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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Eyewitness Testimony

From: "Jerry Cohen" <rjcohen@li.net>
Date: Sat, 28 Dec 1996 01:27:18 -0500
Fwd Date: Sat, 28 Dec 1996 03:28:25 -0500
Subject: Re: Eyewitness Testimony

Commentary on the following article:

>Date: Thu, 26 Dec 1996 20:44:06 -0500
>From: "Steven J. Powell" <sjpowell@access.digex.net>
>To: updates@globalserve.net
>Subject: Eyewitness Testimony

>The Eyewitness
>Imperfect Interface
>Between Stimuli and Story

>James R. Reich, Jr.

>(The Skeptical Inquirer, Vol. 17, No. 4, Summer 1993, Copyright 1993 by
>the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the
>Paranormal, 3965 Rensch Road, Buffalo, NY 14228, published quarterly
>with a membership/subscription rate of \$25/yr.)

> The eyewitness is a link between an event that has taken place
>and the reporting of that event. In a real sense the memory of an
>individual is put to the test when a detailed account of what took place
>is desired. etc.

>Recent research includes work on leading questions.
>one group was asked the question: "How tall was the basketball
>player?" while the second group was asked "How short was the basketball
>player?" etc.

>Using the same pattern in a different question.....
>"How high was the office building" averaged a height of 26
>stories, while those who were asked "How low was the office building"
>averaged only 13 stories - exactly one-half that of the first group.

>Elizabeth Loftus asked individuals questions about their
>headaches.....
>(1) "Do you get headaches
>frequently, and, if so, how often?" or (2) "Do you get headaches
>occasionally..... etc.

>Loftus (1974) investigated the possible effects that leading
>questions may have on memory.
>For example, the question "How fast was the car
>going when it ran the stop sign?" etc.

>In this experiment subjects viewed a short videotape of an
>automobile accident and then answered ten questions based on the
>accident. The subjects were divided into two groups. One group was asked
>the key question "How fast was the white sports car going when it passed
>the barn while traveling along the country road?" etc.

Incident at Exeter, New Hampshire *

JC: September 3, 1965. A man hitchhiking home to Exeter, NH (Norman Muscarello), "about 2AM, object came out of sky directly toward him. It appeared to be 80-90 ft. in diameter and had brilliant pulsating red lights outlining an apparent rim. It wobbled, yawed and floated toward him but made no noise whatsoever

The object backed off slowly and hovered over the roof of one of two nearby houses..... " Muscarello is petrified, stops a car and gets driven to police station. Tells officer in charge (Reginald Toland) what happened. An officer in a patrol car (Eugene Bertrand) takes him back to the area he saw the object.

About an hour earlier, officer Bertrand had come across a car parked on a bypass, "and the woman at the wheel told him that a huge silent airborne object had trailed her from the town of Epping, nine miles away. The object had brilliant flashing red lights... and kept within a few feet of her car. When she reached the overpass, it suddenly developed tremendous speed and soon disappeared among the stars."

It was nearly 3 AM when Bertrand and Muscarello reached the field between the two houses. The night was clear, moonless & warm. There was no wind and the stars were brilliant. Visibility was unlimited.

Bertrand and Muscarello both witnessed the object. "It moved toward them like a leaf fluttering from a tree, wobbling and yawing as it did so. The entire area was bathed in brilliant red light." Officer Bertrand almost drew his gun but decided against it. They both got back to the patrol car and Bertrand called in. "My God," he shouted. I see the damn thing myself!" the two of them watched the object hover. It was about 100 feet above them, about a football field's distance away. It was rocking back & forth on its axis, still absolutely silent."

After several minutes, the object began moving slowly eastward... Its movement was erratic, defying all conventional aerodynamic patterns. "It darted," says officer Bertrand.

As it began to move away, another patrolman (David Hunt) pulled up in a Cruiser. He said: "I could see that fluttering movement" ... "It was going from left to right between the tops of two big trees. I could see those pulsating lights."

More than sixty people living near Exeter, New Hampshire reported experiences regarding this object or others like it. This sighting, and other's called in were recorded in the police log.

..... and so on for three pages of testimony.

Bibliography:

Fuller, John G. . Look Magazine . 2/22/66 . p. 36 . "OUTER-SPACE GHOST STORY" : Fuller, John G. . Incident at Exeter . New York . published by G.P. Putnam & Sons . distributed by Berkley Publishing Corp. 1966

Analysis of case:

a) Was there an object? 4 people testified they had seen it; two police officers & two civilian witnesses. From this testimony, a person would have to conclude there was some object there or all four people were lying. The sightings had been notated in the police log.

b) How big was the object? Muscarello testified 80-90 feet in diameter. The woman said a huge object had trailed her approximately nine miles keeping within a few feet of her car. (say she was wrong by 200 - 1000 feet.) The officers confirmed this. If Muscarello's estimations were off, we could say it might be anywhere from 40' to 150' in diameter. However, since it hovered over a house, they could get some sort of estimate from that. Bertrand and Muscarello said "It was about 100 feet above them, about a football field's distance away." How much should we allow their estimate might have been off?

c) Would it be fair for us to conclude that the object had brilliant pulsating lights? When Muscarello first saw it, he described it as such. The woman said it had "brilliant flashing red lights." When Bertrand and Muscarello saw it together they said "The entire area was bathed in brilliant red light." Officer Hunt said: "I could see those pulsating lights."

Conclusion: If the object *didn't* have pulsating red lights, they all must have gone colorblind when they saw it and it was actually some other color.

d) Did the object make any sound? If it did, then Muscarello and Bertrand went momentarily deaf when it hovered near them? Of course, the woman could have had her window rolled up. Perhaps it was a helium balloon that just happened to have rotating lights going around on it. Perhaps they all got together on the spur of the moment and decided to create a hoax? (The other 54 or so people that called into the police station were in on it too.)

e) Then what was this object seen by the witnesses?

Your guess is as good as mine but, unfortunately, the two-foot basketball player with a headache, driving a white sports car had just crashed into a six-story building and therefore missed the object which was reported by the four witnesses.

Respectfully,
Jerry Cohen

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