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### Re: Down-To-Earth About Aliens (On MUFON)

From: Stig Agermose <[wanderer@post8.tele.dk](mailto:wanderer@post8.tele.dk)>  
Date: Mon, 20 Jul 1998 02:58:53 +0200  
Fwd Date: Mon, 20 Jul 1998 05:32:08 -0400  
Subject: Re: Down-To-Earth About Aliens (On MUFON)

To those abduction researchers who consider Roger Leir's course of action dubious, I would like to say that this email is sent with the express intention of informing and not as an endorsement. It is taken from Sunday's Los Angeles Times and the URL is:

<http://www.latimes.com/HOME/NEWS/VENTURA/VCNEWS/t000066331.html>

Stig

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Sunday, July 19, 1998

Down-to-Earth About Aliens

Mystery: Like it or not, the Mutual UFO Network is peopled by folks like your neighbors, friends and you.

By JOEL P. ENGARDIO, Special to The Times

THOUSAND OAKS--Your real estate agent, airline pilot, even your doctor: They are the faces of the Mutual UFO Network, a national group of 5,000 everyday people and working professionals who like to talk about space aliens.

Determined to prove the existence of extraterrestrials, they track the skies armed with binoculars, a toll-free number and an insatiable desire to reconcile truth with conspiracy.

At MUFON chapters across the country--such as the one that meets each month at the Thousand Oaks library--members gather to hear lectures on crop circles, ancient bacteria on martian rocks or any other mystery that would inspire a good "X-Files" episode.

The curious sit among the convinced, as professed alien abduction survivors swap stories with the hypnotherapists who treat them.

The Ventura/Santa Barbara County chapter is one of MUFON's more active--and interesting--with more than 100 members.

There is "Ellen," who sells high-end property in Santa Barbara and says she has been the victim of multiple alien abductions. The most convincing time, she said, was the night her husband

was awakened by a blinding light and noticed she was missing from the bed. A safe subject at MUFON, but she wouldn't dare tell her clients.

Joe Vallejo, a commercial airline pilot from Westlake Village, recalls the flight from Los Angeles to Denver when he and his cockpit crew watched an unidentified aircraft fly next to the 727, doing maneuvers that seemingly defied physics.

But the local member with the most talked-about claim--one that gets him booked on the UFO lecture circuit from Tucson to Tampa--is chapter president and Thousand Oaks podiatrist Roger K. Leir.

He caused a stir after announcing he surgically removed apparent alien implants from some of his patients' feet.

Call them wacky, but these UFO enthusiasts hold respectable day jobs and don't seem any different from your next-door neighbor. That is the way MUFON founder and national director Walt Andrus] intended it.

"We don't contribute to the kook factor," Andrus said. "Our membership is by invitation only, based on professional occupation and education. We keep the kooks out. And if one slips in, they'll be dropped immediately."

Andrus tries to distance his group from the "Roswell or bust" bumper sticker movement that drives UFO mania today. The Internet has spawned a cavalcade of conspiracy-peddling Web sites offering the latest alien update via direct mail videotape, while carnival-like UFO conventions draw thousands to hotels across the country. The hype, Andrus says, gives UFOs a bad name.

"There are fools and charlatans born every minute. People will say anything if they think they can make some money," Andrus said. "But we want to investigate and resolve the UFO phenomenon using scientific means."

Indeed, UFO enthusiasts got a boost last month when a panel of scientists from Stanford, Cornell and Princeton universities--along with institutions in Germany and France--suggested that some UFO sightings do include unexplained physical evidence and deserve serious scientific study.

The first independent scientific review of UFOs in nearly 30 years, the study concluded that scientists might learn more--either to better understand or debunk alleged UFO sightings--if they can get past the ridicule that has prevented credible study in the past.

"This is a wake-up call that scientists better stop tee-heeing because the public is demanding a serious look at their claims," Leir said.

