



TRIANGLES OVER BELGIUM - THE SOBEPS REPORT
By: Wim Van Utrecht

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Photo source: el mundo de los OVNIS #2
and Science & VIE Jun. 1990).

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TRIANGLES OVER BELGIUM - THE SOBEPS REPORT
By Wim Van Utrecht

On November 29, 1989, hundreds of people living in and near the small city of Eupen, Belgium, witnessed the passage of huge, triangular aircraft equipped with bright spotlights. The event marked the beginning of one of Europe's biggest "UFO flaps" ever. In the early stages, most of the reports emanated from the eastern regions of Belgium. But in the course of the months that followed, other parts of the country, especially the areas around Brussels and Liege, also became the seat of unusual observations.

Because of certain sensational aspects, the flap caught the attention of news agencies in all corners of the world. Journalists were impressed by the fact that there had been several occasions on which jet-fighters had taken off in an attempt to identify inexplicable lights. Equally exceptional was that policemen, military personnel and scientists claimed to have seen the unknown objects maneuvering through the sky. Furthermore, almost all witnesses unanimously spoke of triangular platforms with bright-white lights in each corner, and a red pulsating light in the middle. As for physical evidence, the sky-watches had produced dozens of photographs and approximately 30 video-films. Aside from this, a handful of radar tapes had been made available for analysis. By the spring of 1990, the situation was such that, many Belgians spent long hours outdoors, hoping to catch a glimpse of the bizzare craft. Perhaps the most unique aspect of all, was the collaboration that had been set up between the national Royal Air Force and a Brussels based UFO group named SOBEPS. (*)

As UFO reports kept pouring in for more than a year and a half, the popularity of SOBEPS increased at an equivalent pace. Interviews with members of the group were published in almost every journal and magazine in the country. Usually the group's address and phone-number were given in case readers wanted to report a personal experience. On radio and television, ufologists answered questions about the possibility of an alien presence in our skies. The U.S. Air Force had assured the Ministry of Defence that stealth aircraft had never operated over Belgian territory. All this time the scientific community kept silent, with the exception of some weather-prophets, who tried to calm down the situation by speaking of inversion layers and sea-plankton...

Under these circumstances, speculation and suggestion were given free play and it did not take long before almost any light in the sky which could not be readily identified, was labeled as UFO. People who had never made a habit of looking skywards were now surprised by the variety of luminous phenomena that can be seen in the course of a single night. As months went by it became clear that the popularity of SOBEPS had strongly influenced the course of events. Twenty years ago, a similar situation had occurred when the publicity following the creation of SOBEPS, set off a local out-burst of UFO reports. Probably, the wave of sightings that was now flooding the country, would never have had the same magnitude if the group had not been promoting it so vigorously.

By the spring of 1991 things had quieted down a little and SOBEPS announced that a detailed report about the events would soon be published. On October 17, a book consisting of more than 500 pages thick was presented to the press. The title read: "Vague d' OVNI sur la Belgique - Un dossier exceptionnel" (UFO-flap over Belgium - An exceptional file). The book was sold out in no time.

The introduction of the SOBEPS book is written by Dr. Jean-Pierre PETIT, Director of a research division at the French "Centre National de Recherche Spatial" (CNRS - National Center for Space Studies). Further scientific contributions include papers by Auguste MEESEN, Professor in physics at the "Universite Catholique Libre de Bruxelles". SOBEPS' associates BOUGARD, CLEREBAUT, VERTONGEN, and FERRYIN authored most of the other chapters. Major-general Wilfried DE BROUWER wrote the postface of the book. As an aviator, DE BROUWER had

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coordinated a sky-watch during which, for the first time in history, ufologists and airmen joined forces. The authors almost unanimously conclude that, in view of the evidence, the extraterrestrial hypothesis seems the most likely solution. This was too much to swallow for the scientific community in our country.

On October 26, 1991, the newspaper "La Wallonie" brought the following news: "at the instance of astrophysicist Andre LAUSBERG, ten Belgian scientists had signed a declaration in which the SOBEPS report was heavily criticized. Especially prof. MEESEN and Dr. PETIT were reprimanded for their rash statements and pseudo-scientific approach. In a way, the scientific community had set up a tribunal that would deal with members who were feeding pseudo-scientific information to the public."

Highly respected by European ufologists, the names of MEESEN and PETIT may not sound familiar to overseas readers. Therefore, some background information may be welcome.

