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UFOs: True Believers and Truth Seekers Conference Begins

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By [Leonard David](#)

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The famous Trent photos taken in McMinnville, Oregon circa 1950 have undergone extensive scrutiny and are deemed by many as authentic, but of what? Image (Image credit: Paul and Evelyn Trent, courtesy Bruce Maccabee)

BOULDER, Colorado -- The 37th annual Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) symposium is being held July 14-16 in nearby Denver, attracting throngs of believers, the downright curious--as well as upright skeptics and debunkers.

The symposium's title is the drawing card: "Unconventional Flying Objects: The Best Evidence". The three day gathering features a potpourri of UFO discussion - from border crossings of the third kind, UFO crash retrievals, and triangular UFOs to the alien agenda and ethics of contact. Also add in reports on the physical evidence for UFOs.

There is no doubt that UFOs are here to stay, agrees John Schuessler, MUFON's International Director at the group's headquarters in neighboring Morrison, Colorado. "We see no drop in UFO reports," he told *SPACE.com*, but added that some of the characters in the UFO arena muddy the waters...a lot.

All-volunteer cadre

Schuessler said MUFON is devoted to help unravel the UFO saga and set society straight on the prospects of possible visitors from afar.

"MUFON is working diligently to improve the data collection process, train workers in the field, and improve the credibility of documented evidence," Schuessler explained. "We have approximately 350 volunteer consultants and research specialists with good scientific credentials. At the present time we have more than 450 trained field investigators throughout the U.S. and have another 800-plus in the training process. That is pretty good for an all-volunteer cadre."

Image 1 of 1



There are issues to wrestle with, Schuessler pointed out, in sorting through UFO sightings.

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"We have found that a lot of the scientific-sounding responses given to cases in this field are often nothing more than opinions by well-credentialed individuals that have actually done no field work," Schuessler noted. "They give their answers in a way that makes them seem like they actually know what they are talking about when in fact they are doing nothing but debunking based on their own beliefs. That happens on a regular basis and many people believe them. Science is not well served when this happens," he said.

Continuing mystery and controversy

There is something of potential importance within the UFO mystery, and it is two-fold, according to Don Berliner, a longtime UFO investigator and an independent aviation/science writer. He also is Chairman of the Fund for UFO Research, located in Alexandria, Virginia.

First of all, there are the detailed descriptions from veteran airline and military pilots of objects seen at close range in broad daylight.

"These were said to have been solid, metallic-looking objects with sharp edges and simple geometric shapes that were completely unlike any known aero-spacecraft, and displayed performance--extreme speed within the atmosphere, violent maneuvers and spectacular acceleration--that was even farther from the norm," Berliner told *SPACE.com*.

Secondly, there is the "excessive zeal" shown by the U.S. Air Force when claiming to have solved the UFO mystery, Berliner suggested. "Statistics were manipulated, intelligent adult witnesses were treated like naive children, explanations were fabricated, scientific theories were twisted to fit, information known to have been false was released to Congress and the public, and portions of witnesses' testimony were ignored when they clashed with prepared explanations."

All of these claims, Berliner added, can be supported with quotes from Air Force documents, letters, reports and public statements.

Still, there are many UFO sightings that deserve to be chalked up to more down-to-Earth explanation, Berliner said.

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"Most reasonable persons, no matter what their conclusions, agree that the great majority of UFO reports are easily explained as misidentified conventional phenomena. It is the remaining five to ten percent that constitute the continuing mystery and controversy," he concluded.

Digging in for the facts

George Knapp, an investigative reporter for KLAS-TV in Las Vegas, Nevada has been diving into the UFO enigma for nearly two decades. He senses there's a big-time story worthy of shoe leather and digging in for the facts--but are we any closer to resolving the UFO question?

