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Focus



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NEW PHILADELPHIA, OHIO

The Times-Reporter

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Tim Ashbaugh

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A Dave Barry mystery

UFO

By DAVE BARRY
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

OK, there is DEFINITELY something strange going on in Gulf Breeze, Fla.

The two most likely explanations are:

1. Somebody is perpetrating a hoax and a bunch of other people, through inexperience, imagination or ignorance, are falling for it.

2. Intelligent beings from elsewhere in the universe, driving craft with fantastic capabilities, have come to Earth, and they are observing us, and they have a Paralysis Ray and — this is going to make some South Floridians nervous — THEY APPARENTLY SPEAK SPANISH.

After spending a few days in Gulf Breeze checking things out, I've decided for myself which of these two possible explanations is closest to the truth. Here's the story as far as I know it; see what you think.

The wire story

On Dec. 3, The Miami Herald published this item in a roundup of wire-service stories from around the state:

"GULF BREEZE, Fla. — Pictures of what was labeled as a glowing unidentified flying object published in the Nov. 18 edition of The Sentinel of Gulf Breeze

Well, of course, I needed no further convincing. I grabbed my camera — you have to be ready — hopped on a plane and was off to conduct my investigation.

The town of Gulf Breeze

Gulf Breeze is a small residential community just across a bridge from Pensacola, way at the far western end of Florida, almost in Alabama. It is the opposite of Miami, geographically and in many other ways. It is not even in the same TIME ZONE as Miami. Miami is in the Eastern time zone and Gulf Breeze is in about 1958. In Gulf Breeze, when you buy something at a store, the counter person usually smiles and says, "Y'all come back 'n' see us now, n'kay?" Whereas in Miami, the counter person doesn't usually say anything because he or she is having a very important personal telephone conversation that cannot be interrupted just for some idiot CUSTOMER.

I begin my investigation by driving through downtown Gulf Breeze. Even at slow speed, this takes less than five minutes. It appears to be a normal beach-oriented town, very quiet in the off-season. There are a lot of things in the sky, because this is an area of extremely heavy air traffic: Nearby, besides the commercial airport in Pensacola, are the Pensacola Naval Air Station, Eglin Air Force Base and several



