

UFOs: Fact or fiction?

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SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Gary Kinder thought he would be dealing with people who claim to have eaten "space potatoes" when it was suggested he write a book about extraterrestrial visitations.

"My agent was the one that came up with the topic," said Kinder. "I told him I didn't want to do it. I didn't put much stock in that sort of thing."

However, Kinder, whose first book, "Victim: The Other Side of Murder," had focused on Utah's notorious Hi-Fi Shop murder case, agreed to look at a Swiss man's claims that he had met and conversed with beings from outer space.

The result is "Light Years: An Investigation into the Extraterrestrial Experiences of Eduard Meier." The book, published by Atlantic Monthly Press, is based on voluminous materials provided by Meier, who changed the way Kinder viewed the whole subject.

Meier took hundreds of clear photographs of what he called "beamships," had several video and audio tapes, thousands of pages of notes and several scraps of metal which he claimed were used in the hulls of the spacecraft.

"What really surprised me was the video," Kinder said. "Technicians said it would be impossible for them to produce something of that quality and be undetectable."

While many UFO cases are based only on eyewitness accounts, Meier had an abundance of evidence, Kinder said. "It was extremely frustrating to make sense of all of it. What made it difficult wasn't all of the crazy claims that Meier was making, but the massive amount of evidence he

had to support what he was saying."

Meier, who is 50 and says he hasn't been visited since the 1970s, said he was first contacted by extraterrestrials at age 5. He said he was told he had a mission to help the beings educate the world about the existence of life on other planets.

During his contacts, Meier said the beings gave him hundreds of opportunities to photograph their spaceship and document their existence with metal samples and other information.

Much of the evidence was examined by American scientists, an investigation outlined in the book. But no consensus emerged about the authenticity of the photographs because the examiners couldn't determine if Meier's negatives were originals. A metal sample disappeared shortly after it was examined under an electron microscope by Marcel Vogel, a scientist with International Business Machines.

"I cannot explain the metal sample," Vogel told Kinder. "By any known combination of materials I could not put it together myself."

Sound recordings made by Meier of the "beamship" were found to be impossible to re-create even with a bank of electronic synthesizers, according to sound technicians quoted in the book.

Notwithstanding the mountain of evidence, Meier's case still comes un-

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STAN GORDON via **COUD—I**
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Author investigates UFO reports

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der sharp criticism from some members of the UFO community. Groups such as the Mutual UFO Network Inc. labeled it a hoax and claimed to have proof that many of his photographs had been faked. Several wrote the publisher after word got around that a book was planned.

Kinder said that Meier indeed had been caught faking a photograph of a yet-to-occur earthquake in San Francisco. Meier claimed his space contacts had taken him into the future to see the earthquake, which he said he photographed.

However, the photograph turned out to be an American artist's conception of what an earthquake might look like, a drawing that had appeared in several magazines before Meier took a picture of it.

Kinder said the incident cast doubt

on Meier's other claims, but didn't prove them false.

"I think he might have felt compelled to keep producing information even when he wasn't having contacts," Kinder said. "By that time, hundreds of people were constantly on his doorstep looking to him for more information."

And for Kinder, who studied law, Meier's evidence is too strong to ignore. The author, who hadn't given

UFOs much thought before, believes today that they exist.

On a recent promotional tour, Kinder, who lives in Sun Valley, Idaho, was amazed at the number of people who approached him about extraterrestrial experiences.

"These aren't people that you would ordinarily think of as having these kinds of experiences," he said. "These are respected people; sane, down-to-earth people."