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Readers' Forum

To the editors:

In Vol. 1, Nos. 3 & 4 of the *Ufologist* you ran an article which I would like to comment on since it incorporated a commentary on a piece I originally wrote.

The March/April 1992 issue of the *International UFO Reporter (IUR)* carried my piece, "The invention of a Gulf Breeze UFO". In it I discussed the fallibility of memory using the Hufford report of November 14-15, 1987, as an example. I used many sources for my paper, furnished footnotes and prepared a bibliography, which were left out by the editor. My paper was based on sound principles.

In the *IUR* piece, which Hufford continually misquotes, I wrote the following:

A photograph taken in Pensacola accompanies this paper. It is of a water tower which Hufford would see each time he went to his church. I have also included a copy of a Hufford drawing printed in the 1990 MUFON *Symposium Proceedings*. No, Hufford could not have seen this water tower from where he believes he saw the "UFO". I am not saying he misidentified a water tower. What I am saying is that there is a striking similarity between the tower and the "UFO"—a similarity too close to be coincidental. In compromise memory information already contained in memory is unconsciously mixed with new information. The result is memory that resembles and accommodates both pieces of information.

Art and Mary Hufford's report was taken at face value. They said they saw a UFO; thus it was assumed they saw a UFO. Did it not occur to anyone to investigate another possible explanation? Bayou Boulevard, after all, is on the flight path for Pensacola Municipal Airport. I doubt it, since the report was taken nine months later. The only reason to call what the Huffords saw that day a UFO is that the report is incomplete; whatever they saw is unidentified and will remain unidentified. It is easy to group uninvestigated un-researched cases into the "unidentified" category, but there is absolutely no usable UFO

information that comes out of that kind of blind-faith anecdote-collecting.

I think my words are specific and not subject to interpretation.

In his commentary in the *Ufologist* headed "The water tower ruse", Art Hufford says, "Contrary to what you have been led to believe, there are no water towers visible anywhere close to the area where we had our UFO sighting." He and I agree. So who is saying he saw a water tower?

Answer: Hufford, by innuendo, each time he uses the absurd premise of actually misidentifying a water tower as a "UFO" to add credibility to his report and denigrate the validity of the article.

He says, "I assure you I am quite capable of distinguishing water towers from the UFO my wife and I saw in November 1987." Well of course he is! He then goes on to say water towers don't "hoover" or glow, at least not the ones in Pensacola. This is a clear and purposeful misrepresentation of the article.

In his closing remarks Hufford says, "Realizing people from out of town have no way to gauge one's credibility, I have also attached a resume . . ." Since I am one of the "out of towners" he speaks of, I can say that I don't need a resume to judge his credibility. I just count the times he distorts the truth. According to Hufford, "debunkers", in the absence of facts, simply make them up and throw in a few labels. It seems to me Hufford has been making up a few "facts" of his own and throwing in his own labels such as "ruse".

I did not write the article or include the water tower picture to embarrass or intimidate him. I wrote it in order to pose questions regarding the events in Florida, questions that weren't, and still aren't, being asked by the MUFON investigators.

-Barbara Becker

Barbara Becker is a UFO investigator and writer affiliated with the UFO Research Network in St. Louis, Missouri.

Pascagoula abductions to be subject of movie

Among the stories in the current issue of Lou Farrish's UFO Newsclipping Service (Route 1, Box 220, Plumerville, Arkansas 72127) is an item by Ken Fink from the Biloxi, Mississippi *Sun Herald* about a forthcoming abduction movie.

According to Fink, Baton Rouge producer Midge Soderbergh intends to begin filming the Charles Hickson story by late December. She says the production will be partly based upon Hickson's self-published 1983 book *UFO Contact at Pascagoula*, co-written with William Mendez. The screenplay is being written by Ed Conroy, author of *Report on Communion* and a self-proclaimed abductee.

Soderbergh says the \$10,000 movie will be cast and filmed by Walsh Production Company of Bayou Goula, Louisiana.

