

Speculative Realms

FRIDAY, APRIL 8, 2011

Cautionary Tales, Part Two

By Matt Graeber

Edited By Gary Haden

For those of you who recall reading [Part One](#) of this article, I will not bother to go over the misidentifications of kites, the Goodyear blimp, etc.

However, I will point out that most faulty observations I've investigated over the years involved the planets Venus and Jupiter, conventional aircraft, and such craft's anti-collision, running, and landing lighting. Not to mention search lights, flocks of birds on the wing, and many other things as well. But, we are in search of the "unusual", the "unexpected", and the perfectly obvious objects and errors that have sparked some very mysterious UFO reports.

The purpose of this article is not to ridicule or embarrass any particular person or UFO group - for we all make mistakes from time-to-time and there is a lesson in each story "if" we are open to the learning experience and the privilege of examining these incidents.

I recall a report of many UFOs looking like soft cotton balls flitting across the lens of a rooftop-mounted telescope at the [Philadelphia Franklin Institute](#). Technicians of the institute's [Fels Planetarium](#) had sixty-three eyewitnesses sign a list of visiting spectators before they realized the UFOs were actually gulls on the wing flying across the lens of a telescope that was "pre-set" to gaze upon the distant planet Mercury as it rose in the early morning sky.

Then, there was the report involving a series of flashing white UFOs darting from cloud-to- cloud. Those UFOs were actually a flock of circling pigeons seen at a distance as their white-feathered undersides reflected the sunlight. The flock flew in a tight group creating the optical illusion of disks. The cloud positioning was merely coincidental to the sighting as the birds were not nearly soaring high enough to be in them. Moreover, the separating powers of the unaided human eye (at that distance) failed to pick up the darker side of the flock as they turned.

Obviously, understanding a wee bit about optical acuity plays an important role in the evaluation of some UFO reports.

EXAMPLE No. 4

A report came to the S/E Pennsylvania's MUFON director from a very excited lady who had witnessed a UFO that was "disguised" as a plane. She knew this to be so because the plane was flying backwards! The seasoned field investigator visited with her and she guided him to a plowed field at her farm where she observed the UFO as it flew by.

Unfortunately, the investigator tripped and fell over furrow, breaking his ankle. He later phoned me about the mysterious sighting.

I informed him of the experimental *Rutan Aircraft* which was a "pusher" type plane. Meaning its propeller was located behind the pilot. Its larger wings were swept back well beyond the center of its fuselage and its smaller ones are situated at the very front end of the craft. Thus, it might appear to be flying backwards to a person who was unaware of its existence and observing it in flight from below.

Moreover, many UFO publications of the day carried articles about UFOs being disguised as helicopters and planes; others featured stories about the many observations of the mysterious "Chemtrails in the skies." As it turned out, a privately owned and flown "Rutan" was flying out of a nearby air facility.

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THE LATEST

[Annie Jacobsen](#) [Kepler Space Telescope](#) [Libya](#) [NATO](#) [Fukushima](#) [Syria](#)

[Recommended Reads: A History of Area 51](#), Patch.com

Then along came Annie Jacobsen who managed to gain interviews with men who worked at the base. These men, now in their senior years, provided information on the site and allowed her access to military and intelligence personnel, scientists, pilots, ...

[Dubious Book: Area 51 by Annie Jacobsen](#)
Left Eye On Books

Dwayne A. Day, writing at The Space Review, notes that he does not have additional sources confirming this, but: many of the elements that Annie Jacobsen's source used in her Roswell story are there in [science fiction writer James] Blish's short story ...

['Area 51' expose by investigative reporter](#)
Plain Dealer

The real Area 51, as depicted in investigative journalist Annie Jacobsen's often fascinating, ultimately exasperating expose, is, on the whole, less spooky than its Hollywood persona. Ultra-secret, yes, but more "Dr. Strangelove" than "The X-Files. ...

[The United States of conspiracy: Why more](#)
New York Daily News

BY Annie Jacobsen The truth, many Americans insist, is not what it seems. On the verge of the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, about 15% of your fellow citizens still believe that the attacks were the result of a clandestine "controlled demolition ...

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Here you can see a photo of the [Long E-Z plane](#).

EXAMPLE No. 5

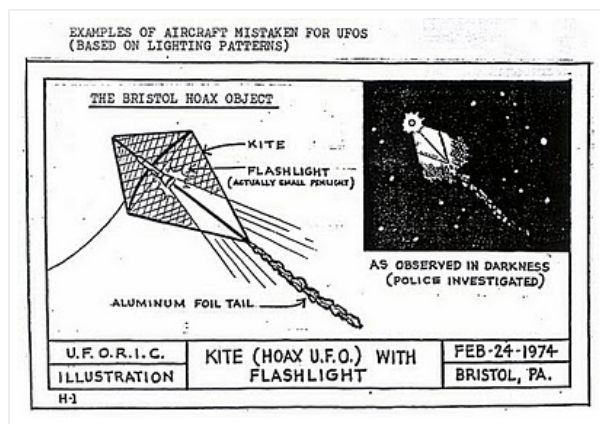
A report came into UFORIC about a strange "Sky Snake." It was observed crawling across the skies and it was "sorta" ivory in color. It had the appearance of 'a bunch of grapes ...all in a line." I investigated the case and could not identify the object so it was put on the back-burner when other reports came in and received my attention.

