

# U.F.O. Stakeout: A Polite Request To Land in Rain

By MICHAEL WINERIP

PINE BUSH, N.Y.

The worst thing about being a U.F.O. photographer is it's a full-time job and you don't make a cent. "It's ridiculous," said Ellen Crystall. "I've got over 500 pictures of U.F.O.'s — I spend thousands on developing — and I get no funding at all."

Ms. Crystall was sitting in her favorite U.F.O. field here, off Searsville Road. It was pouring and she wasn't optimistic. "Hey ships! Come on ships!" she called. "It's pointless — ships don't come out in the rain."

Ms. Crystall doesn't have time to waste. She is studying for her Ph.D. in the highly respected New York University music program. She holds a part-time word-processing job. "U.F.O.'s cut into my work time," she said. "Oh yeah, and my music." Several days a week she makes the 90-minute drive to this popular U.F.O. spot from her parents' New Jersey home.

She gets no cooperation. "The ships intentionally interfere with the camera," she said. Ever try to get U.F.O. pictures developed at Fotomat? The lab guys think there's nothing on the negative and don't print it. They don't realize the little dots surrounded by black are U.F.O.'s. "You've got to take it to a custom lab," she said.

Ms. Crystall and her U.F.O. associates, who all hold down jobs during the day, know some people think this is crazy. "I don't care," she says. "If a friend isn't interested, I don't impose my views." However, she does feel a duty to complain to newspapers if their U.F.O. coverage is weak. Her letters are well written. The letterhead says, "Ellen Crystall, U.F.O. photographer." The signature says, "Ellen Crystall, Ph.D. candidate."

Some have suggested that she stick to more traditional photo subjects — Ms. Crystall won a 1981 contest in The Bergen Record for a photo of the Capitol in Washington. Her music has been played on radio stations WNYC and WFMU. But Ms. Crystall says that ever since she saw her first alien in 1971, she has believed in U.F.O.'s. "The being had a very large head and a rust-color stretch-knit jump suit," she recalled. "I said, 'Oh my God, they have stretch knit fabric!'"

She estimates she has seen 1,000 U.F.O.'s. "It's ridiculous," she says. "So many!" There are a couple of airports near here, but Ms. Crystall says it's easy to recognize a U.F.O.:

"It comes from looking at so many. I can feel them. Even if something looks like an airplane, I'll say, 'wait a minute, that's a ship.' It might have yellow lights — planes don't have yellow lights."

She joined several U.F.O. associates for dinner at the Magic Chef here recently. There was John White, a speechwriter for a Connecticut company who has published 13 books on

paranormal phenomena and is running a U.F.O. conference at the Ramada Inn in North Haven Nov. 7 and Nov. 8. Dan Shenefield, a postal worker was there, too, with his wife, Marianne.

"I was 11 when I was first abducted by aliens," Mrs. Shenefield said between bites of the lobster special. "What did I know? I thought he was from the next town. He looked like a Chinese guy in a scuba diving outfit."

"Naïve," said Ms. Crystall. "Naïve."

"In '52, what did anyone know?" said Mrs. Shenefield. The Shenefields like to U.F.O. watch near a New Hampshire airport. "A National Enquirer reporter came once," Mrs. Shenefield said. "He was a skeptic and then U.F.O.'s came and it blew his mind."

"Marianne has info there should be something at 8:40 tonight," said Mr. White.

"Eight-twenty," Mrs. Shenefield said, "What we're looking for is a triangle-shaped ship."

"Triangles are a dime a dozen up here," said Ms. Crystall.

After dinner, they stopped by a home owned by a local teacher who is a U.F.O. regular. Over cake and coffee, Ms. Crystall showed photos she had taken. To the untrained eye they looked like dots of light in dark skies, but the more experienced U.F.O. people were impressed. Suddenly the teacher said, "What's that light out the window?!"

"A car," said Ms. Crystall.

"Oh, right," said the teacher.

Later, four of them sat in their cars in the rain for more than an hour. Mr. White stood in the field with his umbrella and tried for a better view, but there was nothing. "When you see one, it's fantastic," Ms. Crystall said. "Makes up for all the wasted nights." She was home early, by 11.

The Stewart Airport fire chief, Arnold Messer, has heard the U.F.O. tales. "There's a group of pilots from the airport near here at Stormville who like to pretend to be U.F.O.'s."

J. Di Giacomo



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The Stewart Airport fire chief, Arnold Messer, has heard the U.F.O. tales. "There's a group of pilots from the airport near here at Stormville who like to pretend to be U.F.O.'s," he said. "They fly in formation for just that reason." He said they put different color lights on their planes to fake people out. "We see them," he said, "we just say, 'the boys at Stormville are at it again.'"

Asked about this the next day, Ms. Crystall said, "They told you that? That's the old story! Apparently he doesn't know what the heck's going on."