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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Sheffield UFO Incident 2?

From: **Jenny Randles** <nufon@currantbun.com>
Date: Tue, 20 Jul 1999 21:18:38 +0100
Fwd Date: Tue, 20 Jul 1999 18:16:31 -0400
Subject: Re: Sheffield UFO Incident 2?

>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@GlobalServe.net>
>From: Jerome Clark <jkclark@frontiernet.net>
>Subject: Re: Sheffield UFO Incident 2?
>Date: Tue, 20 Jul 99 09:58:15 PDT

>Hi, Jenny,

>>I think the probability of other life in the universe is high.
>>I think the probability it has visited our solar system at some
>>time in the history of this neck of the space-time continuum
>>maybe 50/50. I think the probability it has done so during the
>>few millenia we have been here maybe 1 in 100.

>On what do you base those odds, besides sheer guesswork?

>>But that's not what you asked. In fact what you asked is a very

>>different question. Have any UFO sightings anywhere ever been
>>the result of an alien craft?

>>Its possible. Of course it is. But look at the facts. The vast
>>majority of cases (I mean 99% of them) absolutely do not offer
>>any indication of that origin at all. They are, in fact, other
>>things such as IFO and UAP. The disturbing prevalence of this
>>data has to make you wary of assuming too much about the 1%
>>because too often we have seen promising cases crumble even
>>years down the track.

>Curious. In a lecture you gave in Sydney in 1991, at a
>conference we both attended, you said you considered the ETH a
>likely explanation for the most puzzling UFO reports. I recall
>your saying that your view of the UFO phenomenon was now much
>like my own. I have enormous respect for you, Jenny, but it
>seems to me, as one who's been reading your work for years, that
>your views are all over the map and are consistent in only one
>thing: their constant changeability. There certainly are worse
>sins, of course, but I can't help wondering, given past
>experience, how long you'll be holding to your current
>neoskeptical course.

>In your response you might inform list members exactly what a
>"UAP" is supposed to be.

>I would also be interested in knowing which "promising cases"
>allegedly have crumbled. The classic UFO cases, in my reading,
>have stood up pretty well to years of sustained attack by
>>would-be debunkers, including -- mostly recently -- your friend
>James Easton's failed attempt to identify Arnold's UFOs as
>pelicans. Now the neoskeptics are hinting darkly that Arnold's
>case has finally been explained (is this explanation #243 or
>#244? I'm afraid I've lost count at this point), but they can't

>tell us about it. And the relentlessly self-promoting Kal Korff
>promises an "expose" (his word) of the Hill case in the near
>future. Will someone wake me when it's over?

>>As we do not have anything approaching scientific evidence -
>>that is alien DNA, non earthly technology conclusively in our
>>possession, photos of landed craft or aliens that are close to
>>probative rather than a joke, etc. The sort of things any police
>>officer would need to accept, for instance, to seek to prove
>>that a crime has been committed, then the only proper answer to
>>give to this question is not yes or no but maybe. The evidence,
>>quite simply, is not nil but is certainly inconclusive.

>In your opinion. In a statement he made to the UFO history
>conference in Chicago this past May, historian of astronomy
>Steven Dick said something to the effect that science has no one
>definition of, or universal agreement to, what constitutes
>"evidence." He cited the UFO controversy as one area where this
>issue is being played out.

>In this context it may well be that scientists in the future,
>and maybe the not-so-distant future, will say that visitation by
>ET intelligence should have been evident as early as (say) the
>Nash-Fortenberry sighting of 1952. Or maybe the RB-47 case of
>1957. Pick your solid, unexplained report. It is entirely
>possible that science will eventually decide that the "leap of
>faith" you mention was not taken by advocates of UFO reality but
>by those who maintained the stubborn belief, in the face of
>serious contrary evidence, that no matter what all UFO
>sightings would all resolve into comfortably prosaic causes.
>They haven't, but hey, who's going to let a little reality
>intrude on somebody's dreams?

Hi,

I thought you'd bring up Sydney. Not that I blame you. If the
positions were reversed I'd have done the same and I was not
seeking to ignore it. You could have, but didn't, so I will,
refer to the letter I sent you written on the plane to Cairns
after we parted in Sydney in which I said I was writing to you
to express my thoughts on the ETH before I chickened out.
Remember? I followed it up with my book 'Star Children' to put
in more tangible form this side of my thinking. So I'm not
denying anything here, Jerry.

