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## UFO UpDates Mailing List

### Re: MAGONIA ETH Bulletin #4

From: Jerome Clark <[jkclark@frontiernet.net](mailto:jkclark@frontiernet.net)>  
Date: Sat, 04 Jul 98 11:37:00 PDT  
Fwd Date: Sat, 04 Jul 1998 16:17:59 -0400  
Subject: Re: MAGONIA ETH Bulletin #4

> Date: Fri, 3 Jul 1998 19:19:55 -0500 (CDT)  
> To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <[updates@globalserve.net](mailto:updates@globalserve.net)>  
> From: Dennis Stacy <[dstacy@texas.net](mailto:dstacy@texas.net)>  
> Subject: Re: UFO UpDate: Re: MAGONIA ETH Bulletin #4  
  
> >To: "UFO UpDates - Toronto" <[updates@globalserve.net](mailto:updates@globalserve.net)>  
> >From: Jerome Clark <[jkclark@frontiernet.net](mailto:jkclark@frontiernet.net)>  
> >Subject: Re: UFO UpDate: Re: MAGONIA ETH Bulletin #4  
> >Date: Thu, 02 Jul 98 12:44:20 PDT

> <Total snip>

> Jerry,

> Before I take the time to respond to your latest post, let me ask  
> you two brief yes or no questions.

> 1) Does the word "condescend" mean anything to you? If so, then  
> don't do it. Please. It merely tickles the tendency in the  
> respondent to do likewise.

I apologize if I sounded as if I were condescending. I did not mean to sound that way, and I know it infuriates me when I felt as if I am being condescended to. I responded as I did because I thought you were, to use the vernacular, jerking me around, and I was, frankly, irked about it. You WEREN'T jerking me around, were you?

> 2) Have you read the Mike Davis essay in The Anomalist 5? I'm  
> pretty sure you have a copy, because I believe I sent you one. If  
> not, it's a long weekend, so maybe you could stir yourself. And  
> I'll read Swords's "Extraterrestrial Hypothesis and Science" in  
> the 2nd edition of your Encyclopedia, which arrived last night,  
> and for which, many thanks.

I read Davis' essay when The Anomalist arrived. I promise, however, to read it again this weekend.

> I will answer one of your questions now, however.

> >And finally, a question: I'm curious. When was the last time you  
> >took a pro-UFO position in any argument on this subject? Or is  
> >that occurrence lost in the dim mists of antiquity?

> One pro-position I took was to solicit and publish Karl Pflock's  
> article "UFOs: For RAND Use Only" in The Anomalist. I might also  
> point out that it precedes Davis's article in the same issue. To  
> some (except possibly yourself) that would indicate that I have a  
> high tolerance for ambiguity.

> For another recent pro-position, see many of the articles

> included in my "UFOs 1947-1997: Fifty Years of Flying Saucers,"  
> co-edited with Hilary Evans. If I weren't in basic agreement with  
> them, I wouldn't have used them.  
> (Sorry, but sometimes one has to state the obvious. I believe you  
> even referred to it as one of the best books of the year, a  
> laurel I doubt you would have bestowed on a book highly critical  
> of the subject.)

Lemme repeat: UFOs 1947-1997 is the best book on UFOs published  
in 1997, followed closely by Kevin D. Randle's overlooked  
Project Blue Book Exposed. Both of these should be in the  
library of any serious ufologist.

> For a forthcoming pro-position, read my next book, "A Field Guide  
> to UFOs," co-written with Patrick Huyghe, and due out next year.  
> You may be surprised.

I look forward to it.

> And my very next death-defying act of pro-UFO-position derring-do  
> (when I eventually get around to it) will be to publish on this  
> List a list of 10-20 cases suggestive of ET UFOs (drawn from the  
> Field Guide), a pro-position a number of people on this List have  
> proffered you, as well, to no avail to date.