Fink quotes Hickson as having said, "I've had the chance to make movies, but Hollywood wanted to fantasize it. I couldn't go along with

that. Midge is capable of bringing my feelings to the screen."

Hickson and fishing buddy Calvin Parker were subjected to much publicity and investigation after claiming to have been taken aboard a UFO and examined on October 11, 1973. Their claim has never been disproved, and in his book Hickson recounts several subsequent UFO contacts, some of them witnessed by members of his family. Parker reportedly suffered a nervous breakdown after the 1973 event and has avoided further media exposure.

Hickson, a successful steel contractor and owner of a producing oil well, does not appear to be motivated by money. Over the years he has continued modest efforts to "spread the word" about UFO reality and what he believes to be major world changes to come, but his commercial interest in the subject has been limited to his one book.

Is the Stealth model kit's 'historical note' a leak?

The following item is reprinted from *UFO PARADOX*, an independent newsletter published by Kerri Murphy and Barry Ballenger at P.O. Box 12245, Parkville, MO 64152. Erich Aggen is MUFON state section director for the Kansas City, Missouri, area, and a frequent contributor to the *Mufon UFO Journal*.

by Erich A. Aggen, Jr.

The measure of the acceptance of an idea can sometimes be gauged by its integration into the prevailing culture.

I recently purchased a Testors 1/72nd scale model of the F-117A Stealth Fighter and found a surprising "historical note" on one page of the instruction booklet referring to Area 51, Area S-4, and alien UFOs.

Historical Note

A very secret test facility at Groom Lake, Nevada, and known as Area 51, was

the initial test and operations site for the stealth program. It was from here the original CIA U-2 and A-12 (CIA predecessor to the USAF SR-71) first flew. It is rumored that an adjacent facility - S4 - is the location from which extraterrestrial UFOs are flown and are being reverse engineered in an effort to provide advanced technology to the United States.

The other interesting facts about this model kit are, (1) The instruction booklet was written by two employees of the Lockheed Corporation, Eric Schulzinger and Denny Lombard; and (2) It is produced in large numbers (hundreds of thousands) and sent all over the world to thousands of children and adults. It is one of Testors best-selling model kits.

I wonder if there are any red faces at Testors over this leak.

Klass takes swipe at 'Linda' abduction story

When Budd Hopkins unveiled his "most important" abduction case—that of "Linda", the woman whose 1989 NYC abduction was allegedly witnessed by multiple ordinary citizens, two policemen/secret service agents, and a highly-placed political figure (Linda herself was at the time highly placed, wafting some fourteen floors above street level in the company of three greys)—many thought he had the appearance of a man hanging a "kick me" sign around his neck.

In the latest issue of the *Skeptics UFO Newsletter*, perennial debunker Phil Klass dances out of the skeptics corner for what will probably be the first round of a long fight.

Klass comes out swinging, alleging that Hopkins ignored warnings from New Jersey MUFON investigators who were suspicious of Linda's story, and that the story itself bears suggestive resemblance to *Nighteyes*, a 1989 horror novel by Garfield Reeves-Stevens.

The editors threw the question of a resemblance out for comment on the Paranormal Issues forum of Compuserve Information Services. The overwhelming consensus among those familiar with both was that *Nighteyes* was not the Linda story.

We have not read *Nighteyes*, but on the strength of the commentary from CIS, it looks like Klass threw Hopkins a couple of sharp jabs, one of which appears to have been a fake.

While Hopkins continues to withhold the identify of the political figure, whom he calls "The Third Man", Klass alleges that "Hopkins reportedly believes 'The Third Man' is: Javier Perez de Cuellar, who in late 1989 was Secretary General of the United Nations."

Unfortunately, Klass does not name his "inside sources", merely hinting that they are ranking members of New Jersey MUFON.