Regarding the ETH I have said, and still believe, that there is
some evidence (some quite persuasive but not probative) that
supports it. I do indeed consider it a plausible explanation for
some of the remaining cases. If you want me to say I regard the
theory as likely then I will. Although my real view is more
fairly somewhere between plausible and likely.

But we still lack anything akin to definitive proof because we
seek this in terms that may not be applicable to the phenomenon
we face. I don't think anything I said in yesterdays posting
contradicts that response. Yes, I have the opinion that this is
a reasonable way to explain the baffling cases. It would not
surprise me much at all if it proves correct. But I was asked to
state conclusively if an alien spacecraft had visited earth post
1947 and I don't think anyone can honestly state that. I
certainly could not.

So this was not a cop out or a change of approach (other than
slight emphasis maybe). It was a proper answer to the question
posed.

You are correct that my stats on the likelihood of alien contact were
'guesses'. But then even cosmologists are doing that.

There really isnt any other way to answer such questions because
its all a matter of making value judgements on how many planets
are out there, how many have life, how many races might visit
other star systems, etc etc. So guessing is all anyone can do. I
was merely trying to give a realistic answer to the question I
was asked. Nothing sinister.

If these things above translate to the 'sin' of changing my
mind, fair enough. I own up. But I really don't perceive it that
way.

Read my first book (UFOs: A British Viewpoint) written 1976-8 and published in 1979. Here I argue that there are two essential branches of UFO phenomena. One was physical and involved tangible energy. The term UAP (Unidentified Atmospheric Phenomena derived from this) - a series of probably natural, scientifically novel and as yet unidentified atmospheric processes. The other branch of ufology was less tangible and occurred during an altered state of consciousness. At that time, seeing in my early cases the overlap with psychic experiences that (as you know) I still perceive as a key part of the close encounter, I argued for some sort of quasi real but subjectively originating experience.

Now I don't think my views are 'all over the map' as you put it. My books since then show a gradation of ideas about the second branch of ufology. But I have stood resolutely in every book I have written behind the belief that most UFO sightings not IFOs are in fact UAP. I thought that then. I think it now. No change there.

My ideas about close encounters have progressed to the suggestion that an alien race was communing with our consciousness (rather than via physical visits) (see my 1988 book 'Abduction') and fairly similar, though more developed, ideas that appear in 'Star Children' in 1994 where I suggest the contact is a lucid dream like experience that occurs because we have an inability to grasp the ineffability of the alien nature of the contact. As such we need to probe behind the imagery that we too often treat as the 'real alien contact' to the more subtle, subjective, inner truth that they reflect. This is a difference not in basic theory from 1979 just in degree of interpretation of the same key ideas.

So - in essence - I am still (and pretty consistently) saying that 95% of cases are IFOs, most others are UAP and around 1% appear to occur during an altered state where it may well be that an alien contact impinges on our consciousness manifesting in a way that is not completely tangible. Anyone who was at my DC lecture would probably say this was more or less just what I argued then.

So, my views have adapted but they have not - in my opinion - fundamentally changed enough to be termed 'all over the map'. Yes, I have toyed with other ideas as experiments (eg time travel) (such mind stretching thinking around the subject is useful in my experience as it prevents stagnation). But in essence my principle philosophy on UFOs is much as it was 20 years ago.

Of course, I have learnt a huge amount in that time and this has inevitably effected my views. I would be worried if it had not and I now argued precisely what I did 20 years ago. You don't do that, Jerry, do you? You virtually disown what you wrote in the 1970's, which is fair enough. Your views have progressed via experience and evidence. Is it so odd that mine have too?

I do go where the data leads and sometimes thats a little further from the mean than others. I also spend time delving into certain phenomena at the expense of others (eg my 1998 book on UAP that were involved in mid-air encounters). But just because I research and write such a book does not mean this is all that I believe is happening. It just means I am at that point in time focusing on that area of study. I don't see this as a failing, but as an advantage.

It is worth noting that I am not - absolutely not - saying there are no alien spacecraft. I am not - absolutely not - saying there is only slim possibility that ufology has an alien component.

