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UFO UpDates Mailing List

James Easton's comments

From: **BOB SHELL** <76750.2717@CompuServe.COM>
Date: 21 Jun 97 13:09:12 EDT
Fwd Date: Sat, 21 Jun 1997 14:08:11 -0400
Subject: James Easton's comments

On UFO Updates James Easton has commented that I stated that I was not interested in UFOs. James may produce documentation if he likes, but I don't think I ever used those words. When I first became involved in the AA film controversy, it is true that I downplayed my interest in UFOs, and for good reason. In "real life" I am the Editor of Shutterbug magazine, which is the world's third largest monthly photography magazine. I had not made it known within the photo community that I was interested in UFOs, and did not want to end up labeled a "nut" by the community on which my job depended. So, for political reasons which ought to be obvious, I downplayed my prior involvement in UFOlogy.

In actual fact, my interest in UFOs goes back to my early teens, and came from my father. My dad, now retired, was a TV newsman as long as there was TV, and a radio newsman prior to that. He went into radio after serving in WW II, and moved over to TV when it came on the scene. He was an investigative journalist of the old school, always digging for the truth of the matter. He is the man who first broke the story of the Russian downing of one of our U-2 spy planes and the capture of Frances Gary Powers, the pilot. This episode is given a new spin in Corso's book, and I've bought my dad a copy to read and will be interested in his comments.

I grew up in Roanoke, Virginia, and that is only about 60 miles from the little town of Wytheville, Virginia. Those who keep up with UFO flaps will recall that Wytheville has had them for years, and was one of the first places to have numerous reports of the black triangular type of UFO. But the UFO activity there goes back to the 50s, at least. My father was a skeptic when these stories first started and he used them as "silly season" stories in his news reports. Over the years, though, he had a change of heart. He had talked to so many ordinary people telling extraordinary stories that he became convinced that there must be something going on. Something strange. He got into hot water a number of times with the management of the TV station for doing reports and editorials in which he treated the subject seriously.

So I went through my early teens watching my dad change his mind about UFOs. When I was in Washington, DC, after college working for the Smithsonian Institution I had a girlfriend for a while who was working as a secretary for a strange man named Don Keyhoe. So I met Keyhoe, and talked to him on a few occasions, and spent some time in his library looking through the books on UFOs. I had already met, and become friends with zoologist Ivan T. Sanderson, who had done research and articles about UFOs. So I took the subject seriously. I even wrote a few pieces on UFOs in the early 70s for the old Gnostica magazine, when my pal Isaac Bonewits was editor.

But career changes and my plunge into photography made it not good politics to be openly pro-UFO, and I was disgusted with the way the field was

going, so I pretty much dropped out of active UFOlogy. I think this was around 1974-75. I kept up with what was going on by reading the books, but that was it.

The opportunity offered by the Santilli film brought me back into UFO research, and I think I am here to stay. I took a chance during this period of research on the AA film to "come out of the closet" about my interest in UFOs in the photo community. Much to my surprise I have found the community very receptive to this aspect of me and my interests, and quite a few people at all levels in the photo industry have confided to me their interest, and in some cases their personal UFO experiences. No one has been nearly as critical of me in this community as have some in the UFO community.

In the past two and a half years I have freely admitted my UFO interest in interviews in the photo industry. Photo Shopper magazine published a lengthy interview with me about the AA film. There is another long interview with some UFO material posted on CompuServe's Photographers and Models Forum (Go:PHOTOH).

I have decided to be completely open about my interest, and my own sighting within the photo community, because it is a part of me, and I was growing tired of pretending to be someone I am not.

In the August and September issues of Shutterbug I am publishing a two part article on interpretation of UFO photographs by Bruce Maccabee, to my knowledge the first publication of a serious UFO article in a mainstream photography magazine. I stuck my neck out with my boss to convince him this would not reflect negatively on the magazine's sales, and I am sure it will not. The news stands are full of all sorts of magazines with UFO articles right now.

Anyway, I'm sorry this post is so long, but I thought this needed clarification.

Bob Shell

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