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By [Sharon Begley](#)

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If you prefer to keep a little magic in your life—by which I mean believing in the possibility of UFOs—then read no further. For I am going to tell you about the latest UFO hoax.

You may remember the sightings of a UFO over Morristown, N.J., in January, which was blogged about and even captured on video that has been posted to YouTube as clips from TV broadcasts and an amateur astronomer.

It was all a hoax, as the perpetrators reveal in [this month's issue of eSkeptic](#).

They cooked up a spaceship hoax "to show everyone how unreliable eyewitness accounts are, along with investigators of UFOs." They used five feet of fishing line to tie flares to each of five three-foot helium balloons and launched them from a field on Jan. 5, 2009. "Once all five balloons were ready for takeoff (with our fingers on the verge of frost bite)," they write, "we struck the 15-minute flares and released them into the sky in increments of fifteen seconds," filming the UFOs as they floated away.

Media coverage was extensive. A lot of it featured Paul Hurley, a pilot, and his family, who appeared on several news broadcasts describing the strange lights they saw in the sky. (For some reason, reporters find pilots' UFO sightings especially believable.) Rudy and Russo repeated the performance four more times, gaining media coverage for each. Conspiracy Web sites and radio shows covered the sightings, but "the icing on the cake came when the popular History Channel show UFO Hunters featured the Morristown UFO one week," the duo recall. "Bill Bimes, the lead investigator of the show and the publisher of UFO Magazine, declared definitively that the Morristown UFO could not have been flares or Chinese lanterns."

This was the pair's main quarry, to expose the foolishness of UFO "investigators." They write: "Are UFO investigators simply charlatans looking to make a quick buck off human gullibility? ... If a respected UFO investigator can be easily manipulated and dead wrong on one UFO case, is it possible he's wrong on most (or all) of them? Do the networks buy into this nonsense, or are they in it for the ratings?"

You can see their handiwork here and here. Nicely done, guys.

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