As I have stated repeatedly, I do not think such an approach is  
useful or helpful, and I also suspect it's a set-up. I've seen  
Phil Klass use it repeatedly. As Mark Cashman wrote in a recent  
posting, it is pointless to do unless both sides agree to a  
whole set of ground rules. In practice what happens is this:

The debunker looks at the list and says, with mock incredulity,  
didn't you know Case X was exposed as a hoax (or proven to be a  
misperception)? He then refers to a chapter of a Klass book.  
(Consider the recent example of John Harney on the RB-47 case as  
but one example of the practice in action.) On to the next case,  
and it turns out that Venus was responsible. How do we know  
that? Blue Book identified it as such. And of course if you  
dispute Blue Book, you are putting yourself at risk of being  
called a conspiracy theorist. Any other case can be dismissed as  
arbitrarily, and at the end of the effort, one is back to Square  
One. If your curiosity is perverse enough, just read the  
book-review columns of Magonia and Skeptical Inquirer, and you  
begin to see the futility of trying to change certain sorts of  
mind-sets with actual evidence. (In this regard I keep thinking,  
as a particularly egregious example, of Peter Rogerson's review  
of Ray Fowler's Allagash book in Magonia.)

Moreover, having demolished (however dubiously) the alleged Top  
10 cases, the challenger implicitly gets to ignore all the  
interesting patterns that give weight to the case for UFOs as  
extraordinary phenomena. So the case for UFOs has been  
artificially whittled down to a handful of reports, and when  
those are dispatched, there is nothing left. As I have said  
before, the UFO evidence -- as you surely know, Dennis -- is  
both good cases and demonstrated patterns.

That is why, being a sensible man, I continually refer  
challengers such as yourself (I am not accusing you, by the way,  
of being a Klass-style debunker, only of conducting yourself  
like one in this instance) to, for example, The UFO  
Encyclopedia, where puzzling cases are discussed in all of their  
detail and complication and where something like intellectual  
inquiry, and not a pissing contest, occurs.

> My doubts about ET visitation (apparently unlike you, I have  
> some), when I have them, are driven more by the sorts of larger  
> issues raised by Davis (and others -- yes, there is a so-called  
> "New Astronomy"), rather than the number of (potential)  
> civilizations in the galaxy or the immense distances between  
> stars. After all, if there's only one intelligent observer  
> species in the universe (the Strong Anthropic Principle), it  
> wouldn't make any difference how far apart (or near) the stars  
> were.

The SETI literature is full of speculation about interstellar  
voyages, colonization of the galaxy, and the notion that  
millions of advanced civilizations exist in the Milky Way alone.  
What I object to is your treating ufology as if it were some  
unique form of perversity, as if its ideas and theories were  
unconnected to anything else in the intellectual universe, and

thereby to be condemned. Talking on NPR yesterday, Von Eshleman (he of the Sturrock panel, a retired Stanford professor of electrical engineering) said something to the effect that serious UFO research ought to be as respectable as the SETI enterprise (to which, as ufologist readers of that literature are aware, there are indeed interesting parallels and common theoretical concerns).

> From the papers I read, it's clear to me that new discoveries  
> are being made about the universe almost on a daily basis. Old  
> theories and best guesses are being overturned regularly. The old  
> girl is refusing to sit still for her full physical, which makes  
> it extremely difficult for any of us -- Davis, Swords, you, or me  
> -- to fully know, or describe, the creature we're talking about.  
> And, by extension, the role of the UFO within.

My sentiments precisely. All I am saying -- let me repeat -- is that honorable, reasonable people can disagree about these matters, given the limitations of the knowledge we currently possess. It is when debunkers and their allies in ufology refuse to acknowledge that the ETH, right or wrong, is a reasonable provisional hypothesis, and that reasonable people may be inclined to that view (Swords' point and Clark's, repeated again and again to no apparent effect; all we get are demands for 10 or 20 cases that "prove" ET visitation, whatever that means), that I get riled and, finally, bored. In fact, I am more and more inclined to the idea that discourse with persons who feel otherwise -- I am not talking about you, Dennis -- is not worth my time.

Jerry Clark

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