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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: IFOs

From: Jenny Randles <nufon@currantbun.com>
Date: Tue, 27 Jul 1999 17:49:32 +0100
Fwd Date: Wed, 28 Jul 1999 15:30:53 -0400
Subject: Re: IFOs

>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalseve.net>
>From: Jerome Clark <jkclark@frontiernet.net>
>Subject: Re: IFOs
>Date: Mon, 26 Jul 99 12:22:14 PDT

>>From: Jenny Randles <nufon@currantbun.com>
>>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalseve.net>
>>Subject: Re: IFOs
>>Date: Thu, 22 Jul 1999 13:24:50 +0100

>Hi, Jenny,

>>There have been some curious responses to my posting in reply to
>>the question asked about whether - in my 25 years experience -
>>one alien spacecraft had conclusively been seen. I thought I
>>answered it fully and properly. Evidently not. It seems that for
>>some of you unless I can be bullied into saying - yes, sure,
>>they are here I admit it, then it isn't good enough.

>I think that when you get more used to what happens on this
>list, you'll stop characterizing it as "bullying" and start
>accepting it for what it is: the usual rough and tumble of
>debate, from which nobody -- including someone so esteemed as
>your own good self -- is immune. You're still a neophyte here.
>You need to thicken your skin a little.

Hi,

I am not in the least bothered about responding to questions and challenges or defending my opinions. The point was that I offered it, but was then basically told it wasn't good enough. Tell me did one alien spacecraft land, was fired back - after I had at length answered that question. That read to me like someone wanting me to say something I cannot say because I do not believe we have evidence to support it. I accepted the possibility, maybe even the near probability, but not the certainty. I would have accepted that as a reasonable answer to the question from anyone else and a thick skin has nothing to do with it. Although you are right, I am very new to this internet debate thing!

>>Well, sorry, I cannot honestly do that. I am afraid this
>>attitude is, in my view, a large part of what is wrong with
>>ufology. The plea - do we have to wait another 25 years for an
>>answer - seems to be saying, go on, say they are here, I don't
>>want to keep waiting to hear you say what I want you to say. I
>>reckon we do have a good part of the answer. I understand what's
>>going on far more than when I started. It's just that you don't
>>seem to like what I say I have found. Problem is if you stand 25
>>years at a bus stop waiting for a train it won't show up.

>In your opinion. With all due respect, yours is an informed
>view, but just one of a number, many of which disagree with
>yours. As you're learning.

I am not just learning, as this suggests, that others have different opinions to my own. Where in any posting have I ever suggested otherwise? I have been asked what I think. I have said what I think. I have been asked to explain why I think it. I have explained why I think it. And frequently I have made absolutely clear this is my opinion, no more, no less, and that I could be wrong. Also that I am happy to listen to any counter argument. Please look at my postings over the past three months and I think my record will show that what I have consistently done. In fact, Jerry, you actually had a go at me once or twice for listening to alternative theories and ideas and for committing the sin of not having a view that has remained unwavering for 20 years. So it is wrong to infer that I expect people to agree with me. I sure as heck don't. But equally I reserve the right to agree with anyone who comes up with a good argument, even if it means changing my mind on an issue or a case. Is that not what debate is all about?

>>As for Stanton's facts and figures. Some of them need to be
>>interpreted. Yes, Condon found a third unsolved. But so would I
>>if I selected the 60 best cases from the past year rather than
>>studied the 6000 or whatever total sightings that have happened.

>This misrepresents what happened with the Condon Committee.
>Hynek and McDonald wanted it to look at only the best cases.
>Condon decided otherwise, no doubt because of his severe
>antipathy to the UFO phenomenon, and the committee ended up
>taking on whatever came its way, whatever the quality. (At the
>most absurd extreme this involved Condon's going to a spot where
>a contactee had predicted a landing.) Even so, about 30% of the
>committee's cases ended up unexplained. According to several
>reinvestigations (for example McDonald's) some of the explained
>should in fact have been in the unexplained category. The great
>irony, as Allen Hynek wrote in a piece on the Colorado Project
>for the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (April 1969), was that
>"the percentage of 'unknowns' in the Condon report appears to be
>even higher than in the Air Force investigation ... which led to
>the Condon investigation in the first place."

