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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Lie Detection in UFO Controversies

From: **Geoff Price** <Geoff@CalibanMW.com>
Date: Fri, 25 Jul 1997 13:36:27 -0700
Fwd Date: Sat, 26 Jul 1997 00:17:56 -0400
Subject: Re: Lie Detection in UFO Controversies

>From: KRandle993@aol.com [Kevin Randle]
>Date: Thu, 24 Jul 1997 09:00:27 -0400 (EDT)
>To: updates@globalserve.net
>Subject: Re: UFO UpDate: Lie Detection in UFO Controversies

[...]

>But the real point is that I reject the Walton case, not only
>because of the failed, or allegedly failed polygraphs, but on
>other evidence as well. We must look at the whole package and
>not just a small segment of it. Look at the deception of both
>the Lorenzens and the Waltons concerning the first test. That
>is very revealing.

That's a pretty poor example, and doesn't support your point well at all. The McCarthy test was arranged and owned by the Enquirer. It's a little ridiculous to expect that, under the circumstances (e.g. intense media pressure, and his negative personal experience with McCarthy) Walton should have held a press conference on his own initiative, bucking the advice of folks like Harder and Lorenzen, and broke the story on the McCarthy test (now ceded to be useless)

The suppression of the test is a significant issue, but it has more relevance for UFOlogy than Walton. It's hard to condemn Lorenzen completely for his initial decision, he knew what the media would make of the results, and his argument that the test was inadequate has been vindicated (although its not clear on what basis he made the decision at the time.) But then APRO compounded the crime by actively covering it up, even apparently denying the existence of the test to other investigators. That constitutes a scandal. The suppression ultimately was a tremendous boon for Klass, lending credibility to his otherwise largely innuendo-based opposition, and was perhaps even single handedly responsible for Klass' success in billing the case as a hoax to the interested public, even among many who are sympathetic to UFO reality (ahem).

The scope of my article was limited to the use (and misuse) of PDD evidence, so it wasn't intended to challenge any other arguments you made about the case. But in your conclusion of the chapter you did seem to be giving the McCarthy test lead billing. What "other evidence" are you referring to? Thankfully, you reject without much comment Klass' quixotic and silly (no offense, Phil) "forest contract theory". The best I can think of is the "acetone" issue, where Walton firmly believes he lost something like ten pounds during his disappearance, but shows no signs of serious starvation in blood

tests. You yourself reviewed this issue and expressed some doubt about its significance as far as establishing hoax. Duane's kooky comments in the Sylvanus interview? Definitely eyebrow-raising, some of them, but hardly compelling or unambiguous evidence of hoax on his part.

The bottom line is that you've got six witnesses attesting to a point-blank encounter with a glowing, reflective, blue-beam flashing saucer in the woods, and no reasonable doubt about whether they're being truthful. That much would get Travis through a normal trial-by-law without much difficulty if all you can muster against him is this silliness with APRO/the National Enquirer suppressing their test results.

A skeptical outlook can say, "I'm not convinced", but there is hardly sufficient grounds to affirmatively rule the case a hoax. Doing so on flimsy grounds is a disservice to the folks involved

>Finally, according to your report, as many as one in four >polygraph tests might be invalid. Other figures suggest one in >ten. This is the reason that the polygraph is not used to prove >guilt or innocence.

I stated, I hope clearly, that I think "there is sufficient evidence of the validity of polygraph testing to justify its use as one form of supporting evidence in the evaluation of UFO and other 'extraordinary' claims, particularly in multiple witness situations" -- which is clearly different from using it as a final word on guilt or innocence, which should absolutely not be done

However, you're glossing over the other side of the equation, the fact that if polygraph has any significant validity at all, it can be used to reject the possibility of gross hoax (by all participants) in multiple witness situations to a very high degree of confidence.

Geoff

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