



Selected articles from
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Not Quite Matter and Antimatter

Earth survives a joint TBS/MUFON meeting

by Valerie Grey

James Moseley, editor/publisher of the [Saucer Smear](#) newsletter, was the guest speaker at the Tampa Bay Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) monthly meeting on March 17. Since Moseley also wished to address TBS members during this brief trip from his home base in Key West, MUFON invited us to attend a joint meeting. As "fate" would have it, the date happened to correspond to our own TBS quarterly meeting.

Although there were a few passionate remarks made during the Q&A periods (one MUFON member, for example, demanded to know if TBS was funded by any nefarious government agencies such as the CIA), we were welcomed with open arms. They were, I thought, as curious about us and our "alien" beliefs and approach to belief as we were about them and theirs.

Mr. Moseley chatted briefly and very pleasantly with the dozen or so TBS members present during our abbreviated separate TBS meeting. Not long thereafter, the joint meeting began. And shortly after a MUFON-member videographer made an appeal to borrow a laptop computer to assist in his photography of "ghosts" in cemeteries (see story below), Mr. Moseley began his presentation.

Moseley categorized himself as inhabiting the middle ground between the two extreme camps of ardent UFO believers and skeptical debunkers. He recited several personal experiences of both UFO sightings and perceived paranormal experiences over the past fifty years or more, which he said had influenced his current belief paradigm.

One amusing incident had occurred on a jet when the passengers were directed by the captain to look out the window to observe a launch from Cape Kennedy. Moseley said he noticed a mysterious white

light that seemed to be tracking them. He finally asked a stewardess what she thought it might be. "Oh, that's the wing light," she answered. The rest of his examples, however, were apparently not explainable so prosaically.

Moseley claimed to have witnessed a "miraculous" spoon-bending feat by [Uri Geller](#) -- the spoon continued to bend "on its own" after being placed on a table, away from anyone's hands (though Moseley did acknowledge that Geller may well use trickery on other occasions). Another other-worldly event involved a drinking glass that had fallen and awakened him one night (possibly knocked to the floor by his cat). Despite the most diligent search, not all of the glass shards could be found -- and he held up the partially reconstructed glass to (not quite) prove it!

Although a few of his stories involved UFO sightings, I began to recognize a noncoincidental connection between alien-hypothesis UFO belief and paranormal beliefs in general. Like some other TBS members, I had expected the MUFON meeting to focus on UFO sightings, and possibly alien abductions (which, it turns out, Moseley said he doesn't believe in). So I was astonished at how many other overtly paranormal topics were discussed in such a positive and uncritical manner.

For example, during one Q&A period, an argument erupted about auras, during which a MUFON member claimed she could see them with her unaided eye, without benefit of [Kirlian photography](#). [Gary Posner](#) offered to test her for the [TBS \\$1,000 prize](#) (of course, she "didn't want our money"), and tried to describe a simple experiment where the claimant is asked to tell whether or not one or more human beings are standing behind an opaque screen that blocks the person(s) from view but not the aura that is supposed to extend several feet beyond the person. But he was shouted down by her and also interrupted by someone else.

I personally chatted with a man who wasn't a member of either group, who said he had been persuaded to believe in the psychic realm because of an incident in a bookstore. Out of all the thousands of available volumes, he had happened to be looking at a book on old architecture that had "Painted Houses" in the title -- and just then a song came on the radio that also was about "painted houses." He was so struck by this chance occurrence that it had forever altered the way he perceived the world.

I tried, unsuccessfully, to point out that it was human nature to remember a "hit" such as this, but to not remember the tens of thousands of similar times when there was no seemingly miraculous coincidence, and to compare it to the lottery: statistically speaking, somebody is bound to win -- if not this week, then next. It may seem like a miracle to the specific person who strikes the jackpot, but that *somebody* was going to win is too pedestrian even to deserve comment.

TBS chairman [Terry Smiljanich](#) tried to explain to the assemblage our position as open-minded skeptics (as opposed to belligerent debunkers fanatically out to prove the non-existence of their claims), but subsequent questions and discussion suggested that his explanation had not been universally understood or accepted.

All in all, I found it a very interesting experience, if primarily from a psychological point of view. MUFON Coordinator Lorraine Gerber observed that this was the first time there had ever been any real dialogue between their group and skeptics such as ourselves (though TBS did have former MUFON field investigator Dave Ring address our group in 1993). Candidly, as far as I'm concerned,

it's just as well, as there wasn't much, if anything, on offer in terms of hard evidence or a willingness to test or even question anecdotal claims. Although we all spoke English, we clearly defined words like "proof" and "belief" and "evidence" as if we came from different planets.

[Don Addis' cartoon](#) in the last *TBS Report* showed a smiling terrestrial "Home Team" baseball player with his arm companionably around an equally happy alien "Visitor" player. I have to wonder, though, if sentient creatures from another solar system ever were to make it to our planet, just what kind of reception they would receive from their most fervent Earthly devotees -- should the visitors dare to question some of the latter's most cherished paranormal beliefs.