Before he launched himself into the investigation of the Belgian UFO flap, Prof. MEESEN had already written theoretical and technical papers on UFOs for "Infoespace", the journal edited by SOBEPS. Although written in an academic style, MEESEN's work is almost entirely based on unverified accounts published in dubious UFO magazines. A second reproach that can be made is that the professor is a fierce defender of the ETH. This is known to have affected his evaluations in the past. In 1988 for instance, an analysis of a sound recording made by a ten year old witness in France, led MEESEN to speculate about the propulsion systems that UFO pilots use. Unfortunately for him, it was later established that the recorded beeping sound had originated from a transhorizontal radar transmitter, an interference phenomenon well-known to French radio amateurs.

One wonders if MEESEN's personal convictions may have influenced his analysis of the Belgium radar tapes as well. As a matter of fact, the unexplained radar images acted so spooky (impossible accelerations and sudden changes in altitude) that they remind one of false radar returns (due to meteorological conditions) or of distorted echoes from real targets (i.e. aircraft equipped with stealth technology). To MEESEN the "only reasonable hypothesis" is that we are dealing with "UFOs, of which the performances clearly indicate a non-terrestrial origin".

As for Dr. PETIT, it was he who introduced magnetohydrodynamics into ufology in the seventies. Now, with the publication of his latest book "Enquete sur des extraterrestres qui sont parmi nous - Le mystere des UMMITES" (IN SEARCH OF EXTRATERRESTRIALS WHO ARE AMONG US - The mystery of the Ummites), PETIT has lost his last grain of credibility. In this book Petit reveals that his scientific work at the CNRS was in reality dictated to him by the inhabitants of Ummo, a planet far beyond our own solar system. Well-read ufologists will remember that, already since 1965, the Ummites are held responsible for a series of mysterious letters that were sent to UFO researchers and scientists around the world.

In fact, the Ummo-virus seems to have affected other scientists at the space center as well and rumors have it that the entire question will soon lead to some sort of purification. Now, another incident is bound to discredit the center's reputation even further. Last year, two journalists of a local French newspaper visited the headquarters of the Raelian Movement in Alibi, southern France. This UFO sect is led by a man who claims to have travelled to distant planets and to have been at tables with personalities such as Moses, Jesus, and Buddha. During their visit to the sect, the journalists ran into four research members of CNRS. The men had just ordered pizza and ice-cream in the love cave of the premises...

Returning to the Belgian flap, it should first be emphasized that the evidence gathered by SOBEPS is impressive in quantity but not very convincing when considered as proof of unearthly manifestations. In fact, the photographic evidence yielded only one good slide, a copy of which is printed on the cover of the SOBEPS book. On page 418 we are

being told that an in-depth investigation of the slide has yet to take place, but the absence of back-ground details in the picture, together with the fact that the young photographer threw away a second photograph which he had taken during the sighting, create doubts about the authenticity of the evidence.

Stimuli for most of the remaining photographic documents varied from aircraft lights to reflections of sunlight in distant windows, and from bright stars and planets to xenon-lamps used by dancing keepers. Any of these explanations came from the ufologists themselves, SOBEPS members included.

As for the eye-witness accounts that are not backed up with physical evidence, they number several thousands, and mainly describe incidents which occurred within an area of 200 kms long and 100 kms wide. About 5 to 10% of these cases is published in some detail in the book. Examination reveals that there is much less coherence in the descriptions than SOBEPS would like us to believe. Position and color of the lights are rarely identical. Features, such as protrusions, windows, domes, and hatches always appear to be positioned at different sides of the object. Furthermore, not only triangles, but also rectangles, trapezium-shaped, diamond shaped, and boomerang shaped objects have been reported. In short, those shapes match exactly what designers' describe on what aircraft of the future should look like. Apparently, the old flying saucer myth has put on a new face, perfectly in line with modern trends in design. Also worthy of note is that only one or two witnesses mentioned daylight objects.

It is the opinion of the author that some kind of flying machine did indeed manifest itself over our country on several occasions between November 1989 and June 1991. This may have been some kind of platform, balloon, or giant glider (self propelled or carried by helicopter), but also an experimental aircraft, such as the F-117A Stealth Fighter, the A-12 Avenger and the TR3-A Black Manta. To try and find out the exact origin and motive of these apparitions will be extremely difficult because of the extensive media coverage that seems to have influenced the reporting process immensely.

The only thing that remains certain is, that also in this UFO flap, it has proven impossible to solidify eye-witness accounts with substantial evidence.

(*) SOBEPS - Societe' Belge d'Etude des Phenomenes Spatiaux (Belgian Society for the Study of Space Phenomena): Avenue Paul Janson 74, B-1070 BRUXELLES, Belgium.

