s comments on my paper, I can only agree with him for the most part. Human memory does fade and distort (“flawed memory”) over this many years; I could not make a recording of this pilot’s narrative at the time and only jotted down notes soon afterward. Nevertheless, I was quite surprised and delighted that he shared his experience with me at all. Herb is also correct that it is a one-witness report, a fact all too common these days when the second and/or third cockpit eyewitness is unwilling to risk his or her flight career by making a corroborating report. This leaves the reporting witness dangling far out over a very deep precipice.

My primary reason for citing it at all was to illustrate the basic theme of the larger report in which it is found, i.e., spherically shaped UAP, using a never-before published report. Perhaps it would have been a good idea to point out the weaknesses in this report that Herb mentions, right up front. A second reason was to try to encourage readers who are pilots to send in their own sighting reports where flight safety was impacted in some way by some kind of UAP. If and when they do NARCAP can promise them 100% confidentiality as well as feedback on what if anything is discovered. A pilot report for this purpose can be found at www.narcap.org in the “Make a Report” section.

Richard F. Haines



ARSENIC AND MONO LAKE

NASA’s announcement about a December 2 press conference that would disclose a finding of interest to astrobiologists managed to get everyone fired up then deflated when it was revealed that the discovery related to a strain of bacteria, GFAJ-1, found in Mono Lake, California, that has the ability to substitute arsenic molecules for phosphorus in its nucleic acids and proteins. The finding, published in *Science*, has significance for the adaptability of life in extreme environments.

However, the research methodology, conducted by lead investigator Felisa Wolfe-Simon, has been criticized as flawed by a number of scientists. (Read the December 7 article in *Slate*, for example, at www.slate.com/id/2276919/.)

The *Science* article is now available online in full for those who have registered for free access through *Science*/AAAS. To read the article, visit www.sciencemag.org/content/early/2010/12/01/science.1197258.

CIRCLED BY A UFO—*continued from page 3*

passed between the two planes. Because of that, we could estimate the size relative to the length of the Chipmunk's fuselage (7.75 meters): about eight to ten feet.

After about 10 minutes, I still was curious and really wanted to know more about this object, so I decided to make an interception, meaning I would head directly towards it but slightly to the side, so it might be forced to alter its course. I told my two Air Force colleagues there that I was planning an intercept. Since the object's speed was very much faster than my own, I flew directly to a point along the trajectory of its elliptical course. It came towards me and flew right over me, on top of my aircraft, and stopped there, like a helicopter landing but much, much faster, breaking all the rules of aerodynamics. It was very close to my plane, only about 15 feet. I was astonished. I closed my eyes and I froze at this moment, without reacting.

There was no impact . . .

It then flew off in a flash towards the direction of Sintra mountain, to the sea. All this happened so fast that I couldn't do anything with my aircraft to try and avoid the object. One of the other pilots saw the whole thing. ♦

TEXAS AIRSHIP—*continued from page 7*

what they appear, starting with the airships themselves. The research continues, and the data pile up, and the evidence—what there is of it—is gleaned and scrutinized for whatever diamonds lurk in the rough. There will be, almost certainly, no certain answers. That acknowledged, I am nonetheless reasonably persuaded that airships, if they did not exist in the ordinary sense of the verb, were indeed experienced as real, and that includes, on occasion, their crews. In other words, something deeply weird may have been going on, but airships were not proto-UFOs.

There is one more story to tell, another heretofore uncovered in the mystery-airship literature. Dated Eagle Pass, Texas, April 25, 1897, it appears in the *Weimar Mercury* for May 8. The article is another reprint, evidently from a paper referred to as the *Express* but otherwise unidentified.

It mentions that residents had been stirred up by an airship sighting the previous evening. The reporter interviewed Sheriff R. W. Dowe, who had his own encounter to relate. Make of it what you will:

Last night about 12 o'clock some Mexicans came running to my house and told me that a very strange thing of some kind had come down from above and stopped on the bank of the Rio Grande just below Fort Duncan. I went at once to the place and found an air ship and three men on board. They were just from Uvalde and claimed to have had an interview with Sheriff Baylor while there. They claim to have solved the problem of traveling by air. They are going from here to the Devil's river country to locate a herd of buffalo that was seen there some time ago by Mr. Duval West and some hunt-

ers from Galveston. The men are all well known in West Texas, but do not care to have their identity known to the public just yet. One of the men inquired for Capt. C. C. Akers of this place, but was told Mr. Akers was over the river counting some sheep that Mr. Schrimpf is getting ready to ship to market. They filled their canteens with water from the Rio Grande and flew off. They invited me to accompany them, but district court being in session I could not accept."

The article concludes, "Mr. Dowe says it was so dark he could not see the vessel so as to describe it."

So dark indeed.