In truth I am far less convinced there are alien spacecraft coming here in some space armada than I am that an alien intelligence is in communication with us at a more subtle level. I see these as separate issues that require different degrees of evidence to support. Which is why I am cautious, because I see evidence backing one option but not the other quite so much. I don't think many sceptics would go that far.

I also noted in yesterday's posting that I am more persuaded of the alien possibility now than I was a few years ago, due to the accumulation of circumstantial evidence. Again I don't see how

this contradicts my basic stance.

Yes, of course, I am warmer towards the prospect some days than others. I doubt anyone short of being a 100% certain alien contact witness could feel any other way about the changing face of this confusing subject. If you know the truth and are unswayed by circumstance, then good on you. But I cannot behave like that. Sorry. A modicum of indecision is something I treasure, because it allows me to go with the flow of evidence and not sit there waiting for a case to come along that proves I was right all along.

Commitment to one scenario is all very well but it isn't how I am built to think and I fear that it has the risk of evidential myopia - to which we are all prone, but the committed (be they outright sceptics or fervent ETH supporters) more so than most.

I have always been a rationalist (I am not a sceptic or a neo-sceptic as you term it). That's surely obvious from the fact I solve more cases than I think are left unsolved. But the difference is also evident. A sceptic does not believe in UFOs and seeks to prove there are no such things, all be it hopefully objectively. (A debunker is a blinkered, biased sceptic). A rationalist, as I trust I am, accepts the realities of ufology and lives by these sometimes sobering facts of life and rules of evidence. Most UFOs are explainable. Some cases that seem inexplicable can ultimately be resolved. It is possible (but not in my view at all likely) that every case could crumble. So you work on that basis and look for the cases that do stand the test and challenge any reasonable prospect of being solved. Yes, there are some. I have never suggested otherwise.

I don't agree with James Easton's interesting theory on Ken Arnold, by the way. But I also don't think the Arnold case is a good UFO. It's at best a currently unsolved case that has always been likely to have a solution. Its importance for ufology is social and never has had much to do with its status as a solved/unsolved sighting.

Although you imply I am James' friend, as if this is a crime of sorts, the truth is I don't think we have ever met. Correct me if I'm wrong James? I like his approach to the field quite often and support some of his arguments (but by no means all). ufology needs this sort of hard headed realism as much as it needs committed, objective supporters of the ETH. I have always regarded you - Jerry - as an excellent researcher with one of the most perceptive defences of the alien nature of UFOs that I have known. As such I have enormous respect for your work and regard you as one of the most significant ufologists we have. But surely we don't need to agree on everything, even every major thing, to share a similar approach to this subject? ufology, in fact, would be the poorer if we did.

You ask which cases have 'crumbled' to cause some recent disquiet on my part? I personally believe Roswell to be one. The Williamette Pass photo (that I regarded favourably pre Irwin Weider) is another. My investigations into Lakenheath/Bentwaters 1956 (one of the UK's best cases in many people's opinions - until recently) seem to be casting at least some doubts about that diagnosis; although it is not a solved case, as such. Rendlesham Forest, whilst again in my view not solved, is without doubt beset with some problems. There are others from my first hand involvement (eg a movie film case that was solved conclusively after more than 20 years). These add up and have to effect your thinking.

None of this persuades me that there is no ufology and that all cases will fall or makes me want to saddle up to the sceptics for the ride. I still believe there are unsolved and unsolvable cases - at least via our present perspective on science. I remain (whilst not convinced) pretty amenable to the prospect that in a few cases alien contact may be occurring - but certainly it is not the cause of the vast majority of sightings. The facts state that pretty unequivocally in my opinion.

This is my honest view of what I think ufology reflects. But it's my opinion, just as you have yours. I am well aware I could be wrong and I do pay heed to seemingly significant new cases that challenge my ideas (like the Kelly Cahill or Peter Khourey stories - that impress me a good deal). I think I would have a problem if when faced with such an incident I shrugged and said,

so what, or I fell back on the last defence of the moribund thinker - it is clearly just a hoax. The day ufology stops causing me to ponder that big question - have I got this completely and utterly wrong? - is probably a good day to retire.

Best wishes,

Jenny Randles

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