Ed. Comment: Let's learn! So what have we here? The above article by Mr. Utrecht is a far cry from what was currently thrust onto the viewers by NBC's 'Unsolved Mysteries' T.V. program. Revealing as this article is, it also portrays the influential factor the media can exert on its viewers or readers, even if the information is one-sided. Leaning on prestigious words such as SCIENTIST(S) or SCIENTIFIC, can emit an air of dominance, mastery, and absoluteness. However one must proceed with caution, preconceived notions coupled with subjective and emotional convictions discloses that it is IMPERATIVE, particularly here in the states, that all claims must be subjected to close scrutiny, no matter who or what the source is.

Furthermore, there is another message of caution that should concern the 'thinkers' within the study of this phenomenon. It is this, because an individual(s) authored a book, it DOES NOT make them an expert, especially when it involves an unknown phenomena; i.e. what do you know that I don't know? And vice-versa. Simply, the phenomenon is still unknown. That is why we label it 'UFO'. Should authors of books be given a special preference and status within prestigious magazines and periodical publications, over others? If so why? Recently this trend was briefly mentioned in a current IUR commentary. Mr. Utrecht's article illustrates that if this trend develops it could prove detrimental to the already bottoming-out study of UFOs.

THE SANTANDER SYMPOSIUM

During the week of OCT. 7-11, 1991, I attended a meeting in Santander, Spain, the first international symposium on UFOs to take place in that country.

These so-called International Journeys were organized and sponsored by CUADERNOS DE UFOLOGIA, the Spanish magazine which unquestionably has become the leading ufological publication in Europe. The event was generously financed by the strongest bank in the area, the CAJA CANTABRIA, and the editors of CdU (Julio Arcas Gilardi and Jose' Ruesga Montiel) were thus able to bring to Spain well-known investigators and researchers from different countries.

I was one of the three English-speaking individuals honored with an invitation to the symposium; the topic of my talk was the development of the UNICAT Project from the directives and scientific orientation initially propounded by Dr. J.A. Hynek. In this 90 minute presentation the background of the UNICAT Project was discussed, and for the first time some of the significant results that are emerging from the analysis of the data were made public. Of particular interest was how the different "hypotheses" advanced to explain the UFO phenomenon will be affected positively or negatively by this research.

Also significant was a very scientific paper delivered by Dr. Richard F. Haines, focusing on the well documented electromagnetic effects reported when an aircraft in flight is approached by an "anomalous aerial object", i.e., a UFO. The analysis was based on data from 55 events ranging in time from 1947 to 1986, many listed in the Blue Book files and including some famous incidents, such as the Zanthus Area, Western Australia case (680822), and the Mansfield, Ohio (731018) helicopter episode.

The third representative of English-speaking countries was the respected British author and lecturer Hilary Evans. Unlike the two previously described talks, his presentation was slanted toward the psychological views of the UFO phenomenon, and the attempts to explain abductions and other marginal aspects in terms other than nuts and bolts. His skepticism about the reality of abductions was cleverly presented.

Naturally, more than half of the papers originated from Spanish researchers, but to keep this review brief I will mention only those speakers who are well-known to American audiences. The first is, of course, Vicente-Juan Ballester Olmos, author of numerous books on the subject, who presented a very interesting talk detailing the involvement of the Spanish military and police in UFO incidents. Years of investigating and research into the official files have produced a sizeable amount of evidence, which will be the central theme of Ballester's new book. His collaborator in this work is Joan Plana Crevillen, whose name is familiar to FSR readers.

Physicist Miguel Guasp prepared a very revealing paper on physiological effects resulting from the close approach of UFOs to witnesses, supported by the analysis of well-known incidents that have occurred not only in Spain but in other parts of the world, including among others the Betty Cash case (801229).

Several papers were devoted to the cultist groups, their history in Spain (by Javier Sierra) and their negative influence not only on ufology but also within society (by Carles Berche).

Contrary to what has become typical in American ufological congresses, the aim was not to pack as many talks as possible into a few days. The speakers were allowed a more than sufficient amount of time for their presentations, and in several instances only one speaker held the floor for the evening. Many hours of the day were free of scheduled events, providing ample opportunity for the participants to engage in one-on-one exchanges with colleagues. I can only emphasize the importance of such an arrangement, and suggest to those responsible for the MUFON Symposia to consider seriously its adoption. The conference was well attended, with a 500-seat lecture hall practically filled every evening.

Last, but not least, an honored guest was the renowned Spanish author and UFO pioneer Antonio Ribera. For those of us who have known him for many years, the emotional high point of the conference was the public recognition of this veteran researcher and author of numerous books on the topic, whose translations to Spanish of significant books originally written in English have decisively contributed to the divulgation of ufology in Spain.

