



Aliens On Earth.com

Resources for those who are stranded here



Our Bookstore is OPEN

Over 5000 new & used titles, competitively priced!

Topics: [UFOs](#) - [Paranormal](#) - [Area 51](#) - [Ghosts](#) - [Fortean](#) - [Conspiracy](#) - [History](#) - [Biography](#) - [Psychology](#) - [Religion](#) - [Crime](#) - [Health](#) - [Geography](#) - [Maps](#) - [Science](#) - [Money](#) - [Language](#) - [Recreation](#) - [Technology](#) - [Fiction](#) - [Other](#) - [New](#)

Search... for keyword(s)

in Page Titles

Location: [Mothership](#) -> [UFO](#) -> [Updates](#) -> [1998](#) -> [Oct](#) -> **Re: Failure Of The 'Science' Of Obergian Debunking**

UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Failure Of The 'Science' Of Obergian Debunking

From: Dennis Stacy <dstacy@texas.net>
Date: Wed, 14 Oct 1998 20:18:57 -0500 (CDT)
Fwd Date: Thu, 15 Oct 1998 07:01:26 -0400
Subject: Re: Failure Of The 'Science' Of Obergian Debunking

>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>
>From: Jerome Clark <jkclark@frontiernet.net>
>Subject: Re: UFO UpDate: Re: Failure Of The 'Science' Of Obergian Debunking
>Date: Wed, 14 Oct 98 05:14:32 PDT

>For example, in Scientific American the Australian plasma
>physicist John Lowke, a world-class authority on ball lightning,
>states his reasons for belief in the reality of this curious
>natural phenomenon:
>
>"Though ... I have never seen the phenomenon personally, I feel
>that there is no question that ball lightning exists. I have
>talked to six eyewitnesses of the phenomena and think there is
>no reasonable doubt as to the authenticity of their
>observations. Furthermore, the reports are all remarkably
>similar and have common features with the hundreds of
>observations that appear in the literature."
>
>Needless to say, not a word was raised in objection to Fowke's
>conclusions, based on six -- I repeat: six -- so-called
>anecdotal reports of ball lightning. Imagine, however, what a
>scorching Lowke would have received if he had been talking about
>UFOs.
>

Jerry,

Your characterization here isn't completely correct. For one thing, Fowke's conclusions obviously aren't based solely on six anecdotal accounts; included is a familiarity with the existing literature (which he mentions). And no doubt his conclusions are at least partly based on his own working knowledge and experience as a plasma physicist. In which case he would most likely be aware that a Japanese physicist, Ohtsuki (someone correct my spelling if it's wrong), and perhaps others (dating back to Tesla), has claimed to have generated ball lightning in the laboratory.

For a plasma physicist, in other words, anecdotal accounts (plus a few indeterminate photographs in the literature) don't necessarily violate his every notion of what is possible where plasma phenomena are concerned. (There is even a virtual 'textbook' on the subject, Ball Lightning and Bead Lightning, by James Dale Barry, published almost 20 years ago.) If a sizeable proportion of all ball lightning cases involved episodes of missing time and fetuses, mysterious scars, little greys, giant space ships and anecdotal accounts of hybrid babies, however,

then I suspect Fowke might have drawn a significantly different conclusion about ball lightning, however weird its other reported properties.

Of course this raises the interesting issue: if ball lightning is agreed upon by both ufologists and plasma physicists, what percentage of UFO reports, especially nocturnal lights (the largest category), can be attributed to ball lightning seen at a distance? Has any prominent nuts and bolts enthusiast drawn any conclusions about that prospect lately? Has any ufologist argued for a deeper, in-depth study of ball lightning within the field, possibly thereby risking his ET stature? Is there an entry on ball lightning in your encyclopedia? No, there isn't, although several references are made to same throughout the work. Still, wasn't it worth an entry, as a possible instigator of numerous UFO reports, if nothing else? To think: you could have quoted Fowke, too.

Moreover, six anecdotal accounts of ball lightning don't necessarily vary that much, one from the other, whereas six sequential UFO accounts can literally be all over the map, abductions included.

Anecdotal testimony per se can't be separated from its content as cleanly as you would like to think. Mark Cashman (to whom you were responding) has already posted to this list, eloquently I might add, as to the scientific uselessness of much anecdotal testimony concerning the size, speed, and distance of reported UFOs. To say that much of it has to be taken with the proverbial grain of salt is to overstate the obvious, which is one of the points Hendry himself emphasized.

If I say I saw a snake 35 feet long while floating down the Amazon, some biologist specializing in Anacondas is at least going to give me the time of day, even while seriously questioning my expertise at estimating the length of a distant snake. If I say my snake was 100 feet long, however, the chances are equally good that he won't, *prima facie*.

Could said scientist be wrong, whereas I'm absolutely right on the money? Of course. At the same time, would I expect him to abandon his present research position and apply for a grant to visit the Amazon in search of anecdotal 100-foot long snakes? Not if he had a mortgage and a family to raise.

>Of course, if debunkers really believed anecdotal testimony to
>be worthless, they wouldn't pay so much attention to it. Thus
>any report, however superficially impressive, could be dismissed
>out of hand if it came solely from eyewitness testimony.
>Instead,

>debunkers go to extraordinary lengths to disprove these cases,
>on the implicit assumption that the testimony is meaningful.
>Typically, debunkers employ any argument immediately at hand,
>even if their actions prove they don't believe it themselves for
>a second.

>Cordially,

>Jerry Clark

Who are these many monstrous debunkers, anyway? Menzel is long dead, Sagan is recently deceased, Klass is alive but aging, Oberg rarely addresses the subject anymore, and Sheaffer only on occasion. To whom are you referring in the collective sense, then, as if there were an army of demon debunkers massed out there on ufology's angelic, overwhelmingly evidential front, the latter backed by a mountain of convincing physical (as opposed to largely anecdotal) evidence?

I would like to see the UFO subject more highly regarded and studied, too. But as a poker player, I also know the difference between a pair of threes and a flush. Give me a straight flush and I'll bet it.

Dennis

[[Next Message](#) | [This Day's Messages](#)]
[[This Month's Index](#) | [UFO UpDates Main Index](#) | [MUFON Ontario](#)]

UFO UpDates - Toronto - updates@globalserve.net
Operated by Errol Bruce-Knapp - ++ 416-696-0304

A Hand-Operated E-Mail Subscription Service for the Study of UFO Related Phenomena.
To subscribe please send your first and last name to updates@globalserve.net
Message submissions should be sent to the same address.

[[UFO Topics](#) | [People](#) | [Ufomind What's New](#) | [Ufomind Top Level](#)]

To find this message again in the future...
Link it to the appropriate [Ufologist](#) or [UFO Topic](#) page.

Archived as a public service by [Area 51 Research Center](#) which is not responsible for content.
Software by Glenn Campbell. Technical contact: webmaster@ufomind.com

Financial support for this web server is provided by the [Research Center Catalog](#).