Let's put the Gulf Breeze Fiasco behind us

Imagine that a local businessman walks into your local newspaper office and presents a dozen or so photographs of women who appear to be dead, and says there is a serial killer loose in your community. He just happened upon the bodies, he says, and took photographs but didn't tell anyone about it. But now that there are a dozen dead victims, and the police apparently haven't even discovered these crimes, he feels that it is his duty to come forth and inform the public about what is going on.

The police investigate and can't find any evidence of any murders having been committed. The photographs appear to be genuine, and the subjects appear to be real women, but in fact there are no bodies or even any missing women in the area. Eventually the police do find a young man who says he helped the businessman fake the photographs, and write the whole thing off as a hoax.

Undaunted, the businessman writes a book about the serial killer, complete with photos of the victims, and makes a lot of money. A handful of local citizens form a vigilante group dedicated to identifying the serial killer, and achieve a measure of notoriety through their tireless publicity efforts.

Gradually they become a serial killer cult, preaching their gospel to all who will listen, selling their photographs, newsletters and trinkets, and viciously attacking doubters and "debunk-

ers". Anyone who doubts, they say, obviously hasn't "investigated" the case. That includes the police, of course, as well as virtually everyone outside their own group who has investigated it.

Regrettably, this is a true story, except that the subject is not a serial killer but the Gulf Breeze UFOs.

UFOs are serious business, and ufology is a serious and worthwhile pursuit. But the public perception and mainstream press treatment of the subject is anything but serious. Anyone who still wonders why need look no farther than Pensacola, Florida, for an answer.

While the press and the public snicker, Pensacola MUFON/Florida MUFON, Inc., continues to astound and embarrass serious ufologists with its commercial promotion of the Ed Walters photos and its trained "red light UFOs (RUFOS).

Anyone who questions the authenticity of either is subjected to threats and slander. Numerous MUFON members have resigned over this ridiculous case. At least four state section directors have been fired over it.

Even the mayor of Gulf Breeze has been publicly threatened with dire consequences unless he mends his ways and puts Gulf Breeze "in a promotional mode to attract more visitors". To his credit, mayor Ed Gray refused, and has yet to suffer any dire consequences.

In an open letter not sent to mayor Gray but published in two newspapers, Florida MUFON, Inc.'s "state director of investigations" castigated the mayor for ignoring the commercial potential of the town's RUFOS. In a long and curtly worded epistle, C. Joseph Barron wrote:

"Now, Mr. Mayor, as a banker, you understand money. The majority of the people who call want to know where Gulf Breeze is located. Those responsible for the research and documentation of Ufology in this area have brought more people here than any other organization. In my opinion, I think that deserves your atten-

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tion since the influx of money that UFO publicity brings to Gulf Breeze will continue to attract more and more people.

"I would like for you to place Gulf Breeze in a promotional mode in order to attract more visitors. Unfortunately, when I'm asked about the support that the city gives to the UFO sightings, I have to tell the truth. This utterly confounds people."

Farther on, in his final paragraph, Barron wrote:

"Mr. Mayor, UFO watchers and believers are taxpayers. If you continue to ignore the subject, these same taxpayers will demand an accounting at some time. Many of those folks are prominent business Gulf Breeze people."

Any MUFON member who is not embarrassed by that asininity must have very thick skin.

The bottom line so far on the Ed Walters photos is that no one has been able to prove or disprove their genuineness, and it's doubtful that anyone ever will. All efforts to prove their genuineness, including Jeffery Sainio's latest and Dr. Bruce Maccabee's most valiant and long standing efforts, ultimately have proved nothing. Efforts to prove them fake have been little more successful, falling well short of proof.

All of the photos apparently have been replicated by various means, including specifically the means described by the teenager who confessed to having helped Walters with his early efforts. Even the infamous road shot, photo 19, has been replicated by a TV newsman using the very model found in the attic of the former Walters home, and double exposure.

In other words, it has been shown conclusively that replicas of all of the Walters photos can be made through fakery, with relatively little skill and simple equipment. That, however, only proves that the photos could be fake. It does not prove that they are.