Dr. Willy Smith
UNICAT Project
November 5, 1991

FROM THE LETTER BOX

The following are a couple of responses from C.D. Allan's La Paz article (Orbiter Jul/Aug).

Author and researcher Kevin D. Randle informs us:

"I thought there were a couple of points that I should make to clarify some allegations made by others.

I have never interviewed Bill Rickett. Those interviews were conducted by Don Schmitt and Mark Rodeghier. Those interviews were on audio tape and are available for researcher review at the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies. Don conducted an additional interview on video tape which is available at the center and at the Fund for UFO Research.

Leading questions are, of course, perfectly acceptable during an interview. However, even the most innocent question can be considered leading. Asking a witness, for example, if he was on the crash site implies there was a crash site. Asking if they saw debris implies there was debris. Questioning a witness, especially concerning an event that is now as well publicized and as old as Roswell is a very difficult and trying task.

Allegations that I 'misreport' data and fabricate evidence are not true. Everything that we, meaning Don Schmitt and I have reported or said, can be verified by our taped interviews and supporting documentation."

* * * * *

Director of The Fair Witness Project, Bill Moore, also shares his foremost thoughts on the La Paz article:

"With respect to your request for comments on the C.D. ('Seedy') Allan thing, he is free to 'think' anything he likes and to speculate in any way he sees fit. Tim Good refers to him as 'the British Phil Klass.' I couldn't agree more.

The last two paragraphs of his paper on La Paz (Orbiter Jul/Aug 1991) pretty well sums up the situation. Allan labels them 'Conclusions'. Note that both of them clearly indicate that the material contained in them are Mr. Allan's thoughts. He 'thinks' if Mr. Rickett were interviewed again that the results would be different. He 'does not think' that La Paz was ever involved with the Roswell incident.

Basically, Mr. Allan's article does nothing but expose the man as a hypocrite. On the one hand, he scores 'credulous crashed saucerologists' because he believes that they have skewed data their own way in order to support their own preconceived conclusions; and then he turns right around and skews the same data in his own favor so that it will support his own preconceived conclusions. That's precisely the same technique Phil Klass uses when he writes his diatribes.

Allan has often said that he is not a crashed saucer believer. He is also not very bright. Consider:

- (1) 'Seedy' assumes that Rickett's memory is unreliable, yet he never met the man and knows next to nothing about him. Bill Rickett is presently in extreme frail health and his memory is failing him badly. I have no doubt that he told Kevin Randle exactly what Randle wanted to hear. The way Randle asks leading questions, misreports data and fabricates evidence, nothing would surprise me. (see upcoming FOCUS, 9/30/91 issue.) When I went to Florida to interview Rickett back in the early part of 1985, Rickett was still of sound mind and good memory. I place much more reliance upon what he said in those interviews than upon anything he might say today. 'Seedy's' assumptions about Rickett are convenient for him though, because they allow him to twist what Rickett didn't say into what Allan wants to hear.

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- (2) In yet another example of his brilliance, Allan asks, 'What possible point is there in seeking out eye-witnesses to such a transient event two months after it occurred, when such testimony by then would be unreliable as to date and time?' By those same standards then, are we to suppose that 'Seedy' also sees no point in seeking out eye-witnesses to a two-month murder (certainly a 'transient event') because their testimony would be equally unreliable? Once again, what is convenient for Allan gets treated as gospel in his writings, even though it may be completely illogical.
- (3) Allan assumes that the Air Force never briefed La Paz about the crash data. Then he goes on (a la Klass) to treat that assumption as it were truth cast in concrete. If he assumes, then he doesn't know. If he doesn't know, then he should stop trying to pretend that he does.
- (4) Allan assumes that because Ruppelt reports that La Paz told him he had never seen any wreckage, and because there is no mention of either saucer crashes or wreckage in 'Secret', not 'Top Secret', reports on green fireballs from Los Alamos, that La Paz knew nothing or seen nothing. Using just such logic, I suppose I am equally free to assume that because La Paz knew I had written the Roswell Incident, and because he knew I was interested in crashed saucers, he therefore refused to talk to me because he knew he had something to hide. And once again using Allan's brand of logic, if there hadn't been a saucer crash and if he hadn't been involved with it, wouldn't Dr. La Paz have wanted to get that fact on the record rather than allow the speculation to go on? After all, he knew he was dying. (You see, I too can speculate and assume, but because what I say isn't what Mr. 'British Klass' wants to hear, he'll continue to call me a 'credulous crashed saucerologists.' Ho hum.)