No, I don't think this is strictly true. During the 18 month life of the project Blue Book received many, many more sightings than are in the report. A large number of trivial LITS were clearly filtered out otherwise they would dominate the report as they dominate any sample of UFO reports. In fact the report focuses on a relatively small number of cases and there has to have been some degree of selectivity given that it contains a proto abduction and several photo cases (which is way over chance expectation levels for such a small sample). Moreover, the report focused on the good data from Blue Book archives - eg the best photos (McMinville, Great Falls, etc) and radar (eg Lakenheath/Bentwaters). It is very obvious that this was no random sample of incoming trivia; although I appreciate that some of this haphazardness went on (eg with Low visiting the UK at a time of its biggest ever wave during which dozens of police officers saw UFOs and he investigated none of them and went to interview people who looked for the Loch Ness monster instead!) But in essence the Condon data is bound to contain a higher than norm percentage of unsolved cases because it had a far higher than norm sample of good cases to start with. Am I seriously misguided here, because that's certainly how I read it.

>>I cannot change the results of what I find to make people happy.
>>As I replied (and sorry it's going to sound repetitive but as
>>some of you don't seem to grasp what I am saying it's necessary)
>>here is what I actually find. And so, by the way, do a lot of
>>other ufologists beyond the US. Many researchers in the US seem
>>unaware that there is a ufology beyond the East Coast or the
>>West Coast. But there is and when you add it up it's actually
>>bigger and very different from what's in the US as well. Note I
>>did not say better. That is not my argument.

>Oh, those US ufologists -- the root of all evil in the world.
>Seriously, I detect a lot of provincialism (and, dare I say it,
>a whiff of anti-Americanism - I am not referring to you, Jenny)
>in non-US ufologists, too. In truth, we all could learn from
>each other. Instead, we are dowsed with gallons of rhetorical
>dishwater in which "US ufology" becomes a synonym for "wrong"

>ufology." Sorry -- I don't buy it, and beyond that, I'm getting
>bored with it.

There is no right and wrong ufology, just different approaches. I have certainly never suggested nor believed otherwise. Bit provincialism is a good word. In the UK we are fortunate to have many diverse European cultures to perceive UFOs through as well as our own. We also are awash in US UFO culture. So we do get to see a very broad global impression of the similarities, differences and nuances that exist from culture to culture. I don't think many in the US are as fortunate. Most of the books published are US originated. A little from the UK now gets there (but that is rather recent) and little from beyond. I suspect this is a key reason for the different approaches - which is why the IUR, which you edit to splendidly, does such a good job of reflecting to the US a little of the global UFO village beyond the US.

>>In the UK in an average year we get say 300 sightings. Of these
>>we can pretty conclusively explain around 180 (60%). I don't
>>think there are too many disputes so far. Of the rest I contend,
>>from my experience, that another 30 - 35% (it does vary - and
>>that's maybe another 100 cases) are probably explainable. You
>>cannot ever say for sure because the data to prove them is not
>>there. But they are LITS or low definition incidents where it is
>>best to err on the side of caution.

>Explaining LITs is, for the most part, the functional equivalent
>of shooting fish in a barrel. I would hope that in the future
>UK ufologists would invest their limited resources more wisely.

I actually noted in one of my replies last week that a major reason we don't spend hours tracking many probable IFOs to a certain conclusion once a probable solution emerges is that to do so is the wrong way to use precious resources of time and money we have. We do concentrate on the better, more challenging cases and leave aside probable IFOs as just that. But we cannot win because I was also told in this debate that by not resolving IFO cases for certain and leaving them 'unsolved' we were labelling as IFOs some cases that may in fact really be UFOs. I agreed this was probably true, but that the cases left aside as IFOs were low grade and so even if they were to prove unexplained most would contribute little to our knowledge of the phenomenon. This is always a juggling act given the fact that we have a small UFO community with hardly any time and money available in the UK. But we must evaluate what cases we can as IFOs, determine which cases we cannot conclusively define as IFOs and leave them aside if it would not benefit ufology to pursue them to the bitter end (thus regarding them as probably solved and moving on) and investigate in detail the few cases that are truly challenging and have the potential to add to our knowledge. That was my very point - the reason we expend so much effort on basic methods of quickly defining IFOs to 'clear the decks'. It is not the end in itself, merely the means to the end. That end is, of course, the study of the remaining intriguing cases. That was a firm policy of all BUFORA investigators in the period 1981 to 1993 that I was Director of Investigations and it is part of our basic training course philosophy. So no argument there.

Best Wishes

Jenny Randles

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