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ACCESSIBILITY

by Dan Tilkin and KATU Web Staff

Wed, September 10th 2008 at 5:00 PM

This famous photo taken by Paul Trent shows what appears to be a UFO flying near the family farm in McMinnville in the 1950.

MCMINNVILLE, Ore. - Two shots of a flying saucer over McMinnville are some of the most debated pieces of Oregon history.

Paul and Evelyn Trent took the pictures in 1950, and now their children are trying to get the negatives returned.

But the negatives are in the hands of the McMinnville News-Register newspaper, who believes they should be part of a permanent historic display in Yamhill County.

The story of how this fight developed begins on the Trent Farm more than 50 years ago.

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Evelyn Trent was feeding rabbits, saw something strange in the sky and hollered for her husband, who grabbed his camera and started shooting. And then the saucer was gone.

The photos were printed in the local newspaper, which sold thousands of copies across the country.

Critics have long said that the Trents pulled off one of the most elaborate hoaxes in UFO history - that they took a pie plate or a hub cap and dangled it from power lines that run in front of the property.

The Trents always maintained they saw something. But the ridicule took a toll on the family.

"We were the alien family," said daughter Tammie Gochenour. "That's all that was talked about was the alien family."

When her parents died in the mid-1990s, the location of the negatives was a mystery. Daughter Linda Sayler eventually discovered they had been in the hands of navy physicist and UFO investigator [Bruce Maccabee](#) since 1974.

He told KATU he had called the Trents and asked to borrow the negatives so many years ago, implying that he would return them in a few weeks. But it took him longer than that - and he ended up keeping them for 25 years.

Maccabee agreed to return the negatives, and Sayler thought it would be safer if he sent them to the News-Register newspaper to

pass on to her.

That was 2001, and she's been trying ever since to get the newspaper to give them back.

Phil Bladine ran the paper when the photos were first published. A letter from 1970 shows he helped get the negatives back from United Press International when they disappeared the first time.

Bladine is also the man who lent the negatives to Maccabee with the permission of the Trents three decades ago.

The fact that Bladine had the negatives to lend is the crux of why the newspaper now wants to keep them.

The newspaper argues in a letter sent to the family in 2004 that Paul Trent left the negatives in Bladine's hands "with the indication that he wanted nothing more to do with them."

The letter states the newspaper "believes that the negatives should become part of a permanent historic display in Yamhill County, with a mediated settlement as to access and other rights."

That's even after Maccabee made it clear in an e-mail that he "sent the negatives to Phil Bladine under the assumption that he would return the photos to the Trent children" and they should be returned to the family.

"The Trents' children are clearly the rightful owners since Mr. and Mrs. Trent never signed any documents giving the rights to anyone else," Maccabee told KATU.

Phil Bladine suffered a stroke several years ago and passed away this spring.

When KATU tried to talk to his son Jeb, who is the current publisher of the newspaper, he declined an interview due to the possibility of legal proceedings related to the UFO photographs.

"We maintain our belief that the negatives should become part of a permanent historic display in Yamhill County," Jeb Bladine wrote in an e-mail to KATU.

The Trent children said they don't have money to file a lawsuit and feel it is wrong to be forced to negotiate over something they feel clearly belongs to the family.

"We're not going to take them and try to make millions off them," said daughter Tammie Gochenour. "We just want to put them in like a safety deposit box, and have them locked up so we know where they're at."

"It's just something that belongs with the family," daughter Linda Sayler said.

**More information:**

[The 10th Annual UFO Festival](#)

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