I suppose I could recite a veritable litany of ridiculous assumptions 'Seedy' has made in the past about other matters, but for the sake of space and illustration, I'll limit my examples to just three:

- (A) Concerning the envelope in which the roll of film containing the photos of the MJ-12 documents arrived, Allan once assumed in print that because the stamps thereon were all of small denomination, the item must have originated with someone who was likely a small time publisher who did a lot of mailing with small denomination stamps. He also stated, without qualification, that any mail coming from an official source in the U.S. would be franked. Both assumptions are, of course, ridiculous. In the first instance, the packet was stamped with twelve twenty-cent stamps out of a booklet; which just happened to be \$1.90 more than was necessary given the weight of the packet. Twenty-cent stamps were the going rate for a first class letter at the time. Knowing that, the only fair assumption one can make is that whoever sent it had a supply of first-class stamps on hand (nearly everyone does) and wanted to be sure that enough postage had been affixed. And in the second instance, the fact that the packet wasn't 'franked' certainly can't be taken as evidence that it didn't come from a government source for reasons too obvious to mention.
- (B) Concerning the so-called Aquarius document of 1981, a copy of which once turned up in Peter Gersten's hands not to long after one had been stolen out of my car during a break-in in San Francisco. Allan made a point of publicly questioning my statement that 'only three copies of that document existed.' 'How can Moore possibly say that only three copies existed?', groused Allan, while suggesting that 'Doty or Falcon could have made others.' (See Orbiter, Mar/Apr 1991, p. #7.)

The above is a perfect example of Allan's hearing only what he wants to hear and nothing else, and then using it out of context to try to persuade his readers that he is some sort of authority whose points are valid and worth considering.

Clearly the statement that 'Seedy' cites comes from page #8 of my and Shandera's The MJ-12 Documnets: An Analytical Report. Yet in his haste to call me into question before his readers, he completely neglects to inform them that the answer can be found only four sentences later in the same paragraph. I had marked the document by annotating it in pencil after I had received it and before I had given a copy to Bennewitz (who later swore to me that his copy had never left his safe). There were only three copies of the annotated version: The one I had given Bennewitz, the one I had in safekeeping under lock and key, and the one that was stolen from my car in San Francisco. The copy Gersten turned up with had my annotations on it. Why didn't Mr. Allan tell his readers this? Because, a la Klass, he felt his point was better made by withholding relevant data which didn't support the point he was trying to make.

(C) Allan had used this same old phoney reasoning to question how Shandera and I knew that the Eisenhower document was typed on 8 1/2 x 11" paper when all we had were 35mm negatives to work from. His assumption is that without the originals, it is not possible to say for certain what size the paper might have been. Indeed, he goes on at length about this point on several other occasions, applying it to other aspects of our analysis as well. (Once again, see Orbiter, Mar/Apr '91.)

Yet, as in previous instances, the answer to Allan's 'weighty' challenge is quite simple. Typefaces are manufactured to very specific and precise size and spacing specifications. Once the specific typeface used in the Eisenhower document was identified, enlarging photos of it, on a grid, to the exact measurements called for in the manufacture's specifications was no problem at all. From there, it was only a matter of measuring the borders on the pages in the photos to determine that they measured 8 1/2 x 11'.

Mr Allan, like Mr. Klass, is out to attract attention to himself in any way he can. Facts, truth and sound reasoning mean nothing to him in this process. In my opinion, you are both taking up a lot of space and misleading your readers when you print anything he writes".

Ed. Comment: Misleading Bill! (a la Vegas '89!)

Researcher/investigator and author of the La Paz article, C.D. Allan, gives his assessment of the above review:

"Now then: what have we hear but another angry response from Bill Moore. Do you remember all those 'incompetent, egotistical, undereducated, underqualified, illogical, emotionally misguided dolts' he refers to in his MJ-12 report? To be fair, he has not actually described me as such, at least not in letter, but I can't help thinking....

The mere fact that he has to revive the now defunct MJ-12 affair to Bolster his pathetic Roswell case shows how bereft of real arguments he is.

To any rational thinker, the mere fact that La Paz specifically said that he did not, repeat not, ever find any UFO fragments, plus the fact (not assumption) that he never made any mention of the Roswell crashed disc in any of his numerous reports to the USAF or in either of the two conferences he took part in ought to be enough proof that La Paz never took part in the Roswell recovery. To Bill Moore, however, this won't do. La Paz obviously kept his mouth shut, told lies and mislead all his contemporaries plus his numerous military contacts over a period of 25 years. Just like Dr. Menzel did over Mj-12 (as per gospel according to Moore & Friedman).

