

John Keasler

The UFOs are back, just in the nick of time

Great! Just in time, too. An absolutely marvelous UFO story finally has shown up, just in time to get the warm weather months started right.

Frankly, we UFO addicts had been a little worried for the past several months.

It's been a long time since a good UFOer hit the wires. And even we true believers — and I take a back seat to nobody in being a true believer in UFOs — need a decent UFO report from time to time, to shore up our faith.



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And this is a good one, as you may have seen in the papers. (Although newspaper editors still bury most UFO stories in the back pages, assuming they use them at all: This shows how cynical and hard-boiled they are. Aren't realists cute, the little devils?)

The right elements are here. The story is from far off (Brazil, in this case). It's always easier to believe UFOs in Brazil than when they are over, say, Yeeshaw Junction. Or even exotic Jacksonville.

There is a good description of these UFOs. (Balls of multicolored light!) High-ranking people are quoted (the Brazilian air force minister himself, along with the air force press office.)

What happened is that tiny balls of multicolored light going 900 mph raced through Brazilian skies and, said the air force, saturated radar and interfered with air traffic one night this week.

The air force sent up three Mirage fighters and two U.S.-made F-5E jets to chase the objects, but instead the multicolored balls of light chased the planes. Brazil now has "ordered a probe" of this sighting.

Wonderful! Now *that's* a fine UFO story... it gives me the strength to go on, gives all us believers new hope, and I should like to take this opportunity to thank the pilots of the multicolored balls of light.

I have been a UFO believer for 40 years this year, and it takes a story like that to start the summer off right. It will add zest to my midnight beach-walking, spring to my stride and a glow to the tired old eyes of this intergalactic scout here. (My dog also gives thanks, as we will be going to the beach more nights, now that we again have something to look up for.)

Sometimes I have wondered how people get along who don't believe in UFOs. What do they hope to see when they look up? Do they look up?

UFOs added a lot to my life the minute I heard about them. The reports started coming in around the world in 1946, which happens to be the first year I was in the newspaper business. They were called "Flying Saucers" back then, and you were supposed to be crazy if you "believed" in them.

(That feeling would still exist widely if we didn't keep sending our own UFOs into space. In fact, and despite this, that feeling does still exist widely... the world is full of people who secretly think you are flaky if you give any credence to UFO reports, despite our own space probes. To each his own.)

Over the years I've talked to hundreds of people — and interviewed dozens in detail — who saw UFOs. I believed most all of them. Why not? They saw something... a flying object they couldn't identify. (Isn't that a UFO?) Also, except for a few shuck-and-jive artists trying to peddle a book or pull a publicity stunt, these people had nothing to gain. They were sincere.

Anyway, UFOs are so important to us humans that if there were no such thing as UFOs it would be necessary to invent them.

What, Virginia? No UFOs? That's as bad as no Santa Claus. (Assuming it is different at all.) And, anyhow, there are all sorts of advantages to believing in UFOs.

We believers aren't as bored as cynics. We can always go outside and look up to see if the space aliens are up there. That means a lot to me, particularly on my beach walks... there's only so much you can do looking at stars and trying, unsuccessfully, to see a bear or whatever.

But when you look up in the hope of noting an incoming spacecraft from Out There, it adds zest to your life. Also, there is usually something up there to make you wonder if it isn't a by-damn spacecraft! (No, more to the left, Nancy; flickering orange and green and just sort of hovering there. This may be it, kiddo...)

People who know I have been scanning the sky for 40 years in the hope of breaking the space alien story often ask me if I have ever actually seen a UFO. Yes. I have seen hundreds of UFOs in my time. I have never seen one I could actually prove was full of space creatures, or which in fact held up to my own doubts the following day... but who cares? In the cold light of tomorrow I may decide it was a cloud, Venus, or an airliner... but the thrill was there every seeking night!

That's hundreds of very interesting experiences the non-believers didn't have... and on the basis of the story out of Brazil I can assure you I will see at least one UFO tonight from the beach on Key Biscayne. So will Nancy, my dog. (She has a good grasp of astronomy and she thinks UFOs are from the Dog Star.)

Looking for UFOs is deeply satisfying. You might see one. Nancy and I are unlikely to see God, as we walk this Big Riddle mudball looking up at the enigmatic stars; we are not going to get a handle on infinity, nor figure out the human condition, or the dog condition either, for that matter. Cosmic mysteries will remain cosmic mysteries as we stroll the dark and lovely beach... but, by golly, we might see *UJY* ing saucer! Hell, they saw 'em in Brazil!

This is called logic, and I like it.

I have been all over this country talking to UFO-seers, and written lots of their stories, and hope to do some more, and one thing is starkly evident. People who look for UFOs have more fun than people who don't. It's been a long arid spell for us true believers. Good UFO stories have been scarce to the point of non-existence. Even the supermarket tabloids have been running short, and, with summer coming up, I had been secretly worried. Had the UFOs gone back where they came from?

That is the secret terror of the UFO believer... that all the stories will dry up, and UFOs will be relegated to a historical limbo of forgotten curiosities. (Then what would we be looking up for when we looked up?)

Ah, but they're back, they're back. Thank you, Multicolored Balls of Light! Thank you, Brazilian air force minister, radar stations, the wire service press and everybody else involved! It looks like a great UFO summer coming up, and I thank you. My dog thanks you, also.