Some Reflections on Some Reflections Purported to be Ghostly Images

by Guss Wilder III

As a sort of side show to the March 17 joint meeting with MUFON, we were treated to an exhibition of cemetery "ghost" photos taken by a MUFON member who had devoted many long nights in the dark to his pursuit of the unknown.

Inspecting the photographs, I found that they fell into two categories. One type appeared to have captured ground fog clouds illuminated by the camera flash. As with most clouds, you can play Rorschach games and find shapes that vaguely resemble a face. When I pointed to what I thought might be the face of the "dead" person in one photo and asked the photographer if that was it, he told me, "The face is anywhere you see it." I didn't find this evidence terribly persuasive.

The second type of picture, also taken with a flash, contained what were termed "orbs" floating over the cemetery. These luminous globes are being captured on both photographic film and digital cameras at many locations around the country. The glowing, fuzzy, semi-transparent globes looked suspiciously like some kind of lens flare to me. Upon close inspection, the "orbs" had several distinct sides like the iris diaphragm of a camera lens. I felt sure that I could re-create the effect, but to save time, I decided to check the Internet first. Within five minutes I had found an excellent re-creation [here](#).

The quick explanation: The built-in flash is reflecting off of tiny dust particles in the air near the camera lens. Since everything else in the night photo is nearly black, these particles appear relatively bright and are thrown into out-of-focus roundness by their nearness to the lens. You don't have to be at a cemetery looking for dead people to photograph these "orbs." What you *do* need is a camera with the flash very close to the lens, and a bit of dust in the air. I was able to [do it myself](#) in my yard. But no, I don't know what's buried there.

Snippets



Pinellas County commissioners have resisted "an aggressive campaign from [professional] psychics, clairvoyants and spiritual guides" urging them to set aside an ordinance requiring that fortune tellers be licensed. Instead, the county has reiterated that the pros must pay not only \$100 each year for a license, but an additional \$25 for an annual background check. Complaints of "religious discrimination" fell upon deaf ears, with officials saying that they are just trying to protect consumers from fraudulent fortune tellers. But that isn't justification enough for interfaith healing minister Annemarie Sklaruk: "When was the last time you guys came to a reading? We don't always tell the future." How true.

(*St. Pete. Times*, May 2)

At least we know one thing for certain: Life once existed on Mars. Right? Forget the "[Face](#)." And never mind the now-mostly dismissed 1996 NASA press conference that announced the discovery of fossilized bacteria within a meteorite from Mars. A magnetite crystal has now been found in that meteorite which, according to two studies published in the Feb. 27 Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, "is supporting evidence for the presence of ancient life on Mars," according to study author Kathie Thomas-Keppta, an astrophysicist at the Johnson Space Center in Houston. "[And] if it existed there at one time, we would expect it to exist today." But although she says that there is no report of such magnetite crystals being formed by any means other than biological, geologist Ralph P. Harvey, who has also studied the meteorite, calls her conclusions "hasty" and says that "the door is still open [to other explanations] until further evidence [of life] is rolled out."

(AP via *St. Pete. Times*, Feb. 27)



Ch. 13 News Promotes "Astronaut UFO" photos

During WTVT-TV 13's 10:00 News on the night of May 6, following a five-minute report about some December 1999 UFO sightings in Ohio, three "astronaut UFO" photos were promoted as if they represented genuinely unexplainable events. The three graphics were taken directly from www.anomalous-sightings.com's credulous website and presented without benefit of any skeptical input, indicating a serious lapse of judgment by Ch. 13 News.

[The first photo](#) shows a white cigar-shaped "UFO" supposedly seen by John Glenn during his historic 1962 flight. But it actually is a photo from Scott Carpenter's Mercury flight -- a severe blow-up of a tracking balloon that Carpenter had deployed but which failed to inflate properly, accounting for its limp appearance.

[The next](#) was a well-known, doctored version of a photo from the 1965 Gemini 7 mission. The craft's long, black nose had been airbrushed out -- many years before [anomalous-sightings.com](http://www.anomalous-sightings.com) got the photo -- leaving the sun's blinding glare on a pair of rocket thrusters to appear as two free-flying "UFOs." And the photo has been posted upside down on the website, further disguising its true nature.

[The third photo](#), taken by Neil Armstrong aboard Apollo 11 in 1969, shows a supposedly "huge" bright-white object on the far right, just above the earth's horizon. As space expert James Oberg writes in his 1992 book, *UFOs and Outer Space Mysteries*,

There is no indication that any of the astronauts saw it. Since it's out of focus on a camera with an extremely wide depth of field, photographic experts have concluded that it was probably only a few feet outside the window, and an inch or two across. As on other flights, pieces of insulation and ice surrounded the Apollo at this stage in the flight. "Unidentified" it certainly might be, but it could not by any semantic word game be called an authentic UFO -- except, for example, in McGraw-Hill's *UFOs: A Pictorial History* !

And, sadly, on Ch. 13 News.

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