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Yes of course, we should accept the 40-year old testimony of a man who told Randle and Schmitt exactly what they wanted to hear, but a few years earlier when 'of sound mind and good memory' did not tell Mr. Moore what he wanted to hear. Of course his 40-year old undocumented memories are worth far more than La Paz's documented testimony at the time, and the Blue Book files.

I would like to suggest a little project, in case anyone thinks it worthwhile. Mr. Rickett says he wrote a report on the Roswell affair. Have a good look among the Blue Book files (or the released OSI files) during the late 1940s period, and you will, if you are very lucky, stumble across a UFO investigation report by one Lewis S. Rickett. Read it, note the event and date, and present it to Moore and perhaps Randle and Schmitt. I will offer heavy odds that the said report does not relate to the Roswell crashed disc of July 1947, but to another event some 18 months to two years later.

Would this prove anything? Of course not, but it would further my case, which is quite simply: neither La Paz nor Rickett had any involvement with Roswell.

Incidentally the only reason Roswell is Top Secret is because Moore & Friedman have promoted this myth over the last twelve years. To those in charge at the time, it was a non-event.

Moore's spy fiction has got a lot worse since his Bennewtitz story in 1989, so I refuse to get dragged into any further arguments over either that story or the long discredited MJ-12 garbage."

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by the 'experts'. Instead, a case is made based on the circumstantial evidence that supports the facts."

What if this WERE a criminal case? We have quite a few facts, 38 almost perfect photographs. What else do we have? We have a motive. How about a practical joke that got out of hand which turned into a publishing deal too good to refuse? We have opportunity. Of the first 24 photos taken, all, with the exception of #19 and #21, were taken in privacy at the Walters home. Out of all the events recounted by the Walters for which photos were taken only FOUR occurred away from the home and the only person who can say they actually saw a UFO at the SAME TIME the photo was being taken is Frances. Considering Frances is co-author on the book one would find her testimony questionable.

Now let's look at the circumstantial evidence. As early as the first week in January 1988 Walters was seeking publishing advice from Budd Hopkins through Don Ware. He withheld events and additional photographs from the MUFON investigators. He disclosed his identity only after he was in danger of losing Maccabee's support.

He sent in his Copyright registration on January 12th, the day he alleges he took photo #19. He called the collection, "UFOs PROOF POSITIVE" the same title Andrus quotes a year later for their upcoming book. We also know that Walters signed a deal with Morrow Publishing in November 1988 while telling Jim Moseley in December that he had no intention of doing a book for a "major publisher".

In February 1988 he kept an appointment with a self-sponsored Polygrapher, and denied, EVEN TO HIM, that he had any intention of benefiting financially from his experiences.

We can see from the GB Serial Number sheet prepared by Oeschler that not only are photos missing but at least one appears to have been tampered with. In my own experience with both the Series 600 and 108 film, never have I had a photo emerge without a sequence number on the back...but Walters seems to have quite a few. Then, when Oeschler and Maccabee notice that the photos don't quite align with Walters story for December 17th, they suggest to him he might have been abducted and send him for hypnotic regression...and guess what... HE WAS!!!

Motive, opportunity, questionable photographs and even more questionable circumstances. If this were tried in a court of law, and you were the judge, how would you decide the case?

ED WAS A STEP AHEAD - TO THE BANK
By Barbara Becker

On January 12, 1988, Ed Walters has a most terrifying experience, he had a Close Encounter. He states that at around 5:15 PM he left his home to return to a job site. On the way he was stalked, stopped, harrassed, and terrified by a UFO and five aliens. One could probably say he feared for his life. But in the middle of this terrifying, life threatening experience Ed Walters managed to take a perfect photograph of the craft, referred to as photo #19. In their book, *The GULF BREEZE SIGHTINGS*, Frances Walters claims in her commentary for January 12, 1988, that their lives had been drastically altered but they would strive to act as though nothing had happened. They wanted to be "normal"...so normal that on January 15, 1988 the Copyright Office of the United States of America, Library of Congress, received a very intriguing collection of photographs...pictures of UFOs from Ed Walters!

The collection was titled "UFO: PHOTOS-PROOF POSITIVE" the same name they planned to give their forthcoming book. The form Walters used, FORM VA, is specifically used for registering photographs. He completed it on January 12, 1988, the same day he alleges he took photo #19. This means he would have had to requested the form at least a week before, if not longer. The Copyright Office received it on January 15, 1988. In order to understand the significance of this event we need to look at the Certificate of Registration.