"No, not at all, not even close," Knapp told *SPACE.com*. "UFO researchers have compiled a vast treasure trove of information, including photos, videos, eyewitness statements, government documents, and physical traces from alleged landing sites, along with radar reports, and a lot more. Much of this evidence is compelling and has withstood the knee jerk, almost perfunctory, and unscientific 'explanations' that are routinely tossed out by a small but reliable cadre of diehard debunkers."

After nearly 60 years of research by well-meaning but under-funded individuals and organizations, there is only one point on which all of the researchers can agree, Knapp suggested. "An elusive, unknown intelligence is operating within our midst. If we assume for the moment that *some* UFOs represent an 'alien' civilization, we still can't answer the three basic questions--Who are they? Where are they from? Why are they here? Anyone who has a definitive answer to those three questions is either a liar, a huckster, delusional, or one of 'them,'" he said.

Cracking the case

So what's it going to take to get to the bottom of the UFO phenomenon?

Knapp has some observations on the matter:

- Time and Death: When the current generation of scientists dies out, a new generation of scientists will include at least a few mavericks that challenge outdated dogma.
- Independent Media: With the growth of cable networks, Internet news sources, satellite radio, and other less-centralized information outlets, the power of the mainstream media organizations will diminish. These alternative information sources will have objectives that are far less conservative and less stodgy than the current corporate behemoths.
- Political change: This is the last and most unlikely change that will occur, but it could be the most significant. If the science establishment gets more serious about UFOs, and if that causes the mainstream media to be more even-handed, it is conceivable that political figures will feel more secure about jumping in.

Unproven theories

Backed by years of his UFO sleuthing, Knapp said the sheer size and complexity of the subject is daunting.

"Unproven theories abound," Knapp continued. "We are pretty sure the visitors are ETs...or inter-dimensionals...or time travelers from our future...or manifestations of the collective consciousness. We also know they are benevolent guardians, evil reptilians, harvesters of souls or genetic materials, angels from heaven, demons from hell, or maybe androids dispatched by incomprehensible super-beings. It's a proven fact that they are here to help us, teach us, or eat us, or mate with us, or mess with our heads, or save their own species while they carve up our livestock, doodle in our wheat fields, and befuddle our most sophisticated technology."

Are UFOs driven by teenage pranksters on a joyride through the cosmos, Knapp questioned, or perhaps anthropologists from a parallel universe, modern manifestations of pixies and leprechauns, or pragmatic politicians from Serpo--a planet of Zeta Reticuli--who have cut a deal to trade advanced technology for the unfettered opportunity to abduct and traumatize certain unfortunate bloodlines?

"Take your pick," Knapp said.

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Leonard David is an award-winning space journalist who has been reporting on space activities for more than 50 years. Currently writing as Space.com's Space Insider Columnist among his other projects, Leonard has authored numerous books on space exploration, Mars missions and more, with his latest being "Moon Rush: The New Space Race" published in 2019 by National Geographic. He also wrote "Mars: Our Future on the Red Planet" released in 2016 by National Geographic. Leonard has served as a correspondent for SpaceNews, Scientific American and Aerospace America for the AIAA. He has received many awards, including the first Ordway Award for Sustained Excellence in Spaceflight History in 2015 at the AAS Wernher von Braun Memorial Symposium. You can find out Leonard's latest project at his website and on Twitter.



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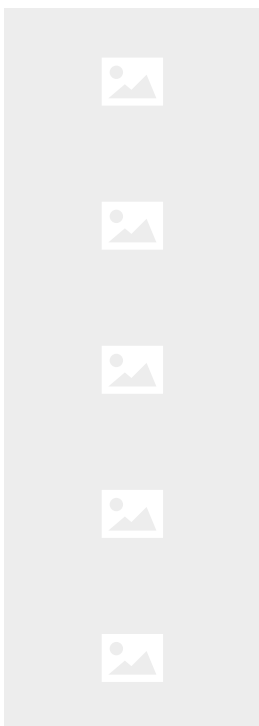
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