MUFON makes much of its "scientific" approach to UFO investigation and is quick to criticize any anti-UFO stance that it perceives as

"unscientific". But the truth is there is little science can do with the Gulf Breeze case. Other than the questionable photographs there is no hard evidence to analyze or evaluate, and precious few established, undisputed facts on which to build or dispute hypotheses. The case is, however, investigatable legally and journalistically, and as a legal case or news event it fails miserably.

First let's put this case into the context of criminal justice standards. If it were a crime to take photographs of UFOs, and if Ed Walters were arrested and charged with that crime, he could not be convicted.

Why? Reasonable doubt. It has been proved that his photos could be fake, and there is credible testimony that he did in fact fake them. Therefore there is reasonable doubt that he ever photographed a real UFO. Not guilty.

What about a civil case, in which guilt need not be proved to the exclusion of any reasonable doubt, but can be established by a mere preponderance of the evidence?

On the one hand we have Ed Walters showing amazingly clear Polaroid photographs of UFOs that have spent months hanging around his neighborhood at low altitude, in clear sight over densely populated Gulf Breeze, without a single other person ever having seen or photographed them. After the photos had been publicized a few persons suddenly recalled having seen such things, but such testimony is little better than worthless. Not a single person in all of Gulf Breeze reported—at the time—seeing such an object in a place or at a time that Ed Walters was supposedly photographing it.

Supporting Walters we have his family, much richer from the book advance and counting on a movie (that failed to materialize), photo analyst Bruce Maccabee, richer for contributing a favorable report on the photos to the book, and Pensacola MUFON, \$6,200 richer for having hosted the 1990 MUFON Symposium because of the Walters case.

And we have individuals within Pensacola MUFON/Florida MUFON, Inc., suddenly seeing themselves on TV and in newspapers and magazines, suddenly elevated to visible import-

ance by virtue of believing in Ed Walters and vouching for the reality of his UFOs.

On the other hand we have young Tommy Smith, who testified that Ed Walters tried to recruit him into the hoax and showed him how he intended to fake the photos. And we have TV newsman Mark Curtis, who followed Tommy Smith's instructions and produced replicas of the Walters photos. And we have the model found in the attic of the former Walters home — a model that is identical to the drawing of the UFO in *The Gulf Breeze Sightings*, and which Curtis used to replicate the road shot.

And we - the editors - have the fact that after several trips to Gulf Breeze over the past three years, and conversations with numerous persons including Ed and Frances Walters, mayor Ed Gray, Rex and Carol Salisbury, Don Ware, Charles Flannigan, news reporters, police officers, motel clerks, restaurant workers and business people and total strangers who live and work in Gulf Breeze, we have yet to meet a single person outside of MUFON who does not believe the case to be a hoax.

Finally we have the most damning photo of all, photo 24. Walters would have us believe that he saw his wife outside in the yard, under attack by alien beings who could injure, kill or take her away, and his reaction was to get his camera and take a picture of her running from them. Either that photograph is fake, or Ed Walters is not a man we would want on our side in a dangerous situation.

So in our considered opinion the case fails as a civil case. We believe it is a hoax.

As a news event, then, it has come and gone. A hoax apparently was perpetrated, exposed and reported. Barring significant new evidence, it is no longer newsworthy.

We believe MUFON in particular and ufology in general would be better served if we could put this business behind us and devote our time and resources to more important issues.

— Terry Ecker

Arcturus Books, Inc. moves to Florida

Bob Girard, former owner of Arcturus Book Service in Stone Mountain, Georgia, is now Robert C. Girard, president of Arcturus Books, Inc., in Port St. Lucie, Florida, according to his October catalog.

During his five years in Stone Mountain, Girard provided a first rate mail order service specializing in UFO and related materials. Regular customers look forward to his monthly catalogs and entertaining reviews of the wares he has to offer. He says the only significant change, other than his address, is that Florida residents now must enclose state sales tax with their orders, while Georgia residents may now stop that unpleasant practice.