Section #3, asks the registrant to state the "year in which the creation of this work was completed". The statute states that "a work is 'created' when it is fixed in a copy or phonorecord for the first time." A work is 'fixed' when it is first put in tangible form, that is, when it is "sufficiently permanent or stable to be perceived, reproduced, or otherwise communicated for a period of more than transitory duration." For a photograph that is the moment it is taken. The instructions state, "The date you give here should be the year in which the author completed the particular version for which registration is now being sought, even if other versions exist or if further changes or additions are planned." Walters claims the only photograph taken in 1988 up to January 12th was photo #19. All photos prior to #19 were taken in 1987. If Walters was sending in all photos up to and including #18, the form should read 1987 since they were in their completed form at the time. But it doesn't, it reads 1988, so we should be able to safely assume that Walters included photo #19 as part of the collection sent in on January 12th, 1988. That poses an interesting question. Since it is a requirement that copies of the photographs accompany the registration, when did Walters have the time to make any kind of copy of Photo #19?

Walters alleges that on January 12th, 1988 he was chased down, attacked and terrorized by a UFO and five goose-stepping aliens. In *THE GULF BREEZE SIGHTINGS*, (p. #125), he states that next morning he could still notice a "tingle" in the back of his legs deep in his calves, and that he spent an anxious night rubbing them. At no time does he mention filling out a Copyright Registration, making any kind of copies or leaving the house at all until the next day, January 13th. Walters' Copyright Registration was received in Washington D.C. on January 15, 1988. If he mailed it on January 13th that would mean a delivery time of only two days; it could have been mailed earlier.

It has long been suspected that photo #19 was actually taken before January 12, 1988, in fact, a look at the serial numbers, shows that the serial number on photo #19 is identical to the serial numbers on photos taken during December 1987. Walters claims he had only one camera which he used for his construction work; the same camera he used to photograph the UFOs. Photos 10 & 11, "mark" 1 & 2, ("mark" is the sequence number of the photos in the film pack, 1 thru 8), begin the J712051Z series and are listed as taken on December 2, 1987, followed by #12, mark 3, on December 5; #'s 13, 14, 15, & 17, marks 4, 5, 6, & 8 on December 17, and finally, #19, NO MARK, on January 12, 1988. Photo 16, allegedly taken on December 17, although no date is

indicated, and photo #18, taken on December 23, have the same serial numbers, H712631Z, and have been noted as being part of a different pack. Since photo #19 shares the same serial number with photos taken in December, it seems reasonable that it too would have been taken in December with the others.

Sometime ago I asked Dr. Maccabee for his comment on this "little discrepancy", his response was that as he understood the process the serial number identified the machine which produced the film along with the month of its production and other manufacturing information. Each pack of film is part of a long roll of film cut into photographs and packaged. There could be hundreds of film packs with the same number on them and since Walters bought many packs at one time the possibility of getting several packs with the same number was great. So, it would be possible for Walters to take photos in December using the "J" series packs and almost a month later load another "J" series pack to take photo #19. That's reasonable, there's just one little problem.

Bob Oeschler prepared the "GB Serial ID Numbers" sheet. As he carefully inspected each photograph he noted the "Walters" photo number, the serial number, the mark number, the date the photo was taken and his comments. The "J" series in question begins with photo #10. His comment on number 11 is "P has splotch (Top Missing)". (He is referring to the notation in black ink at the bottom of each photo, 'Polacolor C J712051Z'.) On numbers 12 & 13 he comments "Mark # very light - P spl". (The mark number runs from 1 thru 8 and is in light purple pink at the top right corner of each photo.) Out of 8 photos in the 'J' series, 5 were noted as having the same unusual characteristic, a "P splotch" and that includes photo #19, in fact, this flaw was so dominant in that pack that Oeschler notes its ABSENCE in photo #10. Ed Walters claims that his original photo #16 was somehow lost during an abduction attempt on December 17, 1987, but if we look at the "J" series photos we count 8, the correct amount for a single pack of film. We could consider that Walters did somehow get a second pack of film with the "J" series of numbers, but the probability of that pack having the same flaws as the first pack is slim, especially since the "P splotch" is not noted in any other serial number. So why did Walters withhold photo #19 insisting it was taken on January 12th? Because it messed up the story for December 17th.

When reading the Walters' book, The GULF BREEZE SIGHTINGS, it is easy to assume that the MUFON investigators were aware of each episode as it happened, that they saw each batch of photos after they were taken, but they didn't. Walters says he took photos 1 thru 5 on November 11, 1987, he turned them over to the Gulf Breeze Sentinel on November 17th and they were printed on November 19th. The next photo to be made public was #18, allegedly taken on December 23, 1987, and printed in the December 24 issue of the GB Sentinel. This photo shows three "UFOs" and is linked to the "Believer Bill" photos. That means that there were at least 12 additional photos taken in the interim that the MUFON people were not aware of. Since Walters still maintained his anonymity, why did he keep those 12 photos a secret? Because he still wasn't sure of his status.