#### MUFON Is Born

The UFO culture was just as outrageous--though less sophisticated--as it is now when Andrus helped start MUFON in 1969. It was the year the U.S. Air Force decided to stop officially investigating UFOs after an Air Force-commissioned study by the University of Colorado recommended that UFOs did not warrant further research.

The report noted the absurdity surrounding the subject, even surveying a UFO convention that sold hair from dogs from the planet Venus.

"They went to one circus convention and were put off by the malarkey," Andrus said. "They got a bad impression at the worst place they could go."

So Andrus, who worked as a plant manager for Motorola, and a few of his friends--including a university chemistry professor and an aerospace engineer for McDonnell Douglas--organized MUFON in an effort to shape up the UFO counterculture and pick up where the Air Force left off in credible investigations.

For 30 years, Andrus has run the group as its only full-time staff member at the national headquarters in Seguin, Texas. Andrus himself answers the toll-free UFO hotline--which rings about a dozen times a day--while three part-time workers help transfer into a computer database tens of thousands of cases stuffed in file cabinets that clutter the small office.

Andrus talks regularly to MUFON's state directors, trying to get a handle on the latest UFO trend.

Local chapters train members to become field investigators, following a meticulous protocol used to track sightings, interview witnesses, make drawings and comb the ground for evidence. The Ventura/Santa Barbara County chapter plans a training session later this summer.

Before thinking flying saucer, Andrus said, investigators are taught to first try to rule out anything else the sighting might have been.

Though a firm believer in UFOs and even alien abductions, Andrus admits that 90% of the reports his group investigates are nothing more than a meteor shower or the Goodyear blimp. Not to mention all the kids who place prank calls to the hotline.

"It's that 10% that defies any earthly explanation we call UFOs," he said.

### 'The Aliens and the Scalpel'

A thousand UFO enthusiasts packed a Greensboro, N.C., auditorium at MUFON's national symposium two years ago, rapt by images of the surgical extraction of tiny, T-shaped objects--in the minds of audience members, alien implants--embedded deep in feet that both doctor and patient swear had never been operated on before.

After cheers and a standing ovation, the crowd swarmed the podium, pressing programs toward the presenting doctor for his autograph. Roger Leir, the 61-year-old podiatrist from Thousand Oaks, had come out of the UFO closet to a celebrity's welcome.

"It was a bit disconcerting at first," said Leir, who initially used the moniker Dr. X to protect his reputation and the 30-year podiatry practice he had built. "I didn't want problems with my patients or colleagues. People might think I was a kook if word got out I was working in a field looked at by some with a jaundiced eye."

While attending a UFO convention in 1995, Leir was asked to read some foot X-rays. The podiatrist noted he saw some foreign bodies that looked like wires or screws; typical remnants of reconstructive foot surgery. But medical records did not indicate any operation, and the patient claimed to be a victim of alien abduction. Leir was intrigued.

Using the justification that the patient clearly had something foreign in her foot, Leir decided to operate. Whether it was of alien origin or simply a carpet nail she stepped on didn't matter.

He sent the little T-shaped objects, covered in a dense, shiny membrane, to New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, commonly known as New Mexico Tech, for analysis in the metallurgical engineering department. One word in the lab report--"meteorite"--convinced Leir he was on to something. It was real scientific proof, he said, that he used as the highlight of his UFO lectures.

"The lab says particles of meteorite, and my patient sure hasn't been stepping on any meteors," Leir told his audiences.

But New Mexico Tech associate professor Paul A. Fuierer, the author of the metallurgical study, said the meteorite theory has been taken out of context.

"The object reminded me of what could be meteorite material, but I'm not prepared to say it is meteorite," Fuierer said, noting

that the objects consisted of common elements such as aluminum and iron. "I have to admit they were odd-looking samples, but I'm by no means saying these are alien implants."

Despite the controversy, the mystery surrounding the objects created such a buzz that X-rays began pouring into Leir's office. And it wasn't just feet anymore. There were films of hands, legs, even jaws.

Limited as a podiatrist, Leir enlisted the help of three colleagues in the Los Angeles area--a dentist, a radiologist and a general surgeon--who were willing to read X-rays and MRIs, pass on their medical opinion and perform more operations.