NOTES

1. For recent examples: "Airship Sightings in the Nineteenth Century" in my *UFO Encyclopedia: The Phenomenon from the Beginning*, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Omnigraphics, 1998), 44–63, and "Mystery Airships: Aeronauts from the Twilight Zone" in my *Hidden Realms, Lost Civilizations, and Beginnings from Other Worlds* (Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 2010), 253–255, 261–275, 278–284.

2. See the discussion on pages 278–282 of *Hidden Realms*.

3. In Cohen's *The Great Airship Mystery: A UFO of the 1890s* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1981), 163–164. ♦

BRIAN BOLDMAN

Sadly, we recently learned that J. Brian Boldman, the ufologist known for his studies of angel's hair cases, died on July 15, 2010, in a fire that destroyed his home in Belews Creek, Forsyth County, North Carolina.

Boldman, who was born in 1961, was a private pilot and a skilled aircraft mechanic who was qualified to taxi (that is, move about on the ground under their own power) airliners and other heavy commercial aircraft. He was an expert not only on angel's hair cases, but also on many other types of Fortean falls. He was one of the few to work with Charles Fort's original notes, preserved in the New York Public Library special collections. Fort's notes, he said, showed more complex and thorough classification and thinking than his books would hint.

Boldman thought that an unknown meteorological process produces solids that quickly sublimate (pass directly from solid to vapor). These solids vary from the jelly-like lumps called *pwdre sér* ("star rot") in Wales to the fibrous stuff we call angel's hair, which can be precipitated by the further-puzzling things we know as UFOs.

It's most probable that Boldman's research material was lost with him—a double loss not only to ufology, but to future meteorology and materials science as well. He was a hardworking and meticulous researcher, no one's fool, and a damn nice guy. We offer our sincere sympathies to his family for their loss.—Frank John Reid.

BEAM OF LIGHT INTO A BODY OF WATER

BY CARL W. FEINDT

Editor's Note: We are pleased to reprint this extract from chapter 12 of Carl Feindt's recent book UFOs and Water. Our thanks to Carl for permission to do so.

In eyewitness accounts involving beams of light, there are no indications of physical changes to the water, but beams of light have been observed many times, so they must have some function. In abductions they are used to transport people from one place to another, as in "Beam me up, Scotty." Could the beam also be a tool for measuring heat, pollutants, or density of life forms in a particular body of water? Could it be a means of communication with another craft still underwater? Another possibility might be that the beam is used to mark a destination to which the aliens would want to return in the future. Something that affects how a beam may be described is the visual distance between the witness and the craft, so that if UFO is up close, the witness will possibly see more than someone who is much further away and can only describe the beam from a distance. Although we still have more questions than answers for the moment, the accounts that follow deal with the beam and may leave some clues for future researchers.

RESIDUAL ILLUMINATION

China Sea off Korea, 1958. A report was given to Bob Pratt by an Indianapolis computer expert who had served in the U.S. Air Force. He had been a sergeant in charge of a fire truck crash crew at an air base on the west coast of South Kore. Late one night in 1958, two American jet fighters flying in from Japan to another base in Korea requested permission to make an emergency landing because one of the planes was low on fuel. As is normal in such emergencies, the fire truck and its crash crew were positioned near the runway in case the plane ran into difficulty.

As the men waited for the planes to arrive, they saw

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a bright light approaching from across the China Sea. The light grew bigger and bigger and, when it got within several hundred yards of the shore, it stopped and hovered a few hundred feet above the water. The sergeant radioed the control tower and asked what it was. The controllers didn't know. They were examining the light through binoculars but couldn't determine anything.

Suddenly, the object shined a beam of light straight down on the water. A short time later the light went off, but the water remained luminescent for a while before fading out. The object again shined a light down on the water and turned it off again a minute or so later. Once again, the water remained luminescent for several minutes.

By this time the jet fighter that was low on fuel was landing, and the control tower asked the pilot of the second plane to check out the light, which was still sitting in the same spot. The pilot of the second jet circled around, and as he approached the object, it instantly shot back toward China and disappeared in seconds. Source: Bob Pratt, *UFO Danger Zone: Terror and Death in Brazil—Where Next?* (Madison, Wis.: Horus House Press, 1996), pp. 247–248.

AGAIN RESIDUAL ILLUMINATION

Rio Tapajós, Amazon Basin, Brazil, January 1980. Late one Saturday night, a Brazilian electronics businessman and nine other people saw a disc-shaped object shine a light down on the water near the eastern shore of the Tapajós river. The man, his family, and some relatives were camping at a beach 30 miles south of Santarém and appeared around 11:00 p.m.

Several teenagers were still awake, lying in hammocks and talking, when they saw the UFO come toward them from across the river. It stopped about 30 yards from the beach and shined a light down on the water 20 yards below. The kids awakened the others. The UFO hovered briefly and then began moving north, or to the campers' right, parallel to the shore. It traveled more than half a mile, with the spotlight still shining straight down, before it disappeared.

