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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Sherman J. Larsen and Ufology

From: Jerome Clark <jkclark@frontiernet.net>
Date: Tue, 15 Dec 98 17:51:41 PST
Fwd Date: Wed, 16 Dec 1998 10:05:19 -0500
Subject: Re: Sherman J. Larsen and Ufology

>Date: Tue, 15 Dec 1998 00:58:46 -0500
>From: Gary Alevy <galevy@pipeline.com>
>To: UFO UpDate <updates@globalserve.net>
>Subject: Sherman J. Larsen and Ufology

Howdy, patient listfolk,

>In reviewing the body of work I have put on the list over the
>last couple of weeks, and then the body of work posted by my
>critics, I see two things:

>I have made several substantive points which have not been
>addressed, at all, by those who purport to be criticising me.
>Like Mark Twain's neighbors in Hannibal, they seem to think it's
>sufficient to say, "It's just sin and I'm agin' it!" This is
>justification enough on their part not to engage in any effort,
>above that of name calling or insults, which would demonstrate
>to any neutral party on this list that I am in error.

Gary is, it is ever more apparent, determined to believe at any cost. Which explains, of course, his imperviousness to arguments based merely on evidence, experience, knowledge, and logic.

When I entered this discussion, I labored under the naive delusion that Gary was actually interested in learning something, even if it happened to contradict some bold, albeit uninformed, statements he was making. It is clear to me now, of course, that Gary was and is not interested in learning something he does not want to know.

That being the case, I have no choice but to view with immense skepticism any future claim he makes about something I know less about than I know about Hynek and Larsen. I urge the rest of you to exercise comparable caution, and I here abandon all efforts to liberate Gary from the ignorance, complacency, and paranoia that afford him such happiness. What follows is for the benefit of the rest of you.

>Thus it was that at a UFO meeting some years ago, in the
>aftermath of the Condon Committee report, Mr. Larsen, late of
>the CIC gave a paper on UFOs. He is worth quoting at some
>length, belying the "Babbit-like" impression ascribed to him by
>one well known UFO researcher. In fact, Larsen has sage advice
>applying to many, if not most, of the posters to this list,
>bogged down as they are in the unimportant piling up of sighting
>reports ad infinitum. No distracting "watch the skies" for Mr.

>Larsen!

Sherm, the rest of you will want to know, was a natural shuffler of paper. He was fond of documents and of filing them (one reason he was such a successful insurance agent, I might add), and a good thing, too. He kept neat files (more than Hynek ever did, which was not at all), and when he handed over the NICAP archives to CUFOS (he'd kept them in his garage, CUFOS then having no better place to put them), they were in terrific shape. Sherm understood something that has escaped many (including me at times): that a significant proportion of good ufology is the proper storing of information.

>But Mr. Larsen is NOT talking about documentation of UFO sightings, >oh, no. He is talking about documentation from four sources:

- > 1) The Government, including the military;
- > 2) The scientific community;
- > 3) Industry; and
- > 4) What he calls "study groups", now known as
- > 'think-tanks'.

>Mr. Larsen says that ufology must move the public where UFOs are >concerned and that the public will then move the government, >which is the source of real authority in our country. I must >quote him directly: "We believe that sighting reports in any >quantity will never be enough to sway the public." How true, >how true, and the last 50 years have proven it again and again. >But what do so many in ufology waste their time on even today, >hm?

It is, of course, a defensible argument, though hardly beyond dispute. In fact, it seems to me, "sighting reports" _have_ swayed the public, which poll after poll attests is mostly sympathetic to the idea of UFO reality. What has not been swayed is elite opinion -- scientific, journalistic, and other -- which would make acceptance of UFOs actually mean something (e.g., significantly funded research). Short of a landing on Times Square, that probably won't change in ur lifetimes. What would immediately change opinion, of course, would be an official pronouncement, with relevant supporting documents, attesting to the authenticity of the UFO phenomenon and/or its extraordinary origins. If Sherm had substituted "elite opinion" for "the public," he would have had a better argument, I think. Possibly, that's the argument he thought he was making.

>The bulk of Mr. Larsen's presentation is most interesting, >concerned as it is with hard-to-get documents, procured by the >author from unnamed sources. Most of these documents were not >officially classified -- officially. But like many other such >documents they had been made very hard to obtain -- very hard.

Sherm's "unnamed source" was Allen, and those documents are available now in the CUFOS archives to any serious researcher who wants to examine them at the office in Chicago. While doing my research for the UFO Encyclopedia series, I went through many of them. To my intense disappointment, alas, the fabled Estimate of the Situation is not among them. All sorts of interesting Blue Book and other documents are, however.

>It is certainly curious that Larsen's "close" friend a "noted" >researcher would not acknowledge this work performed by Mr. >Larsen of whom he claims to be so knowing. Larsen himself >presented this information at a public presentation of a well >known UFO organization. Yes, Mr. Larsen could obtain self >described "hard to get" documents from secret sources he could >not divulge.

Allen was uneasy about possible retribution from the Air Force, since his acquisition of certain documents was not, shall we say, authorized. This is a nice way of saying that not everything he pocketed was a copy of something.

>This "close" friend, poster on this list had maintained of Mr. >Larsen:

- > Nobody who knew him would ever mistake him for
- > anything other than what he was: a hard-working,
- > unimaginative George F. Babbitt type of average
- > intelligence and conventional views, an insurance agent by
- > profession and a living personification of every stereotype

> associated with that calling.

Well said, if I do say so myself. I didn't say, however, that he was stupid. The above description of Sherm, by the way, would be recognized by anybody who knew the man, as Gary -- as we all know all too well -- didn't. Gary's clueless about the real nature of Sherm Larsen becomes ever more profound.

>I ask.

>Does your insurance agent collect documents from sources he
>cannot name, documents the government does not make available to
>John Q. Public?

Yup, if he's interested in UFOs, is an associate of Hynek, and is a document buff. Sherm was all of the above.

>How interesting that Mr. Larsen had been able to get these
>documents, and that he could not name his sources. Now, let me
>see, who was Larsen's good friend, from Chicago, that he would
>combine with to found a UFO investigative organization? Why, I
>think that was Dr. J. Allen Hynek, wasn't it. Hmm. I wonder.

With deductive powers like that, I'll bet Gary has been able to figure out at which horizon the sun will rise tomorrow.

>I think you folks are going to really enjoy my book, with
>research backed up as it is by facts, not the propaganda others
>have offered on these subjects. This is just the tip of the
>iceberg. Thank you for your attention.

Oh? You mean we've seen the tip? Hate to say this, guy, but it has yet to come into view. The way I see it, no tip, no iceberg.

Jerry Clark

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