There have been seven such procedures, with plans for more. But Leir is cautious.

"They have to do more than just say they have implants before I'll consider them a surgical candidate," said Leir, who ends up rejecting most cases because perceived anomalies in the X-rays can be explained more often than not.

"If they think something is still there, they can pursue it somewhere else. It's up to hard science--not me--to determine what the objects are. I'm just looking for real evidence, not to prove someone's abduction was real."

#### Going Mainstream

Despite his continued plunge into UFO research, Leir still maintains two podiatry offices in Thousand Oaks and Camarillo that serve 200 patients. He cut back to a four-day workweek when he was named the local MUFON president but is protective of his profession.

"I don't involve my practice with my hobby," Leir said. "No one wants to go to the doctor and be dragged into UFO talk."

But Leir's otherworldly pursuits are no secret among his patients, considering his appearance on the TV show "Hard Copy," his Web site and the 250-page manuscript he has been shopping around to book publishers. "The Alien and the Scalpel" is the working title.

Leir's interest in UFOs dates to July 1947, when, as a young boy, he remembers his father reading aloud a newspaper article with the headline "Air Force Captures Flying Disc."

That early news report about an alleged alien crash-landing outside Roswell, N.M., became the touchstone of the modern UFO movement.

"My dad was really upset when the Air Force came out and denied it the next day," Leir recalled. "He threw down the paper and yelled, 'I'm not falling for that! They know the difference between a weather balloon and a UFO.' His reaction made an impression on me."

Leir said deciding to go public was easier when he saw national polls such as one done by Newsweek magazine that said half of Americans believe UFOs are real and think the government knows about it, too.

"I also believe," he said. "And I wouldn't be surprised if we've been secretly [studying and possibly utilizing] alien technology all along."

With extraterrestrial talk jumping from the supermarket tabloids into highly successful TV series and movies such as "The X-Files" and "Men in Black," Leir said today's UFO-friendly climate lets him worry less about people thinking he is "nuts."

"Years ago, if you said you saw a UFO, it was, 'Yeah, sure, you saw swamp gas and were drunk,' " Leir said. "Now you see little aliens selling Volkswagens on TV commercials. People accept the notion, and it's the skeptics and debunkers who are more likely to be laughed at now."

## The Future of MUFON

More than 60 people attended last month's local MUFON meeting at the Thousand Oaks library, many of them first-timers who signed up as members.

Brian Noble and his fiancée Jeannie Casse, both of Camarillo, went to their first meeting. She is a believer, he is a skeptic.

"I feel there might be extraterrestrial life somewhere, but I don't think they've made it down to Earth yet," Noble said.

"He wants proof, but I just know," Casse said. "I'm sure there are hoaxes out there, but they are just helping camouflage the truth."

Noble said he was apprehensive about MUFON, expecting to find a group of eccentrics. But after looking around the room and reading the chapter newsletter, he changed his mind.

"I see everyday, normal people from all walks of life," Noble said. "And there are some scientific people here, which impresses me."

Bobbie Lambert of Thousand Oaks also became a new member last month. She had already attended several meetings and found them fascinating. As for the inevitable fringe element associated with UFOs, Lambert said that is easy to ignore, since a bit of "wackiness will attach itself to anything controversial." She keeps her new interest mostly to herself, though.

"I'm cautious about who I tell because it's not completely accepted by the mainstream yet," Lambert said. "But if you just put out a little feeler, it's amazing to discover the people you would never expect who end up having a whole lifetime of experiences. They're just being cautious, too."

MUFON founder Andrus said the more people begin to talk openly about UFOs, the better the chance of finding some definitive answers.

After 30 years of gradually helping move UFOs into the consciousness of pop culture and now the scientific community, Andrus said he looks forward to a time when MUFON has no reason to exist.

"If we could resolve the UFO phenomenon tomorrow, we'd close down," he said. "And that's just more incentive to keep digging."

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