The new address is: Arcturus Books, Inc., 1443 S.E. Port St. Lucie Boulevard, Port St. Lucie, FL 34952. The new telephone number (too new to make the October catalog) is (407) 398-0796.

Welcome to Florida, Bob.

“UFOs Tonite” on Cable Radio Network Sunday nights

Don Ecker, *UFO Magazine's* research director, hosts America's only weekly UFO radio talk show every Sunday night at 9:00 p.m. Pacific time on the Cable Radio Network.

The one hour show is devoted exclusively to the subject of Unidentified Flying Objects, and features live interviews with such UFO notables as Dr. Jacques Vallee, Dr. David Jacobs, Budd Hopkins, Zecharia Sitchin and many others.

The program comes over television sets, or via satellite dish from Satcom 1-R, Transponder 15, Freq. 7.235.

For more information call UFO at (818) 951-1250, or Cable Radio Network at (818) 352-7152, or call your local cable company.

Saucer lands on steel plate – or does it?

The following article is reprinted with permission from the *New Jersey Chronicle*, a bimonthly newsletter published by the New Jersey Mutual UFO Network and edited by Paul M. Macuch, P.O. Box 6103, North Brunswick, NJ 08902.

By Michael P. Rellahan

COATEVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA – Within the past year it has survived the recession, a crippling 111 day Steelworkers strike and the abrupt loss of key executive personnel. But now Lukens Steel Company faces an even more potentially dangerous threat: alien invasion.

Well, maybe. The company is investigating reports that one or more employees saw “an usual object” land at the plant Wednesday, June 10, according to Lukens spokeswoman Evelyn Walker.

According to one source the object was a flying saucer, silver in color with multi-colored lights rotating around its watermelon shape.

While some dismiss the episode as people getting too much sun, employees at the plant are talking about it. The UFO is said to have landed about 4:30 p.m. on a steel plate in the middle of the steel yard. It touched down briefly, then took off toward the old Coateville Hospital.

However, a worker who was at the plant at the time of the sighting said he saw no flying saucer. “I saw a balloon in the air,” said Gerald Wischuck. “I don’t think there was anything to it.”

Whether or not the sighting was valid, it had become the talk of the company by Thursday. “There were rumors flying all over the mill,” said the wife of one Lukens worker.

“I heard a couple of people talking about it,” said John Semple, an employee at the Lancaster Archery Supply II target range in Throntdale, where mill workers go to relax. “I heard they saw a silver type object with lights on it. And several different people are supposed to have seen it.” “It’s a little far-fetched,” Semple said, “but I

guess anything can happen. Personally, though, I think the people just got too much sun.”

Evelyn Walker, the company’s spokeswoman, acknowledged Friday that “apparently one of our security guards did see an unusual object above the Lukens property. Lukens is still investigating the incident.”

“The account varies from person to person,” Walker said, but added that the company had not yet come up with a reasonable explanation of the report. “It takes a while to determine what it might have been, who saw it, was it an object, and what created the object,” she said.

Walker declined to say whether Lukens employees were discussing the sighting. “You’re the first (person) that has called me about it,” she said.

A Coateville police spokeswoman said Friday that no one had contacted the police about the sighting.

To Dr. David Jacobs, an assistant professor of history at Temple University who has studied the UFO phenomenon for years, the fact that there was a sighting is not surprising. What is unusual is that it was reported at all. According to Jacobs, the U.S. Air Force estimated as long ago as 1947 that only one in ten UFO sightings are reported. Jacobs thinks the numbers might be closer to one in one hundred.

“The stronger the evidence, the less a person wants to talk about it,” Jacobs said. “If they see something in their backyard, then mum’s the word.”

Jacobs believes, however, that sightings of UFOs are much more accepted in the days of E.T. and Luke Skywalker than they were in the 1940s and 1950s.

“There’s still a great deal of skepticism, to be sure,” he said. “But there is far less fear than there was in the beginning of the phenomenon. There are so many people who have seen these things that the acceptance level is far greater than you would imagine.”