Some time much later, I was traveling to visit a customer on a Saturday morning. I caught a glimpse of a sky snake as it wiggled like an inch worm in the gentle breeze. Fortunately, the snake was tethered to the ground for a photo shoot in the park. It was actually an "arch" of white balloons. They were clustered in a line and looked "sorta" ivory as the sunlight passed through them.

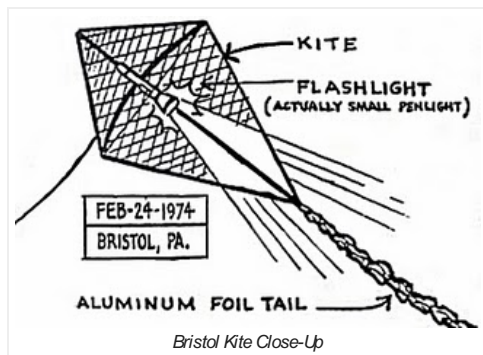
I later spoke to the photographer. He told me he often used balloon arches in the photos of newly married couples in the park – that is, "if" the winds were favorable. He said some kids in the wedding parties would release the balloons without separating them. The string of helium-filled balloons would rise and wiggle in the breezes. The direction of the park matched the earlier report.

At last, I knew what the Sky Snake probably was and chuckled as I filed it away as "identified."

EXAMPLE No. 6



The report came into the Bristol police department's dispatcher and was of a UFO with a trail of sparkling stuff. It appeared to be staying in one location but bobbing about quite erratically as it climbed and descended. Police investigated and discovered the UFO was actually a kite with a small penlight attached. It had a Mylar (?) silvery tail which one cop called tinfoil.



Kites are a persistent source of daytime reports; too. They flutter and fall with a "UFO-like" rocking motion when the breeze subsides and large and very maneuverable kites of today can easily perform high speed angular turns.

When they're seen from afar, as they spectacularly flit about, they might be mistaken for UFOs.



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BRITANNICA BLOG » THE FUTURIST



EXAMPLE No.7

A sighting in progress (SIP) report came into UFOVIC one evening from a fellow living in South Philadelphia. He breathlessly told me about a swarm of UFOs that were "dog-fighting in the sky" directly above him. He said he could see the glowing white disks within the clouds.

Since my home was in S/W Philadelphia at the time, I grabbed my 10x50 power binoculars and stepped out onto the porch with the hopes of seeing the spectacle. There they were. Not in the clouds but under them. Search lights – the kind used for business grand openings and sales, etc.

I told the witness.

"They were search lights," I said.

"Then why is there no beam of light going up to them from a ground source and there are several of them?" he asked.

I went outside again on the porch with my binoculars and indeed there were no light beams leading to the fleeting disks of light. I later phoned a search light advertising company. They informed me some of their trucks were fitted with "quad-lights" that rotated and might give-off the appearance of fighting within the clouds.

I asked why there were no light beams seen at the time. They said in clear weather conditions (sometimes) searchlight beams are very faint or not seen at all. I can imagine at family gatherings and dinners in South Philly, the reporting fellow telling the story of the dog fighting UFOs he saw and the dumb UFO researcher he called who does not even know what search lights look like.


As one can see by the above examples, it is not desirable to "assume" everyone sees things very accurately or the same way. Predisposition, emotion, optics, and a lack of knowledge about aeronautical history do play a part in some events. The investigator should be aware of this in order to perform an objective inquiry.

Moreover, UFO authors should tell the entire story so it can be evaluated and categorized properly by the book reading public.

END

Follow Ups

Cautionary Tales, Part One

Posted by Gary Haden at 7:45 AM 
Labels: [Matt Graeber](#)

3 comments:



Brownie said...

Hello Matt,

Since you've investigated ufo reports for about 30 years, I'd like to know what were the most impressive (to you) C.E. 2, C.E. 3 and C.E. 4

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cases. These can be from your own investigations or other investigations.

Thankyou!

~Susan

April 16, 2011 4:52 PM

Gary Haden said...

The following post is from Matt Graeber:

Dear Susan,

I thank you for your question which is not easily answered as while I have 37 years of chasing UFO reports under my belt, my stint as director of UFORIC did not include reports from other groups in our database (for fear of contamination). But, I feel there are some rather unique unresolved cases such as the Cash/Landrum affair of long-ago to consider.

I DO NOT PERSONALLY INCLUDE ABDUCTIONS IN MY semi-serious THOUGHTS AS I KNOW HOW TAINTED THE INVESTIGATIONS ARE, WE MUST FIRST SEPARATE the researchers mental malady from that of the abductee's actual experience(s) before we will learn anything of value.

Matt Graeber

April 19, 2011 6:55 AM



Brownie said...

Thankyou Matt for answering my question!

Yes, the Cash-Landrum encounter was bizarre with the radiation affecting two of the three witnesses afterwards. And they were treated poorly by our government when they sought answers and compensation.

I've wondered if the diamond-shaped craft may have been a secret experimental military project, what with the helicopters escorting it.

Again, thanks!

~Susan

April 19, 2011 9:58 PM

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