The curious thing about all this was that as the beam of light moved along the river, it left behind a trail of luminescence on the surface for several hundred yards. The

trail gradually faded out, south to north, at about the same speed as the light itself had moved. *Source:* Bob Pratt, *UFO Danger Zone*, pp. 246–247.

BENT BEAM

Gibsons, British Columbia, Canada, 1967. Miss E. R. East, a resident of Gibsons, described her report in a letter:

I live alone in the upper half of a house that overlooks the channel between Gibsons and Keats Island. Closing Gibsons Bay is Shoal Point, with a beacon on the end of the shoal which has a blue-white flasher. My kitchen windows are of casement type, and as the ground is built up at the back of the house to allow access, the window sill is only about three feet above ground level. I was awakened in the night by a banging noise and thought someone was trying to open these windows, so I got up to investigate, but when I parted the curtains and looked out, I saw a ball of brilliant orange-red light soaring above the hills back of the village. As I watched, the color changed to a glowing white, and I rushed to my side windows and watched the object sail over the hill towards Georgia Strait. I was bemused and went back to my room and sat on the edge of my bed looking out at the water and thinking of what I had seen. Suddenly, from high above the village, a beam of green light shot down to the water between the shore and the beacon, and as it struck the surface, it bent and lay flat on the water. It reached right across the channel and lit up the wharf on Keats Island. The beam seemed to be made of many small beams, for I could see dark streaks between the green, and it must have been at least ten feet wide, the same width all along the length I could see; I mean, it did not ray out like a flashlight beam would but was compressed into a pencil beam. As I stared at it, my eyes began to sting, and I fell back on my bed, almost in shock. When I roused and looked out, the beam had gone, and I was too stunned to think of looking to see if the UFO was still in sight.

On thinking the episode over, I reasoned that the occupants of the UFO had been attracted by the flasher light of the beacon and were trying to find out what it was. Except for the initial bangs, I heard no sound throughout this incident.

East's sighting was an example of one of the most fascinating UFO tricks, the manipulation of light. While bent and/or compressed beams are occasionally reported, the water-surface beam she saw was rare, if not unique. The banging noise seems to be another UFO trick. *Source:* John Magor, *Our UFO Visitors* (Saanichton, B.C.: Hancock House, 1977), pp. 37–38.

CHANGE IN ANGULAR WIDTH

Cholla Bay, Sonora, Mexico, November 5, 1970. Albert Formiller of Phoenix, Arizona, was fishing for black sea

bass about 9:00 p.m. when he observed a light in the sky coming from a circular saucer-shaped object. The sea was quiet. The object appeared to stop and hover about 200–300 feet above the surface of the water. A light appeared from the bottom of the object and illuminated a broad spot of water, which Formiller estimated to be perhaps one-half mile wide.

Formiller described the light as appearing to come from within a tube and changing from a broad floodlight to sharp spot on the water surface, apparently as the light was raised or lowered. There was no sound.

After a few minutes a cloud seemed to form around the vehicle. Formiller does not believe this was caused by exhaust gases because there was no apparent "blowing" of the cloud from an exhaust. About five minutes after illuminating the water, the searchlight was turned off and a similar light was turned on atop the vehicle, illuminating the upper part of the milky cloud.

The vehicle then began to move in a westerly direction. It was visible for about 20 minutes in all. Other lights on the strange vehicle gave the cloud a greenish cast. Similar reports came to the *Phoenix Weekly American News* from other Phoenix residents. *Source:* "I See by the Papers," *Fate*, April 1971, pp. 19–20.

NO CHANGE IN ANGULAR WIDTH

Mosinee, Wisconsin, summer 2002. Mike D. writes: "At Mosinee when I saw it, it came from way up! And it almost landed in the water, but came to a sudden stop like nothing moving at that speed could. It hovered and my friend and I could actually feel it watching or observing us. We got the hell out of there. One thing in Mosinee though: It shined a light on the water like a searchlight, but the beam did not spread out; it was straight up and down, like [a] 5-feet-wide beam. And as it went higher above the water, the beam did not change size or shape." *Source:* UFO Wisconsin, retrieved July 15, 2003, at www.ufowisconsin.com/county/reports2003/r2003_0629_marathon.html.

COMMUNICATION?

Stephenfield Lake, Manitoba, Canada, May 16, 1975. Three men had wandered away from a party on the shore of a lake and were standing by a dock when they saw a "moon-shaped" object hovering over a dam near the far side of the lake. As they watched, a "solid" beam of light shot from the object to the surface of the lake. Underneath the surface of the water, a glowing object appeared. This submerged object then began moving towards the witnesses. When it was about 20 feet away from them, one of the men threw a rock at the object. It then appeared to break into several pieces and return to its original location. The "beam" went out, the hovering object split into two pieces, which flew off in different directions, and the baffled men went to tell their friends. *Source:* Chris Rutkowski, *Visitations? Manitoba UFO Experiences* (Winnipeg, Man.: Gateway, 1989), p. 18.

ILLUMINATION AND FISH

North Park Lake, near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, April 6, 2007. Brian Vike writes: "I want to keep this relatively short, but I had quite the experience tonight, one that I will remember forever. I was driving by North Park with friends and a strange light was shining directly on the lake. We looked up but couldn't see the source, which seemed very strange at the time. We got out and moved towards the lake, while trying to keep our eyes on the light in the water. The water was strangely illuminated. Visibility was about 4 feet deep I'd estimate. This was very clear visibility, from about 100 yards away, probably a little more. But the sight was vivid; I actually thought I saw fish beneath the surface. This was not long ago in pure darkness, from far away. I shouldn't have been able to see what I saw. Moving on though, the light that had been causing this, we noticed either moved from the lake to above the trees (and was the source the whole time) or was silently waiting several hundred feet above and was never noticed. Either way I don't know. I do know that the last time I saw the light/object, it was slightly above the trees, then below them and disappearing, then back above and a dark amber color, then below again, then back up, then completely gone and not to be seen again. It didn't noticeably fly into the distance or leave in a spark of glory. That was it. We just lost sight and it was gone."

"The strange thing to me was the size of the object. It couldn't have been large enough for even the smallest human to fit inside. This thing was literally a floating street light with intelligence. I've heard of these sized objects possibly being involved in crop circles. I didn't see anything remotely similar in this case. Please reply if you have relevant information." *Source:* Personal email communication from Brian Vike, April 8, 2007.

BEAMING UP FISH?

Cle Elum, Washington, October 17, 2007. Witness: "I was driving on the freeway about 7 p.m., and saw a bluish-gray disc in the sky about 600-700 feet [in] altitude on October 17, 2007. The weather was clear, raining slightly (mist). The disc seemed to be hovering over the little town of Cle Elum, so I pulled over to watch. It would bobble slightly, but otherwise stay in one position. This lasted for about five minutes and then it just disappeared."

Investigator's note: "This sighting has similar characteristics to a sighting over Lake Easton one week earlier. The two sightings were only about 15 miles apart."

Lake Easton, Washington, October 10, 2007. Witness: "I saw a silver/gray disc about 35 feet radius hovering over Lake Easton for 3–5 minutes on October 10, 2007, around 10:40 p.m. I saw a beam of very bright greenish light which illuminated the lake. Then we saw small objects floating up to the craft. My friend said they were fish."

Investigator's note: "Reports of unknown objects gathering material are rare." *Source:* Sighting reports for 2007, UFOs Northwest, ufosnw.com/sighting_reports/2007/

cleelumwa10172007/cleelumwa10172007.htm; and ufosnw.com/sighting_reports/2007/lakeeastonwa10102007/lakeeastonwa10102007.htm.

SUMMARY

In the 18 cases that I have where a "beam of light" is seen, there are 11 with no description of the color of the beam. I would assume that this would indicate what we would consider a normal beam of white light, such as a flashlight or searchlight. In two cases, witnesses were specific about the beam being white. Two other cases described it as green or greenish, a separate one depicted it as amber, yet another as red, and one more as light blue. All we learn here is that there are color variations to their beams, which might serve as a visual indication of their various functions.

Other effects can include residual illumination in the water after the craft has departed, as seen in two of the above cases. This could also be due to *Noctiluca scintillans*, a bioluminescent oceanic dinoflagellate also known as sea sparkle. *Noctiluca scintillans* may also form red tides.

Additional effects we have seen in these reports include two mentions of a bent beam—variation of the beam on water from vertical to horizontal at the same time; one instance of possible communication with an underwater UFO via the beam; and three cases involving fish—one involving their death, another dealing with illumination, and one with fish being beamed up. All other accounts only mention a beam going into the water along with other normal UFO observations.

The composition of the beam and its various uses remain a mystery, hopefully however, not an unfathomable one. Bring on the scientists. ♦

UFO-NYT FOLDS

After 52 years of covering the UFO phenomenon worldwide, Scandinavian UFO Information (SUFOI) has decided to cease publication of *UFO-Nyt*, its highly respected news magazine, and concentrate exclusively on its website, www.ufo.dk. SUFOI Chairman Kim Møller Hansen said, "It doesn't make any sense to continue publishing a resource-intensive product like *UFO-Nyt* for a small but loyal readership when SUFOI, by focusing on the internet and with fewer resources, can reach many more people, both the information seekers and the news media—as well as the more fanciful conspiracy theorists who need challenging online."—Scandinavian UFO Information