On December 22, 1987 Don Ware stopped by the Walters home with a copy of the report he intended to file with MUFON. The report contained copies of the first five photographs along with measurements taken at the site. Having not read the report I can only assume it was favorable. With that in mind Walters then released photo #18 to Duane Cook at the GB Sentinel. Coincidentally, the "Believer Bill" photos arrived earlier that morning. Cook ran one "Believer Bill" photo and Walters' photo #18 on December 24, 1987. With the support of the MUFON organization, and the acceptance of new photographs, especially the "Believer Bill" photos used to bolster Walters story, he was finally beginning to feel confident.

It has long been said that the Walters, Ed AND Frances, never had intentions of writing a book, but I am not sure the events testify to

that. Ed Walters claims (GBS p. #118) that on January 4, 1988, he decided to "get the story out", considering his subsequent behavior it is safe to assume he is talking about a book. According to Budd Hopkins (GBS p. #18) Walters told him that almost as soon as his (Walters) photos had hit the press, (November 19, 1987), a book scout had entered the area looking for the photographer and Walters had received a "dazzling offer" which included a "six-figure advance". In fact, Ware's phone call to Hopkins during the first week of January 1988 was to enlist Hopkins' aid for Walters regarding "publishing issues". At that time Hopkins advised Ware how he and the other investigators should handle the case with publication in mind... it should be thoroughly investigated, the photos must be authenticated, and Walters must submit to a polygraph. Since Ware called Hopkins for Ed it is likely that Ware also discussed these steps for publication with Ed as early as the first week in January. So, the Walters are planning on writing a book, and unless all the proceeds go to charity, a profit of some kind is expected. Why then did Ed Walters tell his self-sponsored polygrapher, Harvey McLaughlin, Jr. on February 18, 1988 (GBS p. #191, #3), that he expected to receive "no personal gain or remuneration from these sightings?" And as late as December 1988 according to Jim Moseley of SAUCER SMEAR (1/10/89), Walters was still protesting his involvement with a "money making book": "He doesn't seem interested in doing the kind of book, for a major publisher, that would make big money..." I guess MORROW isn't a major publisher and a six figure advance isn't big money. Moseley should have attended the Belgium conference in November instead of visiting Ed in Gulf Breeze in December, if he had he would have heard it straight from Walt Andrus' mouth, "the experience of Ed and his wife from November 11, 1987 through May 1, 1988 will be published in their forthcoming book tentatively titled, UFO: PHOTOS PROOF POSITIVE." (Saucer Smear Jan? 1989) And so we come full circle.

The first five photos were published on November 19, 1987, the next photo not until December 24, 1987. There was plenty of time to prepare the first chapters of a book and see what kind of a reaction the neighborhood would have to the photos. Since no one suspected anything extraordinary was happening at the Walters' household, that allowed Ed AND Frances to come and go as usual without suspicion. They could easily have taken photos #6 through #19 without drawing attention to themselves. It should also be kept in mind that all the photos from 1 through 24, with the exception of #19 and #21 were set at the Walters' home and 10 of those were allegedly taken in the early morning hours between 1 and 6 AM. Even if someone did see Ed lurking about his own backyard with a camera what would it have mattered, no one knew he was "Mr. Ed".

Walters implies he is considering a book on January 4, 1988, however he already has the Copyright form in his possession on January 12. Even calling the Copyright Office directly would not get the form into his hands in five working days. The book idea HAD to have started much earlier than January 4th.

On January 7, 1988 Walters met with MUFON investigators, disclosed his identity and filled them on the events and photos between November 11, 1987 and January 6, 1988. Why come forward at this time? The answer lies in a comment made by Dr. Maccabee in GBS (p. #269): "My interest in the Gulf Breeze sightings probably would have ended with a cursory study of these photos if Ed had not revealed who he was to the investigators on January 7, 1988." Walters needed Maccabee and he was in danger of losing his support, one of the three key points for publishing a book outlined by Hopkins. Having hooked MUFON, Maccabee, and Hopkins, Ed took his next step, he sent in the Copyright Registration.

Bruce Maccabee comments (GBS p. 268/269), that photographic evidence does not make a case because photographs can be hoaxed. Photos can be an aid in a case, but it is the story, the circumstances surrounding them, that supports the case. He says, "A lawyer once told me that very often a case in a criminal court is not made by the physical evidence (the 'hard facts'), because 'facts' can always be disputed